

GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN FROM RURAL AREAS THROUGH INCLUSION INTO THE LABOR MARKET

FINAL PERFORMANCE AUDIT REPORT





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Tirana 2024

List of Acronyms

GRB	Gender-Responsive Budgeting
GRP	Gender-Responsive Programs
MTBP	Mid-Term Budget Program
MoHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
MoARD	Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development
ARDA	Agricultural and Rural Development Agency
AERA	Agriculture Extension Regional Agencies
CATT	Centers for Agricultural Technologies Transfer
MoFE	Ministry of Finance and Economy
NAES	National Agency for Employment and Skills
NSGE	National Strategy on Gender Equality
GO/LGO	Gender Officer/Local Gender Officer
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
LM	Line ministries
GFIS	Government Financial Information System
AFMIS	Albanian Financial Management Information System
PFMS	Public Finance Management Strategy
BPMT	Budget Programs Management Teams
IPARD	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development
NCGE	National Council on Gender Equality
NATC	National Agency of Tobacco and Cigarettes
SESS	State Entity of Seeds and Saplings

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Foreword

Since 1995, the “International Day of Rural Women” is celebrated in order to appreciate the contribution of rural women in agriculture and the achievements with respect to the general well-being of the community, despite the challenges and stereotypes they face.

The Supreme Audit Institution, in the framework of the 2023-2027 Strategy, in which it defines that:

“Success will depend on the level at which the ALSAI will be able to influence the responsibility and accountability system for the purpose of strengthening sustainable institutions”, carried out a performance audit titled “Gender equality and the empowerment of rural women through labor market involvement”.

The audit was also conducted as a follow-up to the UN Sustainable Development Goal implementation as a global call to action to end poverty, protect the environment and climate on Earth and to ensure that people, irrespective of location, will enjoy peace and well-being.

The audit was carried out in cooperation with the National Audit Office of Kosovo, State Audit Office of North Macedonia and UN Women Albania, as well as in the framework of the definitions of Sustainable Development Goal No. 5 / Gender equality/ Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” . **

Albanian Supreme Audit Institution

** <https://albania.un.org/en/sdgs/5>

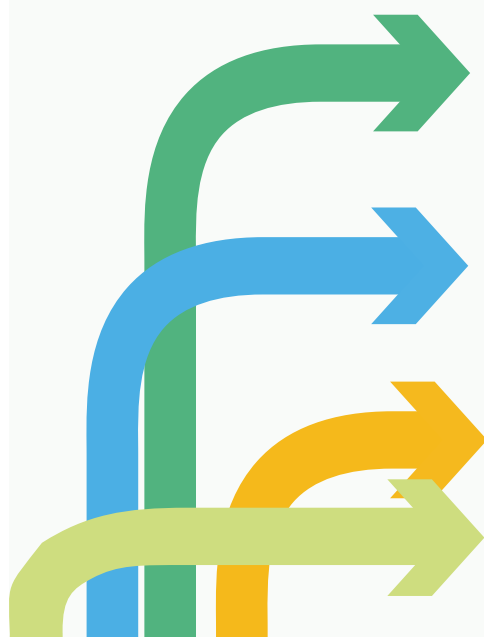
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SUMMARY

The audit titled “Gender equality and the empowerment of rural women through labor market involvement” was designed to review policies and their effectiveness in terms of the qualitative delivery of services provided to promote the employment of women in rural areas, focusing primarily on the role and responsibilities that entities under audit, NAES and 13 Local Government Units (LGUs): Shkodra, Kukës, Lezha, Dibër, Kruja, Elbasan, Kavaja, Divjaka, Lushnja, Berat, Pogradec, Vlora and Gjirokastra have had during the period under audit (2019–2023) regarding the promotion of rural women’s employment in the relevant territories. In reference to audit goals and the design of the question pyramid, the following is an overview of the issues identified during the audit.

The National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021–2030 aims at the economic empowerment of women through their socio-economic empowerment, including “rural women”. On the other hand, the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2023 – 2030 (the draft is currently undergoing public consultation) defines the decent employment of women and men through the implementation of comprehensive labor market policies as a strategic goal. The Employment Strategy does not define any other classifications within the women’s group, unlike the Strategy on Gender Equality, which distinguishes and includes “women from rural areas” as a separate group. The drafting of NSES 2023–2030 did not observe the general principle of national strategies aligning with the NSDEI 2030 framework that also includes the NSGE 2021–2030.

The audit focused on several main directions, including:



The review of employment promotion programs

to assess whether such programs were diversified and tailored to specific regions based on gender, as well as whether they were effectively and efficiently implemented across the country by ensuring gender equality;

The review of the provision of conditions facilitating the employment of rural women

, such as investments in public services, nursery or kindergartens, as well as transportation from rural areas to job centers;

Cooperation and coordination among LGUs and NAES on women’s employment;

Monitoring of the implementation of employment policies and objective fulfillment through process analysis.

Pursuant to the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019 - 2022, the new Law No. 15/2019, dated 13.03.2019 "On Employment Promotion" was adopted, paving the way for the restructuring of the National Employment Service at the National Agency for Employment and Skills, the reconceptualization of relations with employers, the establishment of a labor market information system, etc. Based on the Law, public employment policies include employment services and active and passive labor market programs, which aim to promote the employment of unemployed jobseekers, and the integration and social inclusion of special groups. The National Agency for Employment and Skills, in the capacity of the institution responsible for the implementation of active employment promotion policies, with respect to supporting unemployed jobseekers through active Employment Promotion programs, has implemented the four DCMs adopted pursuant to the Law regarding new employment promotion programs, which include the involvement of unemployed jobseekers in different employment programs. Employment promotion programs have been designed to also address the needs of disadvantaged categories of unemployed jobseekers.

As per the above, it was found that the NAES has not been fully effective as far as its activity related to the employment of rural women is concerned. The audit found that the employment promotion programs carried out by NAES during 2020-2023 are general and not divided on a gender basis, much less focusing on rural women. Data related to employment promotion programs do not include rural women. There is a lack of measurable quantitative or qualitative gender indicators in the implementation of programs and in the performance card, which are necessary to monitor the progress of the outcomes achieved and the fulfillment of specific goals, thus affecting the effectiveness of their implementation for the empowerment of rural women.

NAES structures have only tracked the programs delivered to jobseekers in 2020, while as regards the provisions of program implementation regulations, the process should have been conducted 6 months after program completion.

Moreover, there has been a lack of effective coordination between RDNAES and LGUs regarding the drafting and analysis of rural women's employment needs.

One of the sub-objectives of the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2016-2020 indicating the empowerment of rural women includes sub-objective "1.3.14 The provision of crèches and kindergartens in rural areas", implemented by local government units. The audit team reviewed the measures taken by Local Self-Government Units with regard to reducing the barriers preventing women and girls from entering the labor market.

According to the analysis of the data collected by the Local Self-Government Units, in almost all municipalities, the ratio of crèches and kindergartens is not in fair proportion to the rural and urban administrative units that belong to a Municipality.

In reference to the reported data, there is a lack of crèches, especially in rural areas and, in certain cases, in urban areas. Consequently, there is no full coverage with kindergartens and crèches and fair division thereof according to urban and rural areas in line with the relevant needs of each Local Self-Government Unit. Another identified gap concerns the lack of public transport in certain Local Government Units, with the exception of urban administrative units. Consequently, no condition has been provided to facilitate bringing women and girls as close as possible to the labor market, which hinders the strengthening of women's standing in society.

The National Agency for Employment and Skills has signed a cooperation agreement with the Local Self-Government Units, for the purpose of strengthening and coordinating employment policies at the regional and local level. Namely, 16 agreements have been signed with different municipalities (Elbasan, Gramsh, Librazhd, Peqin, Cërrik, Përrenjas, Fier, Lushnje, Patos, Roskovec, Korça, Maliq, Lezha, Laç, Mirdita and Delvina) since the adoption of the NSES in 2019 and until 2021. The implementation of 3

agreements related to the municipalities part of the audit, namely Lushnja, Lezha and Elbasan, was audited. The audit found that the obligations defined in the signed agreements were not met. The activities carried out to promote employment were not documented. Administrative Units located far away from Local Employment Offices did not record jobseekers in a register to be periodically submitted to the Local Employment Office. Furthermore, no person was assigned at Administrative Units to coordinate the work and address employment issues to the Local Employment Office.

On the other hand, the NAES did not record the progress of the implementation of agreements concluded with the Municipalities of Elbasan, Lushnja and Lezha. Moreover, no assessment was conducted with regard to their effectiveness in improving the employment situation.

The National Agency for Employment and Skills did not establish one-stop shops at Local Self-Government Units, which lack local employment offices, thus not complying with the National Strategy on Employment and Skills.

There were also gaps identified in the employment services provided by the National Agency for Employment and Skills, which are not fully coordinated with Local Self-Government Units. The communication among central and local structures failed to identify the needs of women in general and rural women in particular. Currently, despite the existing cooperation between the National Agency for Employment and Skills and the municipalities, the services delivered to jobseekers, i.e. rural women in our case, are ineffective. The information exchange with Local Self-Government Units does not lead to the addressing of issues that prevent rural women from accessing the labor market.

With regard to NAES, despite the periodic monitoring of the implementation of the activities to be carried out for the purpose of achieving the goals of the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019-2022, there is no information on the actual use of the monitoring results to improve employment policies, or as to which are the specific respective improvements made in reference to the monitoring results.

Periodic monitoring of the implementation of the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019-2022 was carried out for each activity and the relevant monitoring reports were drawn up. Based on the audit focus, the data were grouped into women and men, with no separate "rural women" group. No strategy activity data pertain to rural women. Moreover, there is no finding as to whether the monitoring of the activities carried out to implement employment goals has facilitated the identification of issues or the addressing of issues for improvement. There is no clear indication as to the drafting of employment promotion policies in reference to the monitoring results and if so, what type of policies they are.



In conclusion, we find that it is necessary to conduct labor market analyses on rural women with disaggregated and up-to-date data, as well as with findings and recommendations shared with interest groups and implemented to the benefit of each municipality or administrative unit in accordance with the relevant specifications and features.

It is crucial to provide equal opportunities to women and girls of every group in society, including those living in rural or remote areas, etc.

2

SOCIAL CONTEXT & AUDIT IMPORTANCE

2.1 Social Context

Since 1995, the *“International Day of Rural Women”* is celebrated in order to appreciate the contribution of rural women in agriculture and the achievements with respect to the general well-being of the community, despite the challenges and stereotypes they face. Rural areas in Albania have an economic activity primarily focused on the agriculture and husbandry sector. In certain smaller municipalities in the north, such as Has, Tropoja, Kukës, Puka, Vau-Dejës or Malësia e Madhe, the majority of employed and self-employed persons are women and girls. There are numerous challenges and conditions facing rural women. They have to do daily chores, as well as work in agriculture.

The situation resulting from the challenges facing the world has also affected the agriculture sector due to the increase in the price of fuel and agricultural inputs, as well as the difficulties to sell agricultural products, which impact the livelihood of rural women. National strategies and the projects undertaken by various associations highlight the need to identify the issues of women and girls in the vast majority of municipalities. The heads of centers or associations working to empower rural women state that their studies have found that, although approximately 96% of agriculture jobs are performed by women, the resulting revenues are not managed by them.

In addition to other daily chores, women and girls also work hard in agriculture and animal husbandry. Even though in Albania women play a key role in the agriculture sector as they comprise around 55% of the labor force, they are the heads of only 7% of farms across the country¹. In the procedures followed to access the labor market, they often face issues, such as: in applying, in opening a business, or in running a business in the relevant properties, etc.



IN ALBANIA

Women constitute approximately **55% of the labor force** in the agriculture sector.

They hold leadership positions as heads of only about **7% of farms nationwide**.

1. <https://www.instat.gov.al/media/12598/burra-dhe-gra-2023.pdf>.

Other factors with direct impact on the employment of rural women include the issues resulting from the infrastructure, their relevant area of residence, the lack of transport, potable water and 24h health centers, as well as the lack of crèches and kindergartens with lunch. Although such factors concern the entire community, they primarily affect the lives of women and girls in rural areas. As per the above, central structures and local self-government units in particular should take measures to mitigate the hindering factors and encourage rural women to become part of the labor market.

2.2 Importance of performance audits

In itself, auditing constitutes a key instrument of the accountability process with regard to public money spending, thus providing a critical contribution to the proper administration of resources and delivery of services to citizens.

While the performance audit conducts an independent review to establish whether governmental undertakings, operations, programs and activities comply with the economical use, efficiency and effectiveness principles and whether there is room for improvement. The Supreme Audit Institution audits, *inter alia*, the economic and financial activity of state institutions and other public legal persons, by recommending the appropriate measures for performance improvement. By way of auditing, the SAI ensures the transparency of public fund use, public property administration and legality of immovable property registration, the relevant procedures and legalizations, as well as prompt, quality and optimal-cost provision of public services, etc.²

The audit focuses primarily on the empowerment of rural women through their involvement in the labor market, as well as on the effectiveness of the main procedures and mechanisms identifying and developing the required infrastructure to fulfill the strategic objectives on the observance of their respective rights and raising the awareness of families and the community to empower them. Based on the above, such audit aims at recommending improvements in governmental policy and program implementation, and at increasing the involvement of rural women in the labor market.

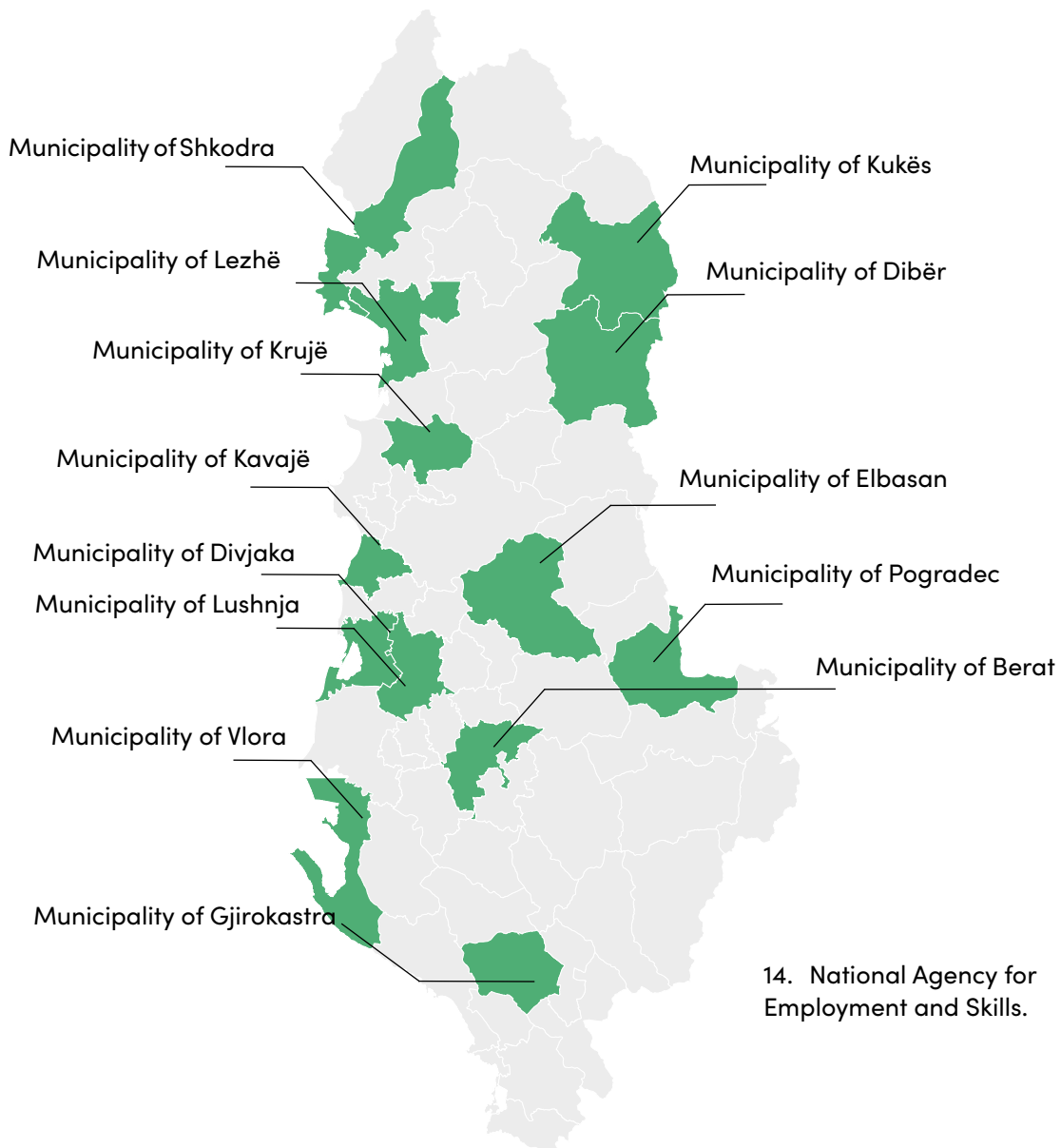
2. Article 6 of Law No. 154/2014 "On the Organization and Functioning of the Supreme Audit Institution".

3

AUDITED ENTITIES

3.1 Introduction to the audited entities

The Performance Audit titled “Gender equality and the empowerment of rural women through labor market involvement” will take place in 13 municipalities and at the National Agency for Employment and Skills. The audit team selected 13 Local Government Units (LGUs) to assess the involvement of institutions at local level with respect to the promotion of rural women’s employment across their respective territory. The audited entities were as follows:



14. National Agency for Employment and Skills.

Local Government Units (*Shkodra, Kukës, Lezha, Dibër, Kruja; Elbasan, Kavaja, Divjaka, Lushnja, Berat, Pogradec, Vlora, Gjirokastra*) shall provide effective and efficient governance at a level closest to the citizens by³:

- Recognizing the existence of different identities and values of the communities;
- Respecting the fundamental rights of the citizens enshrined in the Constitution and other laws;
- Choosing various types of local public facilities and services to the benefit of the community;
- Exercising their functions, powers and duties in an effective way through the agency of local self-government bodies;
- Providing convenient services based on the needs of the community members;
- Promoting an all-inclusive participation of the community in local governance;
- Providing services in conformity with the standards required by law or other normative acts.
- The local LGUs shall have the following rights and responsibilities with respect to generating revenue and spending it as they⁴:
 - Create and collect revenues, and incur expenses to perform their functions; b) Impose local fees for services, and determine their rates, as specified in the applicable law;
 - Design, approve, and implement their budgets;
 - Keep accounts in conformity with the applicable legislation, and provide information and financial reports for the design and implementation of their budgets to the central government or the citizens.
 - The revenue generated from the economic activity is used primarily to support and perform public functions.

National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES)

The NAES comprises a number of regional and local administrative institutions that provide employment, self-employment and development, vocational education and training services.

The mission of NAES is to ensure the right of Albanian citizens to be treated with services and public employment, self-employment and professional qualifications programs, with the aim of finding a suitable job, both domestically and abroad, as well as providing these services.

The NAES is organized into a central and regional/local structure and exercises the following competences⁵:

- Administering regional/local employment structures and ensuring the quality level of services provided;
- In cooperation with employers, administering and implementing employment promotion programs;
- Administering public vocational education and training (VET) providers, pursuant to the legislation on vocational education and training in the Republic of Albania;
- Implementing vocational training programs;
- Proposing to the ministry responsible for matters of employment and skill development, relevant primary and secondary legislation in the employment promotion field;

Moreover, the NAES is responsible for guaranteeing the quality level of employment, self-employment and vocational education and training services, through monitoring and reviews.

In order to fulfill the obligations arising pursuant to the legal framework in force⁶, the NAES shall collect, process and analyze information through the information systems of the subordinate institutions or through specific studies or surveys related to labor market or labor market segments dynamics and trends.

To provide such information, the NAES shall be required to:

- Collect, process and report information on unemployed jobseekers, and vacancies announced at the regional/local structure;
- Conduct periodic studies on the labor market or portions thereof, at the regional and national level;

3. Law No. 139/2015 "On Local Self-Government", as amended, article 3.

4. Law No. 139/2015 "On Local Self-Government", as amended, article 9, paragraphs 1.3 and 1.4.

5. Law No. 15/2019, dated 13.03.2019 "On Employment Promotion", Article 14.

6. Law No. 15/2019, dated 13.03.2019 "On Employment Promotion", Article 16.

- Monitor and assess active labor market program effectiveness, and follow up on them continuously. Moreover, the NAES shall conduct periodic labor market investigations to collect data on the number of persons employed, working conditions, recruitment processes, skill gap or training needs, employing national and international tested and approved methodologies;

National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019 - 2022

Albania has drafted a national strategy on employment, covering the 2019–2022 period. The National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019–2022 focuses on four priorities to provide job positions and opportunities and skills for all women and men throughout the lifecycle.

Strategic objectives include:

- Promoting opportunities for decent work through effective labor market policies;
- Providing quality vocational education and training to youth and adults;
- Promoting social involvement and territorial cohesion;
- Enhancing labor market governance and qualification systems.
- The main objective of the National Strategy on Employment and Skills is to identify and outline appropriate incentive policies on employment in the country and professional training of the workforce, in order to create quality jobs and opportunities for skills throughout the life cycle.
- Focusing on the audit topic, several sub-objectives and goals with direct or indirect relation to the promotion of rural area employment have been defined.

A. Promoting opportunities for decent work through effective labor market policies.

- *Enhancing the range and extension of services and Active Labor Market Programs (ALMP)*

Active labor market programs will be redesigned, which will commence by:

Drafting and diversifying ALMPs based on the needs of groups at a high risk of becoming long-term jobseekers, which will be carried out by:

- Assessing the needs of separate groups to provide identified ALMPs support;
- The legal and regulatory framework on the implementation of ALMPs will be revised based on Law No. 15/2019 “On Employment Promotion”, to support the delivery of enhanced, diversified and tailor-made ALMPs for specific regions, on the basis of gender and social groups;
- Improving the process of promotion program planning and implementation in order to enhance the efficiency and impact thereof; which will be carried out through:
 - Promotion programs will be applied across the country efficiently and effectively, as well as by ensuring gender equality, including contracting;
 - Available and regular statistics will be provided based on the number of Albanian citizens (males and females) supported with employment.

- *Development and implementation of the model for monitoring active labor market programs (ALMPs) with sensitivity to gender issues, which will be carried out in accordance with the following measures:*

Defining and approving the model of ALMP monitoring, where:

- The methodological assessment and monitoring framework will be drafted for ALMPs;
- Instruments will be improved to monitor the involvement of separate groups in the ALMPs;

Implementation of the ALMP monitoring plan, where:

- The active labor market program monitoring structure is established;
- Active labor market programs will be periodically monitored based on standardized indicators.

B. Provision of quality Vocational Education and Training (VET) to youth and adults.

- *Optimizing VET providers at individual and network level to ensure a quality and more diversified offer that will be achieved by:*

Diversifying the VET offers in line with labor market needs;

- The VET offer will be diversified in accordance with market needs, migration and demographic trends, as well as pursuant to the principles of multifunctionality, equality, diversity and flexibility;
- An up-to-date offer will be provided, in accordance with labor market needs;

Reorganizing the provider network by taking into consideration the alignment of the supply with regional demand, by way of the following measures:

- A geographic map will be drafted to operationalize the reorganization of the VET provider network.

Improving the VET information management system by:

- Establishing the model/system of VET information management under a unified system for such information management.

C. Promoting social involvement and territorial cohesion;

- *Enhancing coverage, inclusion and effectiveness of employment and vocational education and training services for youth and adults, including the population at risk of exclusion.*

Assessing the needs for employment and training services in uncovered areas;

- The Employment and VET services needs assessment report will be drafted regarding the uncovered
- areas identified through the relevant recommendations;
- Recording both male and female unemployed jobseekers from the uncovered areas.

Drafting the territorial extension plan on employment and vocational education and training;

- Detailed planning for the provision of employment and VET services in uncovered areas;
- Providing employment services and guaranteeing participation in VET programs for individuals living in uncovered areas.

Implementing the services plan in the uncovered areas;

- The cooperation modalities and agreements with local units by defining the mutual roles and type of services to be offered in uncovered areas without employment and training offices;
- One stop shops will also be set up at Local Self-Government Units.

Implementing the VET plan in the uncovered areas;

- Professional qualification needs are identified;
- Redesigning skills and qualifications packages adapted to rural economies based on the review of the skills gap analysis;
- Providing services to uncovered areas;
- Vocational training courses delivered to unemployed jobseekers, both male and female, in the uncovered areas.

Promoting labor market reintegration

Drafting the reintegration into the labor market scheme of the beneficiaries of the Economic Assistance scheme;

- Employment services harmonized with the State Social Service to identify and minimize the discouraging factors impacting labor market entry and to exit the economic assistance scheme.
- Monitoring mechanism already established, tracking the situation of vulnerable females and males and/or those excluded from society in Albania.

D. Enhancing labor market governance and qualification systems.

- Strengthening the policy-making monitoring and review system related to the employment and VET sectors;
- Developing and upgrading the labor market and VET information system providing safe and up-to-date data.

3.2 Legal basis and other criteria governing the audited entities

The main legal basis governing the activity of entities related to the audit, which will also be the source of auditing criteria, is as follows:

Political criteria

- National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019 - 2022
- Cross-cutting Strategy on Decentralization and Local Governance, 2015-2020"

Technical criteria

- Law No. 139/2015 "On Local Self-Government", as amended;
- Law No. 9936, dated 26.06.2008, "On Budget System Management";
- Law No. 15/2019, dated 13.03.2019 "On Employment Promotion";
- Law No. 68/2017 "On Local Self-governance Finances";
- DCM No. 465, dated 18.07.2012, "On Gender Mainstreaming in the Mid-Term Budget Program";
- DCM No. 17, dated 15.01.2020 "On Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of Employment Promotion Programs through Employment, On-the-job Training and Internships";
- DCM No. 348, dated 29.04.2020, "On the Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the Promotion Program through Self-employment";
- DCM No. 535, dated 08.07.2020 "On Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the Public Community Works Program";
- DCM No. 608, dated 29.07.2020 "On the Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the Incentive Program through Employment of Unemployed People as a consequence of COVID-19";
- DCM No. 554, dated 31.07.2019, "On the Establishment, Organization and Functioning of the National Agency for Employment and Skills".
- Instruction No. 23, dated 30.07.2018 "On Standard Procedures for Drafting the Mid-Term Budget Program of Local Self-government Units".
- Instruction No. 22, dated 30.07.2022, "On Standard Procedures of Local Self-government Units' Budget Monitoring";
- Instruction No. 7/1, dated 28.2.2018 "On the Preparation of the Medium-term Budget Program 2019-2021";
- Order of the Prime Minister No. 172, dated 24.12.2019, "On the Adoption of the National Agency for Employment and Skills Structure and Organization Chart".
- Internal functional and organizational regulation of the National Agency for Employment and Skills.

Monitoring and reporting criteria

- Orders on the implementation of programs;
- Annual monitoring reports.

Other criteria/Best practices

- Various reports;
- Etc.

3.3 Relevance of entities outputs

The audited entities include both central level (NAES) and local level (LGUs and NAES Local Offices) entities. As previously mentioned, the main responsibility for the implementation of employment policies in the country lies with NAES. Moreover, NAES monitors and assesses active labor market program effectiveness, and follows up on them continuously.

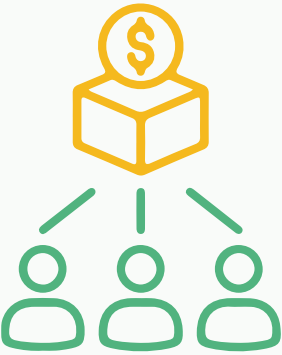
Based on the analyzed data, 50% of unemployed jobseekers are female and this trend has not changed since 2019. The data are summarized in the following table:

Table 1: Overview of UJs for the 2019-2022 period

Year	Total UJ	Female UJs	%	Women Head of Household UJs	%	Total employed persons
2019	70,930	37,228	52	29,417	79	30,391
2020	82,921	43,647	53	33,474	77	23,118
2021	87,419	45,125	52	33,340	74	24,158
2022	76,879	40,620	53	28,743	71	26,808

Data source: NAES/compiled by the Audit team

Based on the statistical data provided by NAES, there is no clear indication of the % of Unemployed Jobseekers from rural areas and the % from urban areas. If we were to analyze the number of women Head of Household UJs compared to women UJ, we would see that averagely 75% of women UJ are Heads of Household. An average of 418 beneficiaries per month have become part of the unemployment benefit scheme and an average of 468 per month have exited the scheme during 2022. In a 2019 report of the Ombudsperson⁷, it is recommended that the Ministry of Finance and Economy provide professional training courses in line with labor market demands for persons involved in the economic assistance scheme. Furthermore, NAES has also identified the need for protocol enhancement regarding the empowerment of UJs receiving economic assistance prior to labor market entry, as well as cooperating with local self-government units on social issue resolution⁸.



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NEW BENEFICIARIES

per month have become part of the unemployment benefit scheme and an average of **468 per month have exited** the scheme during 2022.

7. Monitoring report on disbursement of economic assistance and the upholding of disabled persons rights.

8. Annual NAES Analysis 2019.

Employment programs

In 2019, prior to the NSES adoption, only two employment programs were available, namely:

1. On the implementation of internship programs for unemployed jobseekers possessing a higher education degree⁹;
2. On the payment of the participation fee in vocational training courses¹⁰.

In the framework of the implementation of the new Law “*On Employment Promotion*”, since late 2019, four employment promotion programs have been designed, specifically:

1. DCM No. 17, dated 15.1.2020, “*On Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of Employment Promotion Programs through Employment, On-The-Job Training and Internships*”, as amended. Upon the adoption of this DCM, DCM No. 873 above was repealed;
2. DCM No. 348, dated 29.4.2020, “*On the Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the Promotion Program through Self-employment*”, as amended;
3. DCM No. 608, dated 29.07.2020, “*On the Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the Employment Promotion Program through the Employment of Unemployed People as a result of COVID-19*”, as amended;
4. DCM No. 535, dated 08.07.2020 “*On the Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the Public Community Works Program*”.

The number of new EPP participants during 2021 was 4% lower than the previous year.



In conclusion, the designing of employment programs by assessing the needs of unemployed jobseekers, the implementation thereof and result monitoring following implementation have a direct impact on the involvement of rural women in the labor market and, consequently, on the improvement of their households' financial condition.

3.4 Budget significance

The budget for supporting gender equality in our country provided for in the National Strategy on Gender Equality (NSGE) 2016–2020, has been drafted based on four strategic goals, as well as on the activities reflected in the action plan, on the timing and frequency of its implementation. The planned budget for the implementation of the Strategy is reflected in various forms:

- The overall budget per year for each activity, specific objective, strategic goal and funding sources;
- Budget detailing according to activity, financing source and institutions responsible;
- The classification of the financing from the budget includes the funds that the LSGUs, political parties, the Parliament of Albania and other budgetary institutions, which should allocate for the implementation of this strategy. Most of the expenses are needed to cover the salaries of CRM coordinators and Local Gender Officers (hereinafter referred to as LGO).
- The funds allocated by the state budget and the funds needed to be secured from bilateral and multilateral donors have been identified, and agreements must be signed with potential donors for the financing of some of the activities.

9. DCM No. 873, dated 27.12.2006 “On the extent of financing, criteria and procedures for the implementation of internship programs for unemployed jobseekers who have completed an undergraduate degree in Albania or abroad”.

10. DCM No. 162, dated 21.03.2018 “On the payment of the participation fee in vocational training courses”.

The necessary expenses for the implementation of the National Action Plan (hereinafter referred to as NAP) are funded from the state budget, the budget of local government units, donor funds and sources of non-budgetary institutions, estimated to reach ALL 2,785 million. The main risks, which have had an effect on the successful implementation of the strategy, are related to both levels of government: Central Government (ministries responsible for the implementation of the NAP) and the Local Self-Government Units. For LGUs, these expenses are covered by the budget of the LSGUs and the Development Fund mainly in 2019-2020, for which there are no reports on the actual implementation of the respective budgets.

Table 2. The budget of the Strategy on Gender Equality and the financial gap in %¹¹

<i>000/ALL</i>					
Description	Total cost	Financed expenses	Uncovered expenses	Financed expenses in %	Financial gap in %
Local Self-Government Units	1,666,939.30	1,310,944	355,995	78.60%	21.40%

As regards local self-government units part to the present audit, their draft budgets do not include any separate item on the empowerment of rural women in such LGUs.

3.5 Entities cooperation during the audit process

During the audit process, the entities under audit, namely the National Agency for Employment and Skills and the Municipalities of Shkodra Kukës, Lezha, Dibra, Kruja, Elbasan, Kavaja, Divjaka, Lushnja, Berat, Pogradec, Vlora and Gjirokastra, generally responded to the requests for documentation by the audit team although at times the responses were delivered after the deadline expiry or the provided documentation was incomplete.

The documentation provided to the audit team and the responses obtained from the questionnaires during the field stage helped inform the audit questions, conclusion drawing and drafting of relevant recommendations based on the audit focus.

11. National Strategy on Gender Equality 2016 - 2020

4

AUDITED DETAILS

4.1 Risk assessment of the entity activities

The risks of entities' activities include the risks facing the audited institutions with regard to the performance of their responsibilities resulting from the activity in general by focusing on the policies, programs, processes and strategies followed by said institutions for the development of rural women by including them in employment programs as part of all management stages to ensure their integration into the labor market. The risks of entities' activities are analyzed and included in the following table.

Activity area	Risk description	Impact of identified risks	Risk level	Audit question
Employment program review.	Employment promotion programs may not have been built on gender and the needs of rural women may not have been assessed.	Rural women are not included in employment promotion programs and, therefore, do not benefit from such programs.	High	Are employment promotion programs diversified and implemented across the country for the employment of rural women?
	Employment promotion programs may not have any impact on women heads of household exiting the economic assistance scheme.	Women heads of household face difficulty with integrating into the labor market, which has a direct impact on household finances.		
Policy drafting in line with the needs of interest groups.	During policy or employment program designing, the responsible structures may not have taken into consideration the needs of women in rural areas. The responsible structures may not have conducted a needs assessment process prior to policy and program design.	Employment programs are designed as general and do not improve the employment rate of women, particularly rural women.		

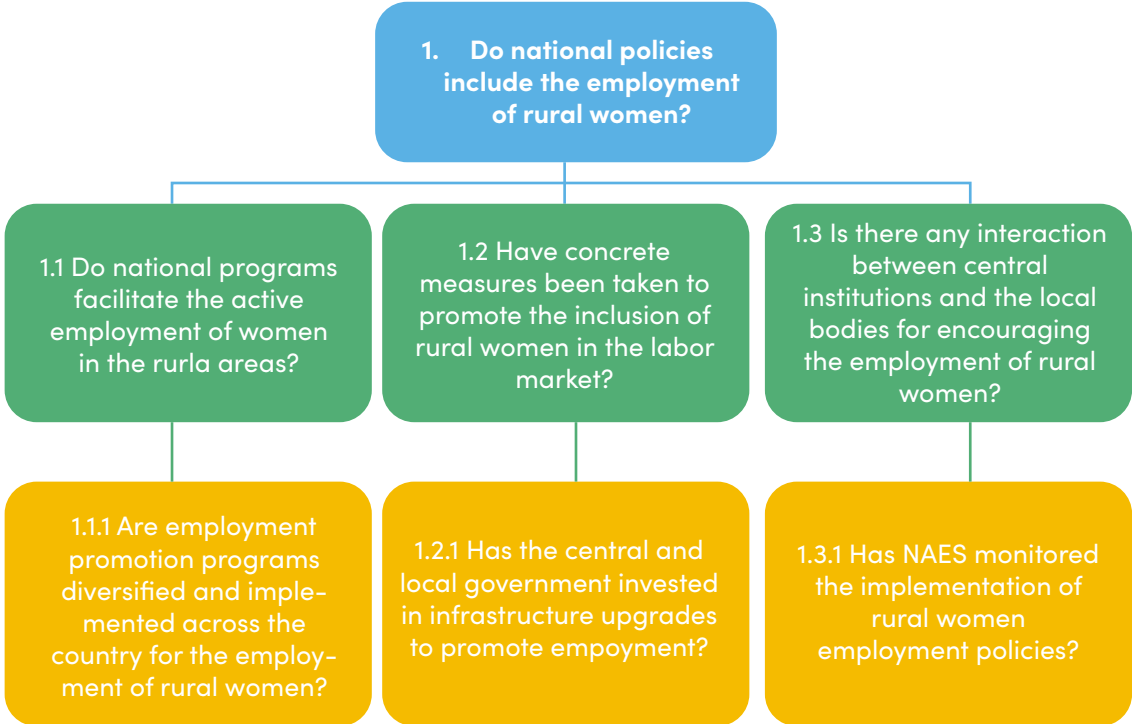
Activity area	Risk description	Impact of identified risks	Risk level	Audit question
Infrastructure to reduce employment obstacles.	Investments in infrastructure (crèches, kindergartens, public transport) may constitute a key factor in the promotion of rural women's employment.	The lack of conditions or transport has a direct impact on the employment of women and, consequently, on household welfare.	High	Has the central and local government invested in infrastructure upgrades to promote employment?
Interaction between the responsible structures.	The mechanism of cooperation among central and local-level structures may not have been established or may not be effective.	The ineffective cooperation affects the identification of the situation and needs of women in rural areas.	High	Has NAES monitored the implementation of rural women employment policies?
Result monitoring.	NAES may not have carried out an employment program implementation monitoring focusing on gender equality and including rural women.	The lack of gender-based monitoring affects decision-making, such as employment program design or imposition of measures that will result in improvement.		

4.2 Audit objectives

The main objective of the audit titled *"Gender equality and the empowerment of rural women through labor market involvement"* consisted in the review of policies and their effectiveness in terms of the quality performance of the services provided to promote the employment of rural women, focusing primarily on the role and responsibilities of the audited entities with respect to the achievement of their institutional goals. Therefore, the audit team sought to conduct an unbiased and objective review of the institutions under audit with regard to:

1. The review of employment promotion programs to assess whether such programs were diversified and tailored to specific regions based on gender, as well as whether they were effectively and efficiently implemented across the country by ensuring gender equality;
2. The review of employment promotion programs for the category receiving economic assistance and unemployment assistance to facilitate their exit from the economic assistance scheme;
3. The review of the provision of conditions facilitating the employment of rural women, such as investments in public services, crèches or kindergartens, as well as transportation from rural areas to job centers;
4. Cooperation and coordination between LGUs and regional/local NAES' on the employment of women, including rural women. Effectivity of the cooperation agreement between NAES and LGUs.
5. Monitoring of employment policy implementation and usage of process-generated information in terms of goal accomplishment.

4.3 Audit questions



4.4 Audit scope

The performance audit titled “Gender equality and the empowerment of rural women through labor market involvement” sought to review employment promotion programs to establish whether they include the employment of rural women. Furthermore, the audit assessed whether the responsible structures at central and local level cooperate with each other. The audit took place in 13 LGUs, namely the Municipalities of Shkodra, Kukës, Lezha, Dibra, Kruja, Elbasan, Kavaja, Divjaka, Lushnja, Berat, Pogradec, Vlora, Gjirokastra and the National Agency for Employment and Skills. The audited period was 2019-2023.

In reference to Economic Assistance (AE), the audit team focused only on reviewing the impact of employment programs on women exiting the Economic Assistance scheme instead of auditing the actual scheme.

5

ELABORATION OF AUDIT QUESTIONS

MAIN QUESTION

Do national policies include the employment of rural women?

AUDIT MESSAGE

The National Agency for Skills and Employment must intensify its cooperation with Local Self-Government Units in order to identify the needs of rural women and, afterward, to draft employment promotion programs and assess their potential and skills in different fields, such as agriculture, social services, education, technology, etc.

The employment promotion programs in terms of diversity and contribution of every community member in establishing a strong and stable society designed and implemented for women in 2020–2023, are general and do not provide a comprehensive overview of the regions and in reference to needs assessment. The local infrastructure does not promote the inclusion of rural women in the labor market as rural areas lack nurseries, while the kindergarten service is not provided by all rural administrative units and there is a lack of transport from the central unit to other administrative units of municipalities.

5.1 Do national programs facilitate the active employment of women in rural areas?

In our country, the role of rural women continues to face a lack of promotion and support. Although there have been numerous projects and initiatives to strengthen the position and decision-making role of women in rural development, their effectiveness has been insufficient. The empowerment of rural women in Albania should be supported through a more helpful climate, with actual and long-term initiatives focusing on the gaps and on the role that the woman in rural areas should have. Rural labor markets do not offer many opportunities to women. Women are discouraged from searching

for a job that is not farm-related and work primarily in agriculture. Actually, a high percentage of women contribute to family chores, meaning that they are the ones who perform the unpaid labor in the agricultural economy of the home. The addressing of obstacles that rural women and girls face constitutes one of the priorities of the Albanian government, as an integral part of the undertaking to increase gender equality and social inclusion.

In March 2019, the new Law No. 15/2019, dated 13.03.2019 “*On Employment Promotion*” was adopted. The Law on Employment Promotion paved the way for the restructuring of the National Employment Service at the National Agency for Employment and Skills, the reconceptualization of relations with employers, the establishment of a labor market information system, etc.

Based on the Law, public employment policies include employment services and active and passive labor market programs, which aim to promote the employment of unemployed jobseekers, and the integration and social inclusion of special groups. The law provides for the implementation of new employment promotion programs that include the engagement of unemployed jobseekers in different employment programs¹², such as: on-the-job training, internships, self-employment, community employment, for which subsidies are foreseen at a set cost percentage for: compulsory health and social insurance, salaries, work environment furnishing and reasonable adjustment, transport to and from work, crèches and kindergartens for children in charge, respectively according to programs.

Employment promotion programs have been approved by the DCM on Employment Promotion, and they have been subject to constant changes over the years according to the government’s priorities for increasing the employment level.

Employment promotion programs are in line with the state employment policies to support jobseekers, and employers to open new sustainable job positions. They include the involvement of unemployed jobseekers in various employment programs, public positions, self-employment, vocational internships or on-the-job training programs, for which a given percentage of cost subsidy is provided in accordance with the relevant legal acts.

The employment promotion policies in our country are implemented by way of the National Agency for Employment and Skills.

- Specifically, for the audited period, the National Agency for Employment and Skills has implemented the four following DCMs to provide support to unemployed jobseekers through active Employment Promotion programs:
- Decision No. 17, dated 15.01.2020 “On Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of Employment Promotion Programs through Employment, On-the-job Training and Internships”, as amended.
- Decision No. 348, dated 29.04.2020, “On the Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the Promotion Program through Self-employment”;
- Decision No. 535, dated 8.7.2020 “On the Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the *Public Community Works Program*”;

Decision No. 608, dated 29.07.2020, “On the Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the Employment Promotion Program through the Employment of Unemployed People as a result of COVID-19”, as amended.

12. Article 23, paragraph 4, sets forth: Secondary legislation acts pursuant to Law No. 7995, dated 20.9.1995, “On Employment Promotion” shall remain in effect until new secondary legislation pursuant to this law is adopted, unless they contradict the provisions of this law.”

Employment promotion programs have been designed to also address the needs of disadvantaged categories of unemployed jobseekers.

- The first DCM foresees the implementation of employment promotion programs for:
 - employment program, on-the-job training, and internships.
- The purpose of such programs is to provide employment, training and internships to unemployed jobseekers who have difficulty entering the labor market. In such programs, the needs and profile of the jobseeker must be tailored to the job vacancy requirements offered by the employer.
- The second DCM (Self-employment program) establishes the procedures, criteria and rules on the implementation of the self-employment program, which aims at promoting self-employment and assisting jobseekers to undertake new ventures and businesses.

The third DCM (Community works program) aims at providing jobs and services to the benefit of the community by training jobseekers in local and disadvantaged geographic areas. Each DCM (Final provisions) establishes that the assessment of the program's impact shall be carried out every four years by the ministry responsible for employment issues, through experts or organizations with experience in this field. This deadline is yet to be met and, consequently, no assessment of the impact of the employment promotion programs has been conducted. Regardless, the NAES should, in the framework of the internal institutional evaluation, carry out the process of tracking employment promotion program beneficiaries through its structures with special focus on the estimation of the employability rate post-promotion and measurement of the relevance level of such programs in reference to occupation type and current salary. The process will be actualized by way of annual reports on program participant tracking. Since 2022, the NAES has commenced the process of participation in the employment promotion programs and has issued only one report on the post-promotion tracking of all employment promotion program beneficiaries who participated in the programs during 2020, carried out in 2022 and published in 2023.

The participant tracking process under DCM No. 17 and DCM No. 608 pertains to programs commenced in 2020 and carried out by the NAES through the Active and Passive Program Sector and LOANES in each region. The survey/tracking stage commenced in March 2022 concluded in July 2022. The process was based on Article 15 of the Regulation with Protocol No. 6, dated 21.10.2020 "On the Implementation of the Employment Promotion Programs, On-The-Job Training and Internships, as amended, (Regulation of DCM No. 17), Article 15, of the Regulation with Protocol No. 5, dated 09.10.2020, "On the Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the Employment Promotion Program through the Employment of Unemployed People as a result of COVID-19", as amended (Regulation of DCM No. 608), defining that six months upon the program completion, the Regional Employment Structure shall perform the tracking of the status of participants in employment, through tax system or phone calls, as well as Article 9 of the Regulation of DCM No. 17, defining that the tracking process should also include non-participant candidates from the control group (at least 25% of the number of program participants). Firstly, the template of the employment status tracking of participants 6 months upon program completion was created. The tracking template included verification through the tax system or employment status calls and provided a number of details on program review. Such data would be collected and processed by way of a database and would then be used to measure program effectiveness. The APLMP Sector in cooperation with the Directorate of Planning and Performance processed the data and drafted the tracking report. In order to carry out the activity regarding gender issues, NAES' focus was solely on assessing the level of employability by gender for each indicator.

As per the above, the Tracking Report on EPP participants during 2020, which was finalized in 2022, provides the tracking results disaggregated by gender (females/males) for each indicator, showcasing that registered girls and women have a higher level of employability following program completion in comparison with boys and men.

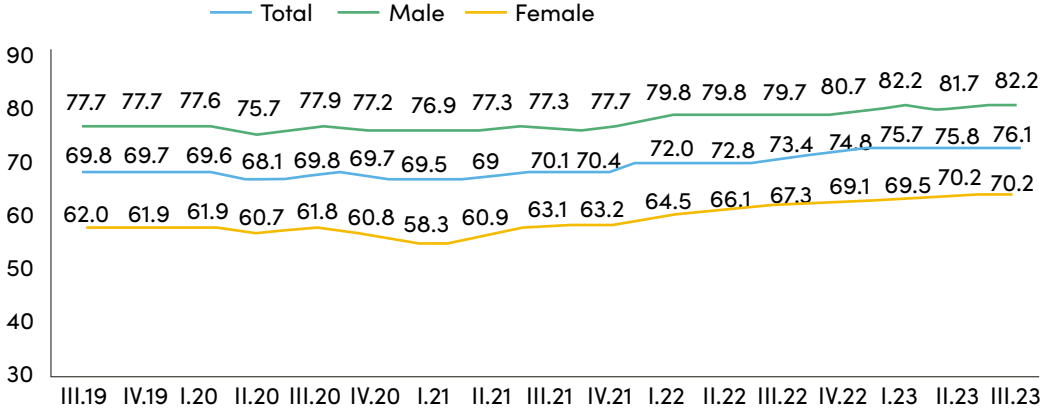
Currently, the NAES is working on the second tracking report that will provide the results of EPP participants' employability during 2021. **However, based on the interviews with the responsible structures at NAES and the analysis of the provided data, it was found that the tracking results could not be disaggregated further; therefore, they do not provide any information on the employment rate of rural women.** The NAES should measure and analyze the level of employment resulting from such programs in order to assess their effectiveness in rural areas. The economic empowerment of women in rural areas is critical to the country's development, the strengthening of their role in rural development and to the rural community. In order to overcome the challenges of gender inequality, rural women should be provided with access to services and financing in order to obtain information about everything concerning technological innovations in the field of agriculture, and to develop their skills in traditional culinary, guest house running, etc.

Year 2023

In reference to the official INSTAT data published in the third quarter of 2023, the employment rate for the population aged 15-64 years is 67.7%. During that quarter, the total number of employed persons increased by 1.6% compared with the third quarter of 2022, and by 0.5% compared with the second quarter of 2023. The official unemployment rate in Albania reached 10.5% in the third quarter of 2023. In the third quarter of 2023, the official unemployment rate in Albania in the population aged above 15 years is 10.5%, marking a decrease of 0.03 percentage points compared with the same quarter of 2022, and has dropped by 0.2 percentage points compared with the previous quarter.

In the third quarter of 2023, the labor force participation rate in the population aged 15-64 years is 76.1%. Compared with the third quarter of 2022, the labor force participation rate is 2.7 percentage points higher, while compared with the previous quarter it increased by 0.3 percentage points.

Figure : Labour Force Participation Rate, population aged 15 to 64. Q.3/19-Q.3/23



Source: INSTAT

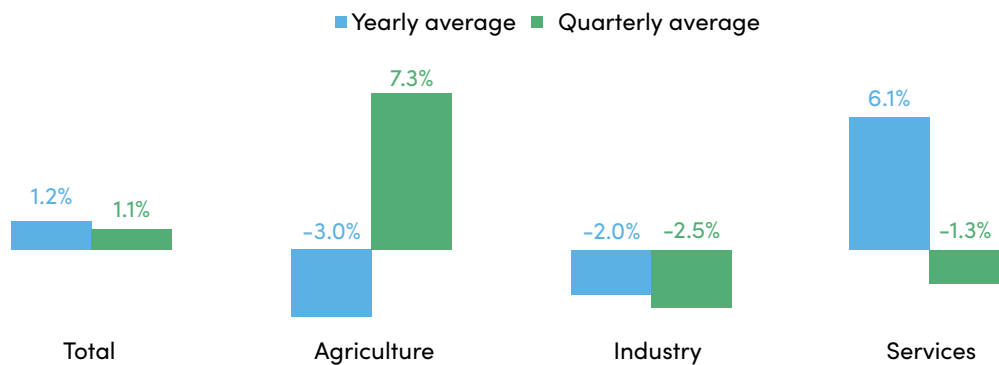
For women, the labor force participation rate is 70.2%, while for men this indicator is 82.2%. For men, the labor force participation rate is 12.1 percentage points higher than women's. Compared with the same quarter of 2022, the women's labor force participation rate has increased by 2.8 percentage points, while men's rate has increased by 2.5 percentage points.

In the third quarter of 2023, the labor force participation rate in youth aged 15-29 years is 57.5%. This indicator has increased by 2.6 percentage points compared with the third quarter of 2022 and by 0.8 percentage points compared with the second quarter of 2023. In the third quarter of 2023, the labor force participation rate in the population aged 30-64 years is 84.6%.

Employment

During the third quarter of 2023, the employment rate in the population aged 15–64 years is 67.7%. The number of employed persons in the population aged above 15 years increased by 1.2% from the third quarter of 2022 to the third quarter of 2023. In annual terms, employment dropped by 3.0% in the agriculture sector and by 2.0% in the industry sector, while increasing by 6.1% in the services sector. Compared with the preceding quarter, in the third quarter of 2023 the employment rate in the population aged above 15 years increased by 1.1%. Employment rate decreased by 2.5% in the industry sector and by 1.3% in the services sector, while increasing by 7.3% in the agriculture sector.

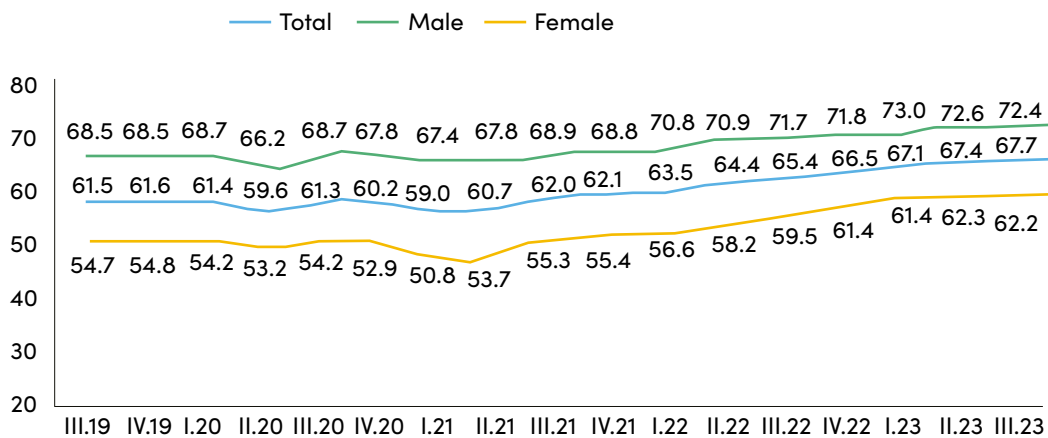
Figure 2: Labour Force Participation Rate, population aged 15 to 64. Q.3/19–Q.3/23



Source: INSTAT

The employment rate in men aged 15–64 years is 73.4%, while for women it is 62.2%. Compared with the same quarter of 2022, men’s employment rate increased by 1.7 percentage points, while women’s rate increased by 2.7 percentage points. In the third quarter of 2023, the employment rate in youth is 44.8%. The youth employment rate has increased by 1.1 percentage points compared with the third quarter of 2022 and by 0.7 percentage points compared with the second quarter of 2023. In the third quarter of 2023, the employment rate in the population aged 30–64 years is 78.2%.

Figure 3: Employment Rate, population aged 15 to 64. Q.3/19–Q.3/23

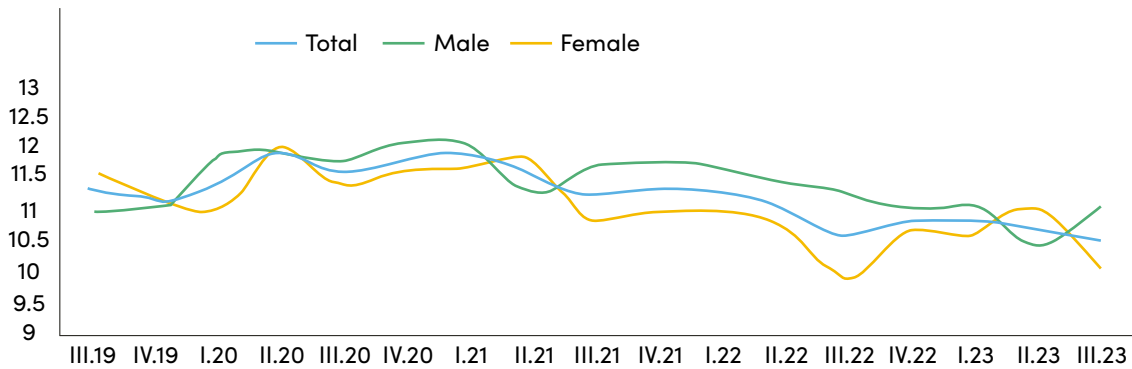


Source: INSTAT

Unemployment

The official unemployment rate in Albania reached 10.5% in the third quarter of 2023. The official unemployment rate decreased by 0.03 percentage points compared with the third quarter of 2022 and by 0.2 percentage points compared with the second quarter of 2023. Men's official unemployment rate is 10.1%, while women's is 11.1%. Compared with the same quarter of 2022, men's unemployment rate increased by 0.2 percentage points, while women's rate decreased by 0.2 percentage points.

Figure 4: Official Unemployment Rate, population aged 15 to 64. Q.3/19-Q.3/23



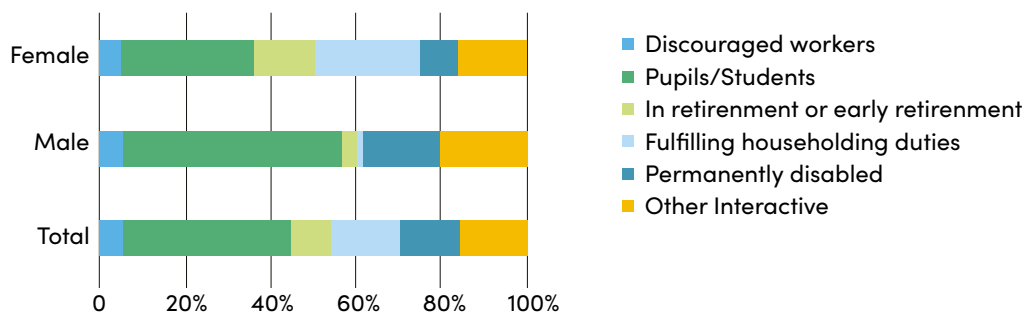
Source: INSTAT

The official unemployment rate in youth aged 15–29 years is 22.0%. Compared with the third quarter of 2022, the unemployment rate in youth increased by 1.6 percentage points. Compared with the second quarter of 2023, this indicator decreased by 0.3 percentage points. The unemployment rate for the population aged 30–64 years is 7.6%. In annual terms, this indicator decreased by 0.1 percentage points and compared with the previous quarter, it decreased by 0.1 percentage points.

Economically inactive population

During the third quarter of 2023, 16.4% of the economically inactive and working age population (15–64 years) were performing domestic duties, 9.7% were in retirement or early retirement, while 13.4% were permanently disabled. During the third quarter of 2023, 4.7% of the economically inactive population (aged 15–64 years) stated that they were not looking for a job as they believed that there were no jobs available; hence, they are categorized as discouraged unemployed.

Figure 5: Official Unemployment Rate, population aged 15 to 64. Q.3/19-Q.3/23

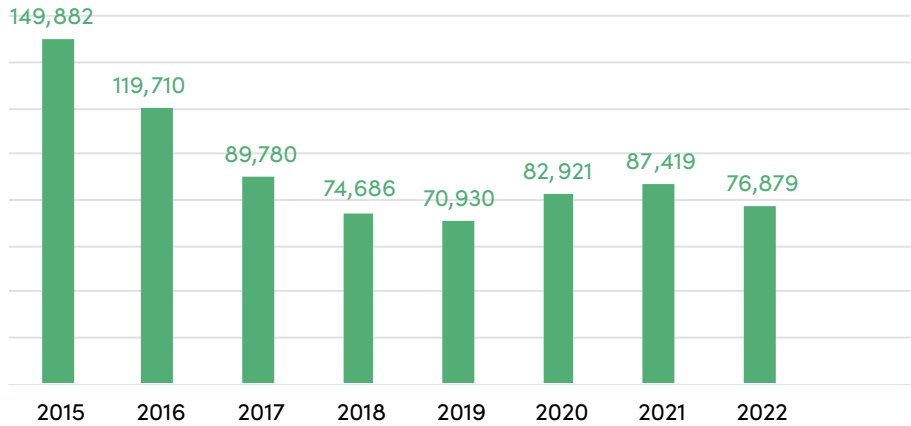


Source: INSTAT

Youth aged 15-29 years who stated that they were students or trainees comprise 69.6% of economically inactive youth. Among the economically inactive youth aged 15-29 years, 2.5% are categorized as discouraged unemployed. In the population aged 30-64 years, this group constitutes 22.0% of the economically inactive population among this age group.

Meanwhile, as regards unemployed jobseekers registered at Employment Offices to benefit from NAES programs (in reference to the annual analyses of NAES for 2019-2022), it results that the recorded unemployment rates are as follows:

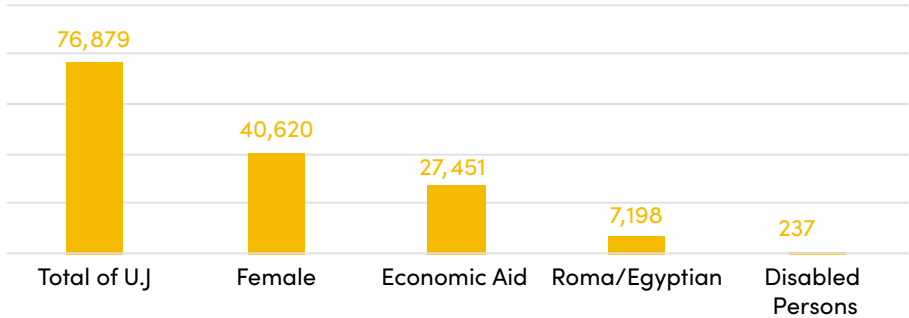
Figure 6: The annual average of unemployment registered in years



Source: NAES

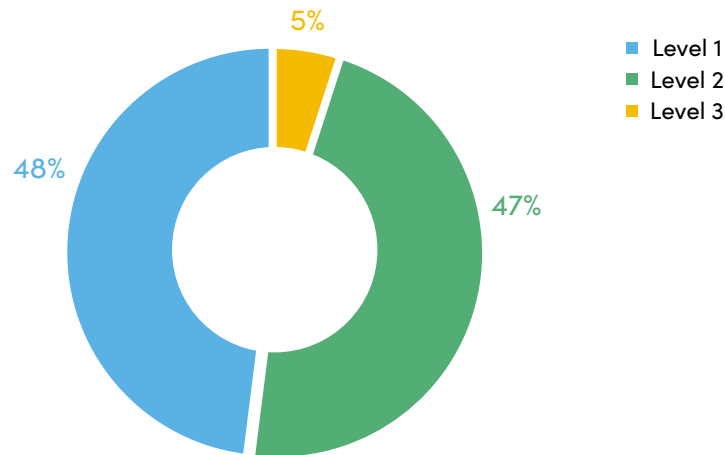
During 2022, the average number of UJs registered at Employment Offices was 76,879. It is noted that a considerable part of the UJ register comprises persons included in one or more special groups, with more than half being women.

Figure 7: Unemployment (Stock) 2022



Source: NAES

The process of UJ integration into the labor market faces various obstacles regarding the skills, age, social status, etc. As a result, about 95% of unemployed jobseekers are identified as being in the second and third employability level.



Source: NAES

Based on the analysis of the UJ register by age and education, it is noted that approximately 48% of the UJ total are above 45 years of age; 55% have completed only the 9-year education, which complicates their integration into the labor market. This trend is more pronounced among special groups.

During 2022, from the total of new beneficiaries (2813) of employment promotion programs, the following special categories have benefited:

- Persons with disabilities (PwD) 24 persons
- Roma/Egyptians 213 persons or 76% more than in 2021
- Economic assistance (EA) 543 persons or 167% more than in 2021
- Unemployment benefit 127 persons

During this year, the NAES has continued implementing DCM No. 348 on Self-employment, which, in reference to the institutional analyses, has been one of the most sought after programs by unemployed jobseekers. In 2022, the program benefitted 242 unemployed jobseekers or roughly 5 times more than in 2021, when there were 44 beneficiaries.

At the same time, during 2022, the Public Community Works program commenced in 2021 continued. It is a dedicated program tailored to the difficult categories and long-term unemployed jobseekers who find it difficult integrating into the labor market. The number of this program’s beneficiaries was 1060 persons or about 5 times greater than the number of beneficiaries in 2021.

The referencing data and their analysis are for women in general, and the used indicators analyzed by NAES are not divided into rural women or urban women.

Employment Promotion Programs

Year 2019

For the January - December 2019 period, the implementation of the promotion programs in 2019 benefitted 600 entities and 5,338 individuals, of which 325 entities and 2,749 individuals had applied in the previous year.

If we were to look at the implementation of programs in 2019, the DCM-allocated fund realization would be as follows:

DCM	Number of projects	Number of unemployed jobseekers	Confirmed fund for the budget year
27	10	26	3.228.919
47	87	1143	101,961,768
48	167	1282	183,825,400
64	0	0	16,008
199	14	20	2,660,245
248	47	58	11,560,888
873	242	1379	49,717,406
162	33	1430	21,766,031
TOTAL	600	5338	374,736,665

Source: NAES

If we look at the realization according to the DCM when comparing the realized fund, the greatest share is occupied by DCM No. 48 programs at 49% of the total, followed by DCM No. 47 programs at 27% of the total. The analysis of the involvement of unemployed jobseekers in employment promotion programs by special group results as follows: 3,045 female UJs or 57% of total participants,

- About 6% from Economic Assistance,
- About 8% from Former economic assistance beneficiaries,
- 17% long-term unemployed jobseekers,
- 1% Roma, 3% Egyptians
- 2% Persons with Disabilities
- more than 1% returning emigrants.

Upon the entry into force of the new Law No. 15/2019 "On Employment Promotion", of the eight abovementioned DCMs implemented in the framework of the EPPs in 2019, only DCM No. 873 and DCM No.162 were implemented in 2019. As a result, the fund allocated to such programs was reviewed. In the Monitorable Indicator Card the inclusion of 1,700 unemployed jobseekers was foreseen, resulting in the inclusion of 2,589 unemployed jobseekers in the EPP.

Unemployment Benefit

Pursuant to DCM No. 161/2018 "On the Payment of Unemployment Benefits", as well as Instruction No. 17/2018 pursuant thereto, the follow-up and monitoring of the unemployment benefits was carried out through all communication channels, such as telephone, e-mail and field visits. During the first 6-months of 2019, the unemployment benefit fund increased as a result of the closure of betting companies, as well as from the increase in the nation-wide minimum wage. In the unemployment benefit scheme during the 12-month period of 2019, an average of 521 monthly beneficiaries were added, with the largest share occupied by persons laid off due to company downsizing or employment

contract termination. As a result of the treatment term expiration, an average of 490 beneficiaries were excluded from the unemployment benefit scheme each month or roughly 85% of the monthly average total. About 885 unemployed jobseekers were employed from the unemployment benefit scheme during the 12-month period, with the largest share occupied by Regional Employment Offices in Tirana, Vlora, Elbasan and Korça. Moreover, during 2019, 25 UJs were included in the EPP from the unemployment benefit category, and 48 UJs attended vocational training courses.

Year 2020

The implementation of employment promotion programs for the January - December 2020 period benefitted 751 entities and 4,146 individuals, of which 171 entities and 1,319 individuals had applied in the previous year. If we were to look at the implementation of programs in 2020, the DCM-allocated fund realization would be as follows:

DCM	Number of projects	Number of unemployed jobseekers	Confirmed fund for the budget year
DCM No. 17 (employment program)	162	341	510,363
DCM 17 (Program 2 On-the-job-training)	90	273	2,221,986
DCM 17 (Program 3 Internships)	85	491	1,279,678
DCM 608, (4-month program)	3	30	606,265
DCM 608 (8-month program)	125	1129	26,381,493
DCM 608 (12-month program/Informality)	115	563	792,957
DCM No. 873	161	171	26,784,626
DCM 162	10	602	11,854,181
TOTAL	751	4146	70,431,549.00

Source: NAES

Of the total EPP participants in 2020, approximately 67% were female and 52% were youth aged 16-26 years.

New Employment Promotion Programs

For the purpose of implementing new programs in 2020 and in line with the adoption of new DCMs, the NAES has conducted several staff trainings in relation to employment promotion program packages at every Local Employment Office. In late August 2020, the procedures for the implementation of new DCMs on employment promotion commenced. During that year, 580 entities and 2,827 unemployed jobseekers joined the new EPPs. About 58% of entities were included in the programs of DCM No. 17, while 61% of beneficiary unemployed jobseekers participated in the programs of DCM No. 608.

Year 2021

During 2021, the implementation of the programs of DCM No. 17 and DCM No. 608 continued, and DCM No. 535 "On Public Community Works" and DCM No. 348 "On Self-employment" were implemented for the first time. During that year, 1,610 UJs were employed and self-employed through employment promotion programs. During 2021, 3,184 Unemployed Jobseekers from allowance-support schemes (about 47% of the unemployment benefit beneficiaries database and 4% of the economic assistance beneficiaries database) were employed.

At the end of 2021, of the total 45,125 female unemployed jobseekers registered, 11,677 found employment, or 14% less than in the previous year. Whereas, of the 33,340 Head of household UJs, only 7,699 found employment or 22% more than in the previous year.

Year 2022

For the January - December 2022 period, the implementation of the promotion programs in 2022 benefitted **1,278** entities and **4,344** individuals, of which **477** entities and **1,531** individuals had applied in 2021 (carried over). If we were to look at the implementation of programs in 2022, the DCM-allocated fund realization would be as follows:

DCM	Number of projects	Number of unemployed jobseekers	Spend fund for the budget year (in million ALL)
DCM 17 (Program 1 Employment)	266	523	43.9
DCM 17 (Program 2 On-the-job-training)	150	338	35.4
DCM 17 (Program 3 Internships)	229	929	59.2
DCM 608, (4-month program)	9	20	1.8.
DCM 608 (8-month program)	106	515	69.2
DCM 608 (12-month program/Informality)	163	466	35.5
DCM 535 (Community works)	69	1267	144.5
DCM 348 (Self-employment program).	286	286	58.8
TOTAL	1,278	4,344	448.2

Source: NAES

Of the total EPP participants in 2022, approximately 59% were female and 41% were youth aged 16-26 years.

	Carried over programs		New programs		Total implemented programs	
	Amount	%	Amount	%	Amount	%
EPP participants of them	1531	100%	2813	100%	4344	100%
Female	800	52%	1773	63%	2573	59%
16-29-year-old youth from	661	43%	1133	40%	1794	41%
unemployment benefit from economic assistance	50	3%	127	5%	177	4%
Roma/Egyptians	149	10%	543	19%	692	16%
	91	6%	213	8%	304	7%
PwD	24	2%	24	1%	48	1%
Returning emigrants	0	0%	17	1%	17	0%

Source: NAES

New Employment promotion programs (new beneficiaries of 2022)

During 2022, 801 entities and 2,813 unemployed jobseekers joined the new EPPs. About 54% of entities were included in the programs of DCM No. 17, while 10% of beneficiary unemployed jobseekers participated in the programs of DCM No. 608. About 30% of participant entities were established and supported by the self-employment program.

DCM	No. of projects	No. of participants
DCM 17 (Program 1 Employment)	170	387
DCM 17 (Program 2 On-the-job-training)	115	275
DCM 17 (Program 3 Internships)	144	637
DCM 608, (4-month program)	2	3
DCM 608 (8-month program)	23	53
DCM 608 (12-month program/Informality)	57	156
DCM 535 (Community works)	48	1,060
DCM 348 (Self-employment program).	242	242
Total	801	2813

Source: NAES

About 59% of the number of participants are located in the regions of Tirana, Durrës, Fier, Elbasan and Shkodra.

Regions	No. of participants	%
Berat	163	6%
Dibra	139	5%
Durrës	318	11%
Elbasan	256	9%
Fier	251	9%
Gjirokastra	237	8%
Korça	149	5%
Kukës	119	4%
Lezha	103	4%
Shkodra	304	11%
Tirana	541	19%
Vlora	233	8%
Total	2,813	100%

Source: NAES

The largest number of entities that applied to participate in DCM No. 17 (employment and on-the-job training) chose the following economic activities:

- Trade;
- Accommodation and food service;
- Processing industry.

Internships were carried out primarily at entities delivering administrative and support services, health and social protection activities. Entities participating in DCM No. 608 operate primarily in the processing industry, accommodation and food service, construction and trade. Entities and NGOs operating in accommodation and food service, organization and exterritorial bodies, as well as other service provision activities were included in the “Community Works” programs. The beneficiaries of the “Self-employment” program focused on economic activities such as: trade, other service provision activities, accommodation and food service, arts, entertainment and recreation.

Economic activities	DCM No. 17 (Employment)	DCM No. 17 (Program 2 - On-the-job training)	DCM No. 17 (Program 3 - Internships)	DCM No. 348 (Self-employment program)	DCM No. 535 (Community works)	DCM No. 608 (12 months)	DCM No. 608 (4 months)	DCM No. 608 (8 months)
Accommodation and food service	21%	34%	3%	10%	0%	28%	0%	26%
Financial and insurance activities	5%	0%	5%	0%	4%	0%	0%	9%
Other professional, scientific and technical activities	2%	0%	1%	7%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Other service provision activities	21%	32%	13%	38%	17%	7%	0%	17%
Exterritorial organization and bodies activities	1%	0%	6%	0%	15%	0%	0%	0%
Education	1%	0%	7%	1%	2%	5%	0%	0%
Arts, entertainment and recreation	1%	0%	1%	11%	2%	0%	0%	0%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishery	1%	1%	0%	2%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Water supply	0%	0%	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Mining industry	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
Processing industry	9%	12%	3%	1%	0%	35%	100%	26%
Information and communication	1%	0%	0%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%
Construction	3%	3%	1%	1%	0%	5%	0%	4%
Health and social work activities	7%	2%	26%	7%	10%	2%	0%	0%

Administrative and support services	1%	0%	30%	2%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Transport and storage	1%	1%	1%	0%	0%	2%	0%	0%
Retail and wholesale trade; motor vehicle and motorcycle repair	26%	16%	3%	20%	0%	14%	0%	17%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: NAES

Categories such as women, unemployment benefits, economic assistance and Roma/Egyptians have been included more in the program of DCM No. 535, followed by the programs of DCM No. 17. Unemployed jobseekers with disabilities have benefitted primarily from the employment and internship programs under DCM No. 17 (86% of total).

	Total	Female	Unemployment benefit	Economic assistance	Roma/Egyptians	PwD
DCM No. 17 (Employment)	12%	12%	4%	5%	7%	65%
DCM No. 17 (On-the-job-training)	8%	8%	1%	3%	2%	2%
DCM No. 17 (Internships)	21%	27%	10%	10%	2%	19%
DCM 608, (4-month program)	0%	0%	1%	0%	1%	0%
DCM 608 (8-month program)	12%	11%	22%	1%	2%	4%
DCM No. 608 (Informality)	11%	11%	2%	3%	2%	0%
DCM 535 (Community works)	29%	26%	59%	78%	81%	8%
DCM No. 348 (Self-employment)	7%	5%	1%	1%	3%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Source: NAES

Unemployment Benefit

During 2022, there was a noticeable decrease in the number of beneficiaries of unemployment benefits from 2,914 beneficiary UJs in January 2022, to 2,307 UJs in December 2022. In the unemployment benefit scheme during the 12-month period of 2022, an average of 418 monthly beneficiaries were added, with the largest share occupied by persons laid off due to company downsizing or employment contract termination. As a result of the treatment term expiration, an average of 468 beneficiaries were excluded from the unemployment benefit scheme each month.

Based on the benefit period, the largest number corresponds to the 12-month benefit period. This is due to two reasons: the contribution period of more than 10 years and the age group of above 55 years for women and above 60 years for men. In addition, both age groups continue to occupy the largest share of total unemployment benefits.

During February 2022, DCM No. 71 “On the Establishment of Procedures, Documentation and Benefit Amount for Employees and Former Employees of Ballsh Oil Refinery” was adopted. The decision defines the benefit amount for the relevant category at 100% of the minimum wage and the social and health contribution payments.

Upon the entry into force of the decision during the February - March 2023 period, about 450 applicants were registered at Mallakstra, Fier, Berat, Vlora and Tirana employment offices. Of the total number of applicants, about 435 unemployed jobseekers were eligible beneficiaries.

At the end of 2022, the NAES drafted DCM No. 646, dated 5.10.2022 “On the procedures, criteria and rules on the implementation of vocational training programs through the financial support provided, as per the competition procedures, to the vocational training courses organized by public or private vocational training institutions.” The DCM aims at the provision of advanced courses to match the economic development priorities. Priorities comprise the delivery of IT courses, such as coding, programming, cybersecurity, robotics, etc. at a 50% discount for jobseekers and 100% discount for unemployed jobseekers.

The audit did not show that vocational training courses were held in rural areas. Therefore, no rural women, who attended vocational training courses, were identified from these areas. The NAES possesses data on vocational training course participants according to their relevant municipality of residence. Vocational Training Centers are localized in the major cities and, based on demands and specific needs, they have also provided courses in smaller municipalities in cooperation with Vocational Upper Secondary Schools and businesses.

For the northeastern region, vocational training courses are provided by the Mobile Vocational Training Center, which delivers courses in several local units in the region. Upon the request of the audit team, the NAES issued gender-based data (women/men) for all administrative units only for the fourth quarter of 2023.

The UJ register by gender, November 2023

Rural areas								Urban areas							
Region	Municipality	Total	Women	Men	women % of the total	Women heads of household	women heads of household % of the total	Total	Women	Men	Women heads of household	women % of the total	women heads of household % of the total	total women	% of rural vs. urban women
Berat	Berat	814	402	412	49.4	112.0	13.8	151	76	75	15	50.3	9.9	478	15.9
Dibra	Dibra	1,557	822	735	52.8	75.0	4.8	301	177	124	14	58.8	4.7	999	17.7
Durrës	Kruja	483	241	242	49.9	29.0	6.0	1,501	815	686	123	54.3	8.2	1,056	77.2
Elbasan	Elbasan	2,230	1,290	940	57.8	242.0	10.9	336	208	128	31	61.9	9.2	1,498	13.9
Fier	Lushnja	1,388	776	612	55.9	141.0	10.2	800	455	345	53	56.9	6.6	1,231	37.0
Gjirokastra	Gjirokastra	1,422	705	717	49.6	114.0	8.0	391	208	183	19	53.2	4.9	913	22.8
Korça	Pogradec	1,358	725	633	53.4	137.0	10.1	609	312	297	43	51.2	7.1	1,037	30.1
Lezha	Lezha	586	360	226	61.4	91.0	15.5	609	369	240	60	60.6	9.9	729	50.6
Shkodra	Shkodra	1,938	994	944	51.3	143.0	7.4	639	372	267	34	58.2	5.3	1,366	27.2
Tirana	Kavaja	1,302	715	587	54.9	146.0	11.2	632	362	270	47	57.3	7.4	1,077	33.6
Vlora	Vlora	2,161	1,235	926	57.1	261.0	12.1	81	51	30	11	63.0	13.6	1,286	4.0
Kukës	Kukës	3,828	1,961	1,867	51.2	219.0	5.7	352	217	135	20	61.6	5.7	2,178	10.0
Fier	Divjaka	131	67	64	51.1	8.0	6.1	578	319	259	46	55.2	8.0	386	82.6
	Total	19,198	10,293	8,905	53.6	1,718.0	8.9	6,980	3,941	3,039	516	56.5	7.4	14,234	27.7

Source: NAES/Authors: Audit team.

Based on the analysis of the data above, it was noted that the majority of registered UJs reside in rural areas as opposed to urban areas. Kruja Municipality is the only outlier, with UJs residing primarily in urban areas.

This high rate of unemployment recorded in rural areas is a clear indication that the challenges faced by Albanian women in rural areas, such as: combatting gender stereotypes, gender inequality, preventing all forms of violence against them, accessing health and social services, etc., should first be identified and then combatted.

If we intend to consider a sustainable development of the country, improving and mitigating such challenges or increasing resources to ensure the economic empowerment of women, should not be viewed only as a benefit to them because through their empowerment, women enhance the finances of their households and contribute to the development of the whole country.

Based on the annual reviews for 2019–2022 and the Reports according to strategic priorities, expected outcomes (sub-objectives) and activities carried out by the NAES, employment promotion programs may be considered successful in terms of the gender aspect, mainly because they helped increase the % of women beneficiaries compared to men; however, despite this achievement, the gender gap in employment persists. In reference to the official data on employment and unemployment in the country, we note that there has been no data analysis based on the rural and urban division. Moreover, it should be mentioned that a considerable number of Albanian citizens have left the country in the recent years. According to INSTAT¹³, Albania's population as of 1 January 2023 is 2,761,785 residents, marking a decrease of 1.1% compared with 1 January 2022. The number of immigrants in 2022 was 13,963, 51.9% more in comparison to the previous year. The number of emigrants was 46,460 persons. 10.5% more as compared to 2021. Net migration (difference between immigrants and emigrants) marked a slight improvement compared to the previous year: from -32,853 to -32,497 residents in 2022. According to recent figures, the emigration flow was concerning during 2018–2023, marking a significant decrease in and affecting the population of the majority of regions in the country (without accounting for those who left due to asylum and "American Lottery", with Albanians being the first in Europe as regards the number of applicants). The majority of those leaving the country are men, most of whom are capable for work. Moreover, these leaves have a direct impact on the lives of women and girls in rural areas as they have to bear a greater workload as a result of living in such areas. Another key factor in the analysis of the employment level includes the labor market informality. For this reason, employment should be viewed in an integrated manner with emigration, informality and rural area needs.

Pursuant to Instruction no. 25, dated 16.06.2020, which sets forth the methodology of fund allocation for employment promotion programs based on defined criteria (i.e., no. of registered employers, no. of registered unemployed jobseekers, monitorable indicators for each region and office, etc.), the NAES continued with program planning and implementation. The allocation of funds and employment promotion program participants for 2022 were adopted by Letter No. 485/1, dated 06.04.2022, "Submission of employment promotion funds table" in the Public Notification Bulletin of the Public Procurement Agency No. 50, dated 19.04.2022.

In the cases of actual indicator definition in the relevant strategies of special groups, the NAES includes them at indicator level during the planning process and in the Performance Card. As per the above, it results that there has been a positive allocation of funds and realization thereof in terms of the gender aspect because, in late 2022, of the total number of 4344 beneficiaries (including those carried over), 2573 or 59% of the total are women/girls. However, this distribution does not specify the number of rural women and girls.

13. Population of Albania, 1 January 2023

Implementing the services plan in the uncovered areas.

A cooperation agreement was signed between the National Employment Service and ADISA on 17.12.2018, which aimed to regulate and legitimize mutual cooperation in compliance with mutual legal obligations to provide NES counter services (nowadays known as NAES) pursuant to Appendix I, from the ADISA counters, according to the separation principle of Front Offices from Back Offices. Also, during 2019, the former NES (currently known as NAES) has undertaken the initiative to sign agreements with Local Government Units in the framework of strengthening and collaboration employment policies at the regional and local level. In order to achieve the territorial cohesion of employment services, the structure of the Regional Employment Directorates has been revised and sent for approval, in which additional staff are provided to cover new programs such as the youth guarantee and the social fund in the regions that have been assessed as necessary, mainly based on the number of unemployed jobseekers.

For the strategy result C2.1 Drafting the reintegration into the labor market scheme of the beneficiaries of the Economic Assistance scheme.

NAES, during the interview and assessment of the unemployed jobseekers by the counselor, may identify that the unemployed jobseekers (usually vulnerable groups such as EA and other groups) cannot be employed due to some other obstacles which can be resolved by municipalities and other institutions. In such cases, the unemployed jobseekers receive a pending status, which is referred to the relevant institution or NGO. As mentioned in indicator 1.5, NAES in cooperation with UNDP has drafted a Guide for the integrated management of the EO & NARU case to regulate the referral system.

Cooperating the reintegration of the EA and former EA category into the labor market. The agreement between NAES and the State Social Service signed for the reintegration into the labor market of current and former beneficiaries of cash assistance resulted in the following:

In 2019:

- Employment of 1,168 previous beneficiaries and 1,875 beneficiaries;
- Participation of 403 previous beneficiaries and 311 beneficiaries in the active labor market programs;
- Participation of 92 previous beneficiaries and 361 beneficiaries in the vocational training courses;

In 2020:

- Employment of 455 previous beneficiaries and 1,374 beneficiaries;
- Participation of 62 previous beneficiaries and 165 beneficiaries in the active labor market programs;
- Participation of 43 previous beneficiaries and 170 beneficiaries in the vocational training courses;

In 2021:

- Employment of 185 previous beneficiaries and 972 beneficiaries;
- Participation of 59 previous beneficiaries and 326 beneficiaries in the active labor market programs;
- Participation of 15 previous beneficiaries and 433 beneficiaries in the vocational training courses;

Reintegration of Economic Assistance beneficiaries into the labor market was a priority during 2022. For this reason, pursuant to Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 822, dated 24.12.2019 “On inter-institutional work coordination mechanism for the employment referral of working age individuals and members from economic assistance beneficiary families”, Joint Order was drafted and signed between the Ministry of Finance and Economy and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. Regional commissions were established, which assessed and referred working age individuals for employment and social integration. These commissions consist of representatives from the State Social Service, the Regional Directorates of Employment and the Directorates of Social Services in the municipality. SSS referred 16.529 files to Employment Offices. Meanwhile, 10.840 people, or 65% of the persons referred to, appeared at the employment offices.

1 out of 3 people who appeared have been mediated for employment and referred for participation in an employment promotion program or vocational training. Specifically, 2,328 unemployed jobseekers have been employed and have participated in employment promotion programs, and another 813 have started a vocational training course.

Dedicated projects to expand services in uncovered areas

NAES in collaboration with Expertise France have drafted and validated a comprehensive package of employment programs and services tailored to women residing in rural and other areas which are currently uncovered by public employment services. Three municipalities: Elbasan, Lushnja and Kamza will be involved in the pilot implementation of this package. The development of this validated package of employment services for unemployed women residing in rural areas and other areas currently uncovered by employment services is based on a previous concept document that circulated in April 2023 and then on the presentation of the workshop and validation of this employment services package held in June 2023, as well as in a previous analytical study on the special circumstances and needs of the target group, which are women residing in rural and/or other areas currently uncovered by public employment services. The current document demonstrates the results of the presentation and assessment workshop, the detailed discussions held with MoFE, NAES at the central and local level, Social Services staff in three proposed pilot municipalities, NGOs, various partners, etc.

Methodology used in drafting the Employment Services Package

The methodology is based on drafting a practical operational model for the implementation of an expanded package of Employment Services for the target group. From an operational perspective, the target group can be described as women residing in administrative units that do not have local



2,328

UNEMPLOYED JOBSEEKERS

have been employed and have participated in employment promotion programs, and another **813 have started a vocational training course.**

structures of NAES Employment Services or that are far from any existing one stop shop of NAES. The proposed operational model for the implementation of an expanded package of Employment Services for the target group will be achieved by utilizing the current NAES instrument and developing performance indicators regarding the provision of services to the target group. During 2019-2021, this initiative was being piloted under the conditions that the NAES package of Active Labor Market Programs (ALMPs) has been updated and additions have been made. In this process, the four-stage planning guidance and counseling model has been introduced and integrated into the new employment services system. Econometric profiling is also included in the case management system, for the first time in NAES in Albania. These characteristics help in identifying those jobseekers who need the most intensive employment services and those who are far away from the labor market.

New employment promotion program drafted

The draft decision “On the procedures, criteria, and rules for the implementation of employment promotion programs through social reintegration” aims at regulating the definition of criteria and procedures for the employment promotion program through the provision of specialized counseling for employment, self-employment or vocational training, coordination, and referral to employment services and social services, which help the beneficiaries integrate into the labor market.

The Basic Skills Training Program aims to target unemployed jobseekers registered at the Employment Offices, focusing on beneficiaries of the economic assistance scheme and women residing in administrative/local units where there are no local employment structures. The target group needs specialized counseling services based on the complexity of the vulnerability it presents and needs to ensure coverage with employment services and programs in areas where there are no local employment structures.

The social reintegration program offers beneficiaries support services as well as financial support for their participation in the program, such as: Attendance pay, bonuses for transportation expenses, and for those taking care of dependent children and/or elderly or sick persons. The expected effects of this program are the provision of specialized and dedicated counseling for employment, self-employment, or vocational training for program participants based on the Individual Reintegration and Employment Plan. In addition, this program is committed to their sustainable integration into the labor market, not only through these services but also through the bonuses foreseen to be offered in case of participant employment up to a maximum period of 6 (six) months uninterrupted after program completion.

NGOs are dedicated and specialized in treating vulnerable groups, and this would help with their specialized treatment and reduce the flow of unemployed jobseekers who receive services at the Employment Offices.

Also, it is intended that NGOs expand their activity to areas uncovered by the Labor Offices by offering counseling services to all persons residing in rural areas or areas that are difficult to access these services.



Findings:

1. Audit findings:

Employment promotion programs, implemented by NAES for the period 2020-2023, are general, not focusing on women, especially on rural women.

These programs aim to be implemented countrywide and focus on vulnerable groups, but there is no evidence to what extent they apply in rural areas.

- The referencing data and their analysis are for women in general, and the used indicators are not divided into rural women or women residing in a city. Even other data (such as education level, age group), which are administered by NAES, are limited only to the national level, and there are no urban or rural classifications.

2. Audit findings:

NAES, in order to judge the effectivity of the currently approved programs, has not measured or analyzed the level of employment outcomes from these programs for rural women.

Currently, NAES, through its structures, has been tracking the results for the benefited programs by unemployed jobseekers only in 2020. According to the provisions of the program implementation regulations, this process had to be completed 6 months after their completion.

3. Audit findings:

The assessment of the needs of special groups for support from ALMPs has not always been done in cooperation with Local Self-Government Units. Specifically, NAES has drafted and diversified ALMPs based only on the available database. However, the study of the database does not provide a panorama of all regions. The same applies to LGUs, which have further analyzed the actual needs of women in order to empower them. In the case of Dibra, these needs have not been addressed by NAES. As a result of this situation, there have been no reports assessing the needs for employment and training services in uncovered areas.

4. Audit findings:

The audit did not show that vocational training courses were held in rural areas. Therefore, no women, who attended vocational training courses, were identified from these areas. NAES itself has data on trainees who attended vocational training courses according to their municipal units, since the Vocational Training Centers are located in the main cities. However, these data are not disaggregated by urban-rural origin.



Conclusions:

1. The employment promotion programs carried out by NAES during 2019-2023 are general and not divided on a gender basis, much less focusing on rural women.
2. Data related to employment promotion programs do not include rural women. The most important elements that support economic empowerment are women's access to the labor market and their decent employment.
3. There is a lack of government policy documents targeting rural women, or addressing the difficulties faced by rural women regarding employment, poverty, and access to health services, education, infrastructure, social security, etc.
4. The lack of measurable quantitative or qualitative gender indicators in the programs implementation and in the performance card, which are necessary to monitor the progress of the outcomes achieved and the fulfillment of specific goals, contributes to the lack of efficiency and effectiveness of the programs managed by NAES by affecting the effectiveness of their implementation for the empowerment of rural women.
5. Moreover, there has been a lack of effective coordination between RDNAES and RDPVTs regarding the drafting and analysis of rural women's employment needs.



Recommendations:

1.1 Recommendation:

The National Agency for Employment and Skills should also focus on the real needs of rural women regarding employment promotion program services, training services, and market information systems. [Ongoing](#)

2.1 Recommendation:

The National Agency for Employment and Skills should collect and analyze the data upon realization of employment promotion programs by dividing them according to urban-rural administrative areas, as well as by adding the category "rural women" to the data analysis. [Ongoing](#)

3.1 Recommendation:

The National Agency for Employment and Skills should propose to the Ministry of Finance priorities according to geographical areas, economic sectors, and the rural women's employment needs, as well as draft concrete employment programs for their inclusion into the labor market, for the rest of the implementation of employment promotion programs. [Ongoing](#)

4.1 Recommendation:

The National Agency for Employment and Skills, in cooperation with local self-government units, should enable the opening of vocational courses for rural women and girls, determined by the priorities and development of each rural area. [Within 2024](#)

5.2 Have concrete measures been taken to promote the inclusion of rural women into the labor market?

The National Strategy for Gender Equality (NSGE) 2016–2020¹⁴ and its Action Plan drafted by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth with the contribution of the Interinstitutional Working Group¹⁵, is envisaged as a roadmap toward an equitable society without violence, in which: the needs of women and men are equally taken into consideration and addressed; women are respected, protected, encouraged, and supported to progress similarly to men; girls and boys grow up happy and joyful through principles of equality and non-discrimination; – thus, a society based on sound families, supportive communities, and consolidated institutions that observe the legislation and perform their duties responsibly. Referring to this strategy, one of the sub-objectives indicating the empowerment of rural women includes sub-objective “1.3.14. The provision of crèches and kindergartens in rural areas”, implemented by local government units, which must report to the central level for its implementation. The budget available for accomplishing the objective according to this strategy for the period 2017–2020 is 80,000,000.00 ALL, for the period 2019–2020 it is 24,000,000.00 ALL every year, for the period 2017–2016 it is 16,000,000.00 ALL every year.

Through special questionnaires, the audit team has assessed what measures, the Local Self-Government Units have taken:

- Reducing the barriers that keep women, young women and girls away from the labor market.
- Constructing, rehabilitating, and maintaining local roads (providing regular public transport in all Administrative Units);
- Constructing, rehabilitating, and maintaining preschool educational facilities of the educational system in kindergartens and crèches.

From the official data collected by 12 out of 13 local government units, they vary according to their demographic distribution, which are as follows:

The Municipality of Shkodra

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the Municipality of Shkodra 2019–2023

Administ. Unit	Urban	Rural	Crèches	Kindergartens	Access to public transport	No. of residents 2019	No. of residents 2020	No. of residents 2021	No. of residents 2022	No. of residents 2023
City	X		YES	YES	YES	115,215	111,514	115,401	115,765	116,593
Suburb		X	NO	YES	YES	26,399	27,014	27,927	28,448	29,115
Postriba		X	NO	YES	YES	11,666	11,716	11,691	11,705	11,829
Gur i Zi		X	NO	YES	YES	12,003	12,096	12,172	12,666	12,264
Velipoja		X	NO	YES	YES	9,715	9,778	9,857	9,922	10,065
Dajç		X	NO	YES	YES	9,047	9,077	9,085	9,098	9,142
Ana e Malit		X	NO	YES	YES	6,094	6,109	6,119	6,130	6,157
Bërdica		X	NO	YES	YES	9,811	9,859	9,917	10,017	10,215
Pult		X	NO	NO		3,064	3,043	2,941	2,919	2,956
Shosh/Shala		X	NO	NO						
Shala		X	NO	NO	YES	5,600	5,336	5,072	4,947	4,881
Total						208,614	209,542	210,182	211,117	213,217

Source: Compiled by the audit team, the Municipality of Shkodra

14. Herein after referred to as “NSGE” 2016–2020.

15. According to Order of the Prime Minister No. 15, dated 21.01.2016 “On the Establishment and Functioning of the Inter-institutional Working Group for the Development of the Strategic Document on Gender Equality Issues 2016–2020”.

Referring to the data collected by the Municipality of Shkodër, processed by the audit team and presented in a summarized way in the table above, for 11 administrative units where 1 AU is urban, and 10 AU are rural, it results that for the audited period 2019–2023:

- There are no crèches in the rural areas of Shkodra Municipality. There are crèches only in city AU, which is urban AU, but there are no crèches in 10 other administrative units.
- Only 8 out of 11 administrative units in Shkodra City have kindergartens. There are no kindergartens in Pult, Shosh, Shala rural AU.
- 9 out of 11 administrative units have access to public transport, where 1 AU is urban and 8 are rural. There is no access to public transport in Pult and Shosh AU.
- For each administrative unit, the number of population has changed. In the city it has increased, even in the rural areas it has changed, but the number of crèches and kindergartens has not changed in proportion with the number of residents for each administrative unit in Shkodra Municipality.

Data on the investments in kindergarten, crèches, infrastructure of Shkodra Municipality, disaggregated by rural/urban administrative units with their respective values for the period 2019–2023.

Administrative Unit rural/urban	Crèches Investment 2019–2022	Kindergartens Investment 2019–2021
City (urban)	NO	3,898,530 ¹⁶
Suburb (rural)	NO	2,358,990 ¹⁷
Postripa (rural)	NO	NO
Gur i Zi (rural)	NO	NO
Velipoja (rural)	NO	NO
Dajc (rural)	NO	NO
Ana e Malit (rural)	NO	2,967,120 ¹⁸
Bërdica (rural)	NO	NO
Pult (rural)	NO	NO
Shosh (rural)	NO	NO
Shala (rural)	NO	NO

Source: Compiled by the audit team, the Municipality of Shkodra

Referring to the data presented by the Municipality of Shkodër, 4 investments were made only for kindergartens, during 2019–2022, specifically: 2 investments in 2 rural areas and 2 investments in 2 urban areas, amounting to 9,224,640 ALL. There were no investments in kindergartens and crèches during 2023.

16. Investment for the period 2021–2022

17. Investment in 2020

18. Investment in 2019

The Municipality of Kukës

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the Municipality of Kukës 2019–2023

Administrative Unit	Urban	Rural	Crèches	Kindergartens	Access to public transport
Kukës /City	X		Yes	Yes	No
Shtiçen		X	No	Yes	No
Terthore.		X	No	Yes	No
Bicaj		X	No	Yes	Yes
Topojan		X	No	Yes	No
Shishtavec		X	No	Yes	No
Zapod		X	No	Yes	No
Ujmisht		X	No	Yes	No
Gryke Çaj		X	No	Yes	No
Kolsh		X	No	Yes	No
Malzi		X	No	Yes	Yes
Surroj		X	No	Yes	No
Bushtrica		X	No	Yes	Yes
Kalis		X	No	Yes	No
Arren		X	No	No	No

Source: Compiled by the audit team, the Municipality of Kukës

The Municipality of Kukës has 15 administrative units, among which 1 is urban unit and 14 others are rural units. There are no crèches in 14 rural units of Kukës Municipality, whereas there are kindergartens only in 14 out of 15 administrative units in Kukës City in total. Regarding public transportation, it is accessible only in 3 rural administrative units.

Referring to the data related to investments in kindergartens and crèches disaggregated by rural/urban UA for the period 2019–2023, the Municipality of Kukës has not carried out a chronological data division according to the audited period. Some investments for the construction of kindergartens and crèches in the Municipality of Kukës are: Reconstruction of the kindergarten building no. 2, quarter no. 3, and rehabilitation of the kindergarten yard and playground no. 2, quarter no. 3, amounting to 9,636,446 ALL. These investments do not determine which period and administrative unit of Kukës Municipality they belong to.

The Municipality of Lezha

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the Municipality of Lezha 2019–2023

Administ. Unit	Urban	Rural	Crèches	Kindergartens 2019	Kindergartens 2020–2023	No. of residents 2019	No. of residents 2020	No. of residents 2021	No. of residents 2022	No. of residents 2023
Balldre				YES (6)	YES (6)	10,997	10,997	11,103	11,031	11,032
Blinisht		X		YES (5)	YES (5)	5,776	5,776	5,806	5,847	5,858
Dajç		X		YES (6)	YES (6)	7,350	7,350	7,407	7,524	7,625
Kallmet		X		YES (4)	YES (3)	7,379	7,379	7,428	7,520	7,520
Kolsh		X		YES (4)	YES (4)	7,349	7,349	7,876	7,920	8,039
Lezha	X		YES (1)	YES (4)	YES (4)	31,799	31,799	32,136	32,668	33,413
Shëngjin		X		YES (4)	YES (3)	12,966	12,966	13,528	13,740	13,950
Shënkoll		X		YES (4)	YES (4)	17,372	17,372	17,515	17,802	17,973
Ungrej		X		No (0)	YES (1)	2,853	2,853	2,689	2,600	2,583
Zejmen		X		YES (5)	YES (5)	9,714	9,714	9,622	9,460	9,443
Total	1	9	1	42	41	113,555	113,555	115,110	116,112	117,436

Source: Compiled by the audit team, the Municipality of Lezha

Referring to the data submitted by the Municipality of Lezha, the population in each administrative unit has changed for each audited year. The population has increased in the city, it has changed in the rural areas, but the number of crèches and kindergartens has not changed regarding the number of residents for any urban/rural administrative unit. There are no crèches in the rural areas of Lezha Municipality, but only 1 crèche in the urban administrative unit of Lezha. There are kindergartens in 10 administrative units of Lezha City, among which 1 is urban and 9 are rural. Referring to the data related to the investments in kindergartens and crèches disaggregated by rural/urban UA for the period 2019–2023, the Municipality of Kukës has carried out 3 investments in kindergarten and 1 investment in crèches, specifically: In 2019, investment in kindergarten construction in 1 rural unit, amounting to 80,221,200 ALL; in 2021, investment in kindergarten construction in 2 rural units, amounting to 6,605,672 ALL and 3,021,288 ALL; in 2022, investment in crèche construction in 1 rural unit amounting to 29,856,367 ALL. The amount of the investments in crèches and kindergartens in Lezha Municipality for the audited period were 119,704,527 ALL.

The Municipality of Kruja

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the Municipality of Kruja 2019–2023

Administrative Unit	Urban	Rural	Crèches	Kindergartens 2019 -2023	Access to public transport
Kruja	X		YES (2)	YES (7)	YES
Fushë-Kruja	X			YES (6)	YES
Thumana		X		YES (5)	YES
Nikël		X		YES (6)	
Bubq		X		YES (5)	
Cudhi		X		YES (2)	
Total			2	31	

Source: Compiled by the audit team, the Municipality of Kruja

Data on the number of residents in the Municipality of Kruja 2019–2023

No. of residents 2019	No. of residents 2020	No. of residents 2021	No. of residents 2022	No. of residents 2023
82,556	83,086	82,556	83,086	83,086

Source: The Municipality of Kruja

Referring to the official data presented by the Municipality of Kruja, the population in each administrative unit has changed and increased for each audited year. The municipality of Kruja has 6 administrative units, among which 2 are urban units and 4 are rural units. In 6 administrative units of Kruja Municipality, there are 2 crèches only in Kruja urban unit, while there are kindergartens in all administrative units of Kruja city. Regarding public transportation, it is accessible only in 3 administrative units of Kruja Municipality. Referring to the data related to investments in kindergartens and crèches disaggregated by rural/urban UA for the period 2019–2023, the Municipality of Kruja has as follows: There were no investments in crèches, kindergartens, or infrastructure in the administrative units of Kruja Municipality for the period 2019 and 2023.

In 2020:

- It has been invested in 4 rural administrative units for the reconstruction of crèches, kindergartens and infrastructure, amounting to 1,077,628,282 ALL; In 2021:
- It has been invested in 4 rural administrative units for the reconstruction of crèches, kindergartens and infrastructure, amounting to 889,304,782 ALL; In 2022:
- It has been invested in 1 rural administrative units for the reconstruction of crèches, kindergartens and infrastructure, amounting to 335,000 ALL.

The Municipality of Elbasan

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the municipality of Elbasan 2019–2023

Administrative Unit	Crèches	Kindergartens
Bradashesh	0	9
Funar	0	2
Gracen	0	4
Gjergjan	0	5
Gjinar	0	5
Labinot Fushë	0	9
Labinot Mal	0	8
Papër	0	9
Shirgjan	0	6
Shushica	0	6
Tregan	0	7
Zavalinë	0	1
Quarter No.1	0	4
Quarter No.2	2	3
Quarter No.3	0	3
Quarter No.4	1	3
Quarter No.5	0	2
Quarter No.6	0	1
Total	3	87

Source: Compiled by the audit team, the Municipality of Elbasan

Referring to the data presented by the Municipality of Elbasan, with observation no. 54/4, dated 30.01.2024, available to the audit team on 06.02.2024, this municipality has completed the information that the population in each administrative unit has not been determined for each audited year. This municipality has 6 administrative quarters in the city and 12 administrative units, undefined if urban or rural. There are 87 kindergartens in 12 administrative units of Elbasan Municipality, while there are crèches in only 2 administrative units, specifically 3 crèches. Regarding public transportation, it is accessible only in 18 administrative units of Elbasan Municipality.

Referring to the data related to investments in kindergartens and crèches disaggregated by rural/urban UA for the period 2019–2022, the Municipality of Elbasan has as follows:

Investments table for crèches and kindergartens /000 ALL

Administ. Unit	Year 2019		Year 2020		Year 2021		Year 2022	
	Crèches	Kindergartens	Crèches	Kindergartens	Crèches	Kindergartens	Crèches	Kindergartens
AU 1.2...3.4.5.6.....	521	122	345	994	602	1630	410	3545

Source: The Municipality of Elbasan

Referring to the above table officially sent by the Municipality of Elbasan for the period 2019–2022, it is not clearly defined which administrative unit has invested in crèches or kindergartens.

There were investments in crèches, kindergartens or infrastructure in urban and rural areas, in 60 facilities in 2023, amounting to 35,106,960 ALL.

The Municipality of Kavaja

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the Municipality of Kavaja 2023

Administrative Unit	Urban	Rural	Crèches	Kindergartens	No. of residents	Access to public transport
Kavaja	X		NO	NO	40,094	NO
Golem		X	NO	NO	13,929	NO
Synej		X	NO	NO	12,300	NO
Helmas		X	NO	NO	5,202	NO
Luz i vogël		X	NO	NO	11,351	NO
Total					82,876	

Source: Compiled by the audit team, the Municipality of Kavaja

Referring to the official data presented by the Municipality of Kavaja, the population in each administrative unit has changed for each audited year. The municipality of Kavaja has 5 administrative units, among which 1 is urban unit and 4 are rural units. There are no related in 5 administrative units of Kavaja Municipality, while there are kindergartens only in Kavaja urban administrative unit. Regarding public transportation, it is not accessible in any administrative unit of this municipality. Referring to the data related to investments in kindergartens and crèches disaggregated by rural/urban UA for the period 2019–2022, the Municipality of Kavaja has as follows:

In 2019, there is 1 investment in Kavaja urban administrative unit for kindergarten reconstruction, amounting to 39,760,930 ALL;

- In 2020, there are 2 investments in 2 rural/urban administrative units, amounting to 404,130,722 ALL;
- In 2021, there are 2 investments in 2 rural/urban administrative units, amounting to 404,130,722 ALL;
- In 2022, there are no investment in kindergartens and crèches,
- In 2023, there are 3 investments in 3 rural/urban administrative units, amounting to 371,927,481 ALL.

The Municipality of Divjaka

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the municipality of Divjaka 2019-2023

Administ. Unit	Urban	Rural	Crèches	Kindergartens	No. of residents 2019	No. of residents 2020	No. of residents 2021	No. of residents 2022	No. of residents 2023	Access to public transport
Divjaka AU	X		Yes	Yes	14,545	14,651	14,705	14,754	14,761	Yes
Terbuf AU		X	No	Yes	16,671	16,825	16,935	17,043	17,125	Yes
Gradisht AU		X	No	Yes	10,948	11,009	10,996	11,008	11,003	Yes
Remas AU		X	No	Yes	6,776	6,752	6,715	6,756	6,753	Yes
Grabian AU		X	No	Yes	6,535	6,512	6,456	6,442	6,442	No
Total					55,475	55,749	55,807	56,003	56,084	

Source: Compiled by the audit team, the Municipality of Divjaka

Referring to the data submitted by the Municipality of Divjaka, the population in each administrative unit has changed for each audited year, but the number of crèches and kindergartens has not changed regarding the number of residents for any administrative unit of the Municipality of Divjaka. This Municipality has 5 administrative units, of which there is 1 urban unit and 4 rural units. There are no crèches in 4 rural administrative units of the Municipality of Divjaka, while there are kindergartens in each administrative unit. Regarding public transportation, it is accessible only in 4 rural/urban administrative units of this municipality.

Referring to the data related to investments in kindergartens and crèches disaggregated by rural/urban UA for the period 2019-2023, the Municipality of Kavaja has as follows:

The Municipality of Divjaka has financed the construction of the kindergarten in Çermë Proshk with contract No. 4686, dated 30.11.2016, amounting to 4,268,364 ALL, which was an investment of Divjaka Municipality from its own funds.

The Municipality of Divjaka has received funding from the State Budget in 2019 for the construction of a full-day kindergarten in Çermë, Tërbuf Administrative Unit Sector, with a total funding of 50,208,168 ALL, where 35,145,718 ALL is financed by the State Budget and 15,062,450 ALL is financed by Divjaka Municipality.

There is no investment for the construction of crèches and kindergartens, or even infrastructure by Divjaka Municipality for the period 2021-2023.

The Municipality of Lushnja

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the Municipality of Lushnja 2019–2023

Administrative Unit	Urban	Rural	Crèches	Kindergartens	Access to public transport
Lushnja AU	X		YES(2)	YES	NO
Golem AU		X	NO	YES	NO
Dushk AU		X	NO	YES	NO
Bubullim AU		X	NO	YES	NO
Fiershegan AU		X	NO	YES	YES
Allkaj AU		X	NO	YES	YES
Ballagat AU		X	NO	YES	NO
Kolonja AU		X	NO	YES	YES
Hysgjokaj AU		X	NO	YES	NO
Krutje AU		X	NO	YES	YES
Karbunare AU		X	NO	YES	NO
Saver AU		X	NO	YES	NO

Source: Compiled by the audit team, the Municipality of Lushnja

Referring to the data presented by the Municipality of Lushnja, the population in each administrative unit has not been determined for each audited year. This municipality has 12 administrative units, of which there is 1 urban unit and 11 rural units. There are no crèches in 11 rural administrative units of the Municipality of Lushnja, while there are kindergartens in each administrative unit. Regarding public transportation, it is accessible in 4 rural administrative units of this municipality.

Referring to the data related to investments in kindergartens and crèches disaggregated by rural/urban UA for the period 2019–2023, the Municipality of Lushnja has as follows:

- It has financed the construction of kindergartens in 1 urban administrative unit in 2021, amounting to 912,000 ALL.
- It has financed the construction of kindergartens in 1 urban administrative unit in 2022, amounting to 946,800 ALL.
- It has financed the construction of kindergartens and crèches in 1 urban administrative unit in 2023, amounting to 218,139 ALL and 6,834,865 ALL.

The Municipality of Pogradec

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the Municipality of Pogradec 2019–2023

Administrative Unit	Urban AU	Rural AU	No. of crèches	No. of kindergartens	Access to public transport
Pogradec	x		1	5+3 (Preschool class)	Yes
Buçimas		X	-	7	Yes
Çërrava		X	-	9	Yes
Udënisht		X	-	6	Yes
Proptisht		X	-	9	Yes
Velçan		X	-	3	Yes
Trebinjë		X	-	4	Yes
Dardhas		X	-	3	Yes
Total	1	7	1	49	

Source: Compiled by the audit team, the Municipality of Pogradec

Data on the number of residents in the Municipality of Pogradec 2019–2023

No. of residents 2019	No. of residents 2020	No. of residents 2021	No. of residents 2022	No. of residents 2023
91,902	92,016	91.838	91.955	91.970

Source: The Municipality of Pogradec

Referring to the official data presented by the Municipality of Pogradec, the population in each administrative unit has changed for each audited year, but the number of crèches and kindergartens has not changed regarding the number of residents in any administrative unit of Pogradec Municipality. This municipality has 8 administrative units, of which there is 1 urban unit and 7 rural units. There are no crèches in 7 rural administrative units of the Municipality of Pogradec, while there are kindergartens in each administrative unit. Regarding public transportation, there are no data for the accessibility of the rural/urban administrative units of this municipality.

Referring to the data related to investments in kindergartens and crèches disaggregated by rural/urban UA for the period 2019–2023, the Municipality of Pogradec has as follows:

- In 2020, there were 2 investments in rural/urban administrative units in infrastructure, amounting to 48,980,008 ALL.
- In 2021, there were two investments in 2 rural/urban administrative units in infrastructure, amounting to 193,919,996 ALL,
- In 2021, there were two investments in 2 rural/urban administrative units in infrastructure, amounting to 193,919,996 ALL,
- In 2022, there was 1 investment in 1 rural/urban administrative unit in infrastructure, amounting to 141,562,1766 ALL,
- There is no investment for the construction of crèches and kindergartens, or even infrastructure by Divjaka Municipality for the period 2019 and 2023.

In 2020, after consultations with the representatives of the community area, and with the aim of continuously improving the quality of educational services for all students in public pre-university educational institutions, the Municipality of Pogradec has taken the initiative to:

1. Open and operate the Public Preschool Educational Institution “Kindergarten”, in Homçan village, Proptisht Administrative Unit, Pogradec Municipality.
2. Open and operate the Public Preschool Educational Institution “Kindergarten”, in Losnik village, Velçan Administrative Unit, Pogradec Municipality.
3. Due to these two proposals sent to the Ministry of Education and Sports, a mixed group was set up in Homçan village in 2020.

The Municipality of Gjirokastra

Data on the number of crèches and kindergartens in the Municipality of Gjirokastra 2019–2023

Administrative Unit	Urban	Rural	Crèches	Kindergartens	No. of residents	Access to public transport
Gjirokastra	X		YES	YES		YES
Picar		X	NO	YES	2,800	YES
Antigone		X	NO	YES	1,700	YES
Lazarat		X	NO	YES	3,000	YES
Lunxheri		X	NO	YES	5,000	YES
Cepo		X	NO	YES	3,000	YES
Odrie		X	NO	YES	1,600	YES
Total					17,100	

Source: Compiled by the audit team, Municipality of Gjirokastra

Referring to the data provided by the Municipality of Gjirokastra, no differences were noted on official data, for each audited year. The number of citizens per administrative unit has not changed, this includes the number of crèches and kindergartens as it relates to the total number of citizens for each administrative unit of the Municipality of Gjirokastra. This Municipality has 7 administrative units, of which there is 1 urban unit and 6 rural units. There are no crèches in 6 rural administrative units of the Municipality of Gjirokastra, while there are kindergartens in every administrative unit. Public transport, is accessible in all administrative units of this Municipality.

Regarding the data on the investments made for the crèches and kindergarten devised according to the rural/urban AU, of the Municipality of Gjirokastra for 2023, there has been one investment in the infrastructure amounting to 1,634,833 ALL. For the period of 2019–2022, there have not been any investment done in the construction of crèches and kindergarten or even in the infrastructure.

The Municipality of Vlora

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the Municipality of Vlora 2019-2023

Administ. Unit	Year 2019		Year 2020		Year 2021		Year 2022		Year 2023	
	Crèches	Kindergartens	Crèches	Kindergar.	Crèches	Kindergar.	Crèches	Kindergart.	Crèches	Kindergar.
Vlora	3	19	3	19	3	19	3	19	3	19
Orikum	-	4	-	3	-	3	-	3	-	3
Qendër	-	10	-	10	-	10	-	10	-	8
Shushica	-	4	-	4	-	4	-	4	-	4
Novosele	-	10	-	10	-	9	-	8	-	8

Source: Compiled by the audit team, Municipality of Vlora

Referring to the official data of the Municipality of Vlora, this Municipality has 5 administrative units, of which 1 is urban and 4 are rural. There are no crèches in 4 of the rural administrative units, however they are present in the urban unit. There are kindergarten in every administrative unit. Regarding, Public transport, there is no information if it is accessible in all of the rural/urban administrative units of this Municipality.

The Municipality of Dibra

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the municipality of Dibra 2019-2023

Administrative Unit	Urban	Rural	Crèches	Kindergartens	No. of residents	Access to public transport
Peshkopi AU	X		Yes(3)	Yes(7)	18,950	No
Maqellare AU		X	Yes(2)	Yes (5)	13,632	Yes
Melan AU		X	No(0)	Yes (7)	4,415	Yes
Tomin AU		X	Yes(1)	Yes (6)	8,489	Yes
Kastriot AU		X	No(0)	Yes (6)	7,323	Yes
Lurë AU		X	No(0)	No(0)	1,482	Yes
Silovë AU		X	No(0)	Yes(3)	3,184	Yes
Kala e Dodës AU		X	No(0)	Yes(3)	3,014	Yes
Zall-Dardhë AU		X	No (0)	Yes(1)	-	Yes
Zall-Reç AU		X	No(0)	No(0)	2,346	Yes
Fushë Cidhen AU		X	No(0)	Yes(5)	3,611	Yes
Arras AU		X	No(0)	Yes(4)	3,841	Yes
Selishtë AU		X	No(0)	No (0)	1,961	Yes
Luzni AU		X	No(0)	Yes(3)	3,176	Yes
Muhurr AU		X	No(0)	Yes(4)	3,516	Yes
Total			6	54	78,940	

Source: Compiled by the audit team, Municipality of Dibra

Referring to the data provided by the Dibra Municipality, no differences were noted on official data, for each audited year. The number of residents per administrative unit has not changed, this includes the number of preschools and kindergartens as it relates to the total number of residents for each administrative unit of the Municipality of Dibra. This Municipality has 15 administrative units, of which there is 1 urban unit and 14 rural units. There are no preschools in 12 rural administrative units of the Municipality of Dibra, while there are no kindergartens in 3 administrative unit. Public transport, is accessible in 14 rural administrative units of this Municipality.

Regarding the data on the investments made for crèches and kindergarten devised according to the rural/urban AU, of the Municipality of Dibra for the period of 2019–2023, there have not been any investments in the construction of preschools, kindergarten or even in infrastructure.

The Municipality of Berat

Data on the number of kindergarten and crèches in the municipality of Berat 2019–2023

Unit Courts	Urban	Rural	Crèches	Kinder-gartens	No. of residents 2019	No. of residents 2020	No. of residents 2021	No. of residents 2022	No. of residents 2023	Access to public transport
Berat	X		Yes	Yes	63,505	63,406	63,408	63,490	63,432	Yes
Velabisht AU		X	No	Yes	12,084	12,109	11,962	11,950	11,956	Yes
Sinje AU		X	No	Yes	5,235	5,224	5,190	5,183	5,021	Yes
Roshnik AU		X	No	Yes	3,896	3,672	3,658	3,602	3,574	Yes
Otlak AU		X	No	Yes	15,475	15,540	15,575	15,533	15,570	Yes
Total					100,195	99,951	99,793	99,758	99,553	

Source: Compiled by the audit team, Municipality of Berat

Referring to the data presented above, it turns out that in Berat Municipality there are a total of 5 administrative units, of which 1 is urban and 4 are rural. Preschools are present only in the Qendër AU (Berat), while in 4 rural AU, there is no preschool service.

Data on the investment in kindergartens, crèches and infrastructure in the municipality of Berat 2019–2023

Administ. Unit	Year 2020			Year 2021			Year 2022			Year 2023		
	Investment in Crèches (a)	Investm. in Kinder-gartens (b)	(a)	(b)	Investm. in Infrastructure (c)	(a)	(b)	(c)	(a)	(b)	(c)	
Berat AU	600,000	550,000	800,000	1,200,000		400,000	540,000		670,000	756,000		
Sinje AU	0	230,553	0	321,000		0	125,000	11,452,141	0	256,770		
Roshnik AU	0	112,300	0	124,445		0	90,000	11,803,149	0	157,880	11,452,141	
Velabisht AU	0	325,000	0	411,321		0	170,000	11,452,141	0	223,000	9,365,040	
Otlak AU	0	231,660	0	377,400	438,068,428	0	220,442	11,452,141	0	200,000	9,365,039	

Source: Berat Municipality

Residential population by region Nomenclature of the Territorial Division for Statistical Purposes (NUTS 3) and urban-rural division

No.	Name of the region	Urban population	Rural population	% of Urban population	% of Rural population
1	BERAT	61,403	80,557	43,3	56.7
2	DIBRA	34,754	102,308	25,4	74.6
3	DURRËS	149,199	114,488	56,6	43.4
4	ELBASAN	112,267	184,589	37,8	62.2
5	FIER	112,855	199,865	36,1	63.9
6	GJIROKASTRA	36,567	37,287	49,5	50.5
7	KORÇA	87,791	133,116	39,7	60.3
8	KUKËS	26,772	58,655	31,3	68.7
9	LEZHA	49,896	85,217	36,9	63.1
10	SHKODRA	90,743	125,332	42,0	58.0
11	TIRANA	478,127	278,801	63,2	36.8
12	VLORA	106,906	74,482	58,9	41.1
Total		1,347,280	1,474,697	47,7	52.3

Source: INSTAT, - Census of Population and Housing in Albania 2011.

Referring to the data presented in the above table, as well as other data consulted, by INSTAT, it is noted that in the majority of the regions in our country, rural population prevails. Referring to the data from 2014, the rural population prevails in 9 of the 12 regions in our country, the intermediate population prevails, in 2 regions (Durres and Vlora) and the urban population prevails in 1 region (Tirana).

We emphasize that, as of now, these data may have changed, however due to the fact that the Municipalities did not provide updated data, we are referring to the 2014 INSTAT data.



Findings:

1. Audit findings: According to the audit data, collected by the Local Self-Government Units part of the audit, in almost 80% of them, the ratio of crèches and kindergartens is not in fair proportion to the rural and urban administrative units that belong to a Municipality. Referring to the official data from the audited Municipalities, there is an absence of crèches in rural administrative units and in some urban units as well. Consequently, a full coverage and a fair division according to urban and rural areas, with kindergartens and crèches, is not ensured.

2. Audit findings: According to the audit data collected by the audited Local Self-Government Units, in some Local Government Units, public transport is not accessible except in urban administrative units. Consequently, no condition has been provided to facilitate bringing women and girls as close as possible to the labor market.



Conclusions:

1. Conclusion: Lack of crèches in almost all rural AUs, as well as the lack of kindergartens in some of them, greatly affects the level of employment for women from rural areas and does not lessen the barriers that prevent women, young women and girls to get as close as possible the labor market.
2. Conclusion: Lack of transport coverage and logistic infrastructure especially in the rural administrative units, hinders the strengthening of women's position in society and their access to the labor market.



Recommendations:

1.1 Recommendation:

Local Self-Government Units, in accordance with the regional strategies for the development of rural areas, should take measures to evaluate the situation in these areas, regarding the coverage of crèches and kindergarten as well as designing investment plans dependent on the needs, proportional to the number of residents. [Within 2024](#)

2.1 Recommendation:

Local Self-Government Units, should take measures to identify and evaluate the needs of every administrative unit for public transport in order to bring it closer to the urban areas. [Within 2024](#)

2.2 Recommendation:

Local Self-Government Units, should evaluate the state of the infrastructure in rural areas and draw up an investment plan depending on the situation, the number of residents and the ascertained needs. [Within 2024](#)

5.3 Is there interaction between central institutions and the local bodies for encouraging the employment of rural women?

According to the NAES administrated data, the level of unemployment is more pronounced in women, residents of rural areas or less-educated persons etc,. Women and girls are significantly disadvantaged in all employment indicators.

Indicator	2019		2020		2021	
	Males	Female	Males	Female	Males	Female
Labor force participation rate	68.0	53.0	66.9	52.3	67.2	52.6
Employment rate	60.1	46.9	59.2	46.1	59.5	46.4
Unemployment rate	11.6.	11.4.	11.5.	11.9	11.3	11.8
Percentage of long-term unemployed	63.1	63.7	59.7	59.1	60.5	65.5
Long-term unemployment rate	7.3	7.3	6.9	7.1	6.9	7.7
Inactivity rate	32.0	47.0	33.1	47.7	32.8	47.4

Data source: NAES

Referring to the INSTAT data, the informality in the labor market is still a problem in our country. During 2021, one in five employed persons works for free in the family business and this indicator is higher for women than for men, this is also true of employment in rural areas.

The National Strategy for Gender Equality and the Action Plan 2016–2020, have as their first strategic goal, “The Economic empowerment of women and men”. The objectives of this goal relate to the increase of the participation of women and girls in the labor market as a result of the implementation of the Employment and Skills Strategy 2014–2020 with gender in mind. Another specific objective relates to the Economic Empowerment of Rural Women.

In the National Strategy for Gender Equality and the Action Plan 2021–2030, the strategic goal “Economic empowerment of women and men” has been further expanded, aiming not only at the socio-economic empowerment of women, young women and girls from all groups, e.i from rural areas but also the advancement towards environmental economy and digitization. To fulfill this goal, one of the objectives is “Increasing the access of women, young people and girls, from all groups to financial services and products, as well as to productive resources”. While analyzing these objectives as well as implementing the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019–2022, the audit team examined the activity of institutions at the central and local level related to the focus of our audit, “the employment of rural women”.

With the completion of the NSES 2019–2022, the new employment strategy 2023–2030 has been drafted, which has not yet been approved. In implementation of the objectives of the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019 - 2022, it has been determined that NAES will develop several activities aimed at establishing interaction between central institutions and local structures to promote employment in general. Namely, all measures must be taken by NAES to implement the service plan in the uncovered areas¹⁹. To realize this, a cooperation agreements will be signed with the Local Self-Government Units in which mutual roles will be defined, as well as the type of services that will be offered in areas not covered by employment offices. One stop shops will also be set up near Local Self-Government Units.

Implementation of cooperation agreements signed between NAES and LGUs Lezhë, Elbasan and Lushnje. The National Agency for Employment and Skills has signed a cooperation agreement with the Local Self-Government Units, for the purpose of strengthening and coordinating employment policies

19. National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2019–2022, Objective C, page 19.

at the regional and local level. Namely, 16 agreements have been signed with different municipalities (Elbasan, Gramsh, Librazhd, Peqin, Cërrik, Përrenjas, Fier, Lushnje, Patos, Roskovec, Korça, Maliq, Lezha, Laç, Mirdita and Delvina) since the adoption of the NSES in 2019 and until 2021. From these 16 agreements, the audit team audited the implementation of 3 agreements, such as Lushnje, Lezhë and Elbasan.

An agreement was signed with the Municipality of Lushnje no. 160 Prot. dated 17.01.2022, an agreement was signed with the municipality of Lezhë no. 20663 Prot. dated 06.12.2021, an agreement was signed with the municipality of Elbasan no. 3772, dated 17.12.2020 These agreements have a term of two years starting from the date of signing and define the responsibilities of municipalities and AKPA in the framework of employment promotion.

The signing parties agree to cooperate to enable institutional support and the integration of jobseekers in the labor market. The goal is to coordinate institutional efforts at the central, regional and local level with the main objective of reducing the level of unemployment and addressing the social problems faced by individuals in these municipalities as effectively as possible.

In reference to the agreements, the commitment of all three municipalities consists of the following:

1. The subordinate structurers and social administrators of the Municipalities and Administrative Units, dependent on the directorate that deals with social cases, guide persons who are able to work to register at the employment offices, enabling them access to benefit from the services and programs they offer, counseling, employment mediation, professional training or participation in employment promotion programs;
2. The interconnection of web pages in order to increase the public's access to sources of information to prepare for the labor market;
3. The development of joint activities (e.g. annual fairs) that promote and support the field of employment, establish employer-job seeker connections, increase and improve the local economy, strengthen public and private partnership initiatives, maintain contacts with potential investors, as well as establish and boost new forms of cooperation between parties;
4. Ensuring the contingent and promoting partnership with important enterprises for the development of work practices, such as internships, on-the-job training programs, etc.;
5. Partnership with important enterprises for the development of new professional profiles and training packages designed on the basis of competences according to the needs of the enterprises themselves for young men and women, as well as the exchange of information and valuable connections in order to increase cooperation with entrepreneurs who operate in the administrative unit;
6. Providing premises to accommodate Employment Offices staff, in the municipalities which do not have a local Employment office;
7. Cooperation between institutions in order to cover the entire administrative space with employment and mediation services, by keeping a register for jobseekers and employers by the Social Administrator at the Administrative Unit (for Administrative Units that don't have Local Labor Offices within reach), and sending this register at the Local Labor Office on the 25th of each month, so that the persons registered as interested in receiving employment services are then contacted by the employees of the Labor Offices;
8. Guidance for registering at the Labor Offices, in order to increase interaction, between all vacant job positions, focusing on those vacancies, procedures of recruitment of which do not require making an application according to the portals of other institutions.
9. Establishing a focal point in every Administrative Unit or Local Government Unit which will coordinate the work and keep in constant contact with the focal point of the Local Employment Office.

For its part, NAES will commit to realize the following:

1. Exchange of information, related to data on members of working age of beneficiary families of social assistance schemes through the report generated in the National Electronic Registry of the Employment Services System or by the interaction of the two respective systems;
2. Informing the Municipalities regarding data on the members of working age of beneficiary families of social assistance schemes who have appeared at the employment office's counters and information on the cases that have been mediated for work and how many have benefited from professional training programs;
3. Referring, individuals with work potential but who have other social problems, near municipalities;
4. Assigning a responsible employee in each Local Employment Office who maintains continuous communication on the progress and implementation of this agreement with the responsible person.

Based on the audit, related to the implementation of the obligations defined in the three agreements, it results that:

- Persons who are able to work, that come to the municipal offices are generally guided to register at the Employment office, in order for them to benefit from services, guidance programs, job mediation, or the participation in employment promotion programs. This process is not documented by the municipal structures;
- The interconnection of web pages in order to increase the public's access to sources of information to prepare for the labor market is not present in any of the three Municipalities.
- In general, Municipalities have developed joint activities that promote and support employment or establish employer-job seeker connections, however these activities are hardly documented by municipal structures. The only exception is Lezhë Municipality, where a more complete documentation of these activities is found.
- The implementation of the coverage of all administrative spaces with employment and mediation services and the way it is implemented are not formalized or documented. The Social Administrator at the Administrative Units that have no proximity to the local Employment Offices does not keep a register, for job-seekers and employers which has to be periodically sent to the Local Employment Office, so that the persons registered as interested in receiving employment services, or later be contacted by the Employment office's employees.
- Focal points has not been established in every Administrative Unit in order to coordinate work and keep in constant contact with the focal point of the Local Employment Office;
- The window that refers to the adults of working age, who are beneficiaries of economic assistance, is completed as provided by the representatives of the municipalities in the national electronic register of economic assistance.

NAES's obligations in these agreements are generally completed because they are activities of the work processes of the agency. NSES does not have, complete and documented information regarding the progress of the agreements, for example, the drafting of a document stating their effectiveness, or how these agreements have influenced the improvement of the employment situation in order to become an example to be applied in other Municipalities in the Country.

Identifying the factors that prevent the involvement of rural women in the labor market.

One of the duties of LGU²⁰ is to ensure effective governance and at as close as possible level to residents, by providing appropriate services, in accordance with the standards required by law or other normative acts. In this framework, the municipalities continuously carry out activities as well as field meetings with different groups of individuals, including women in rural areas. In these meeting, employment is one of the general problems and concerns women generally express.

20. Act No. 139/2015 "On Local Self-Government" amended, article 3.

In reference to the data provided by all the municipalities part of the audit, the main factors identified during these meetings and that prevent rural women's involvement in the labor market are:

- The mentality that women are predisposed to do house work or engage in family agriculture rendering them unemployed;
- Their husband's emigration, making women the sole caretaker of children (children and elderly);
- The lack of proper public transport lines provided by the Administrative Units, or transport lines with limited schedules;
- The almost complete lack of crèches;
- The lack of kindergartens, and in the cases where there are, they provide no lunches which forces parents to pick them up at noon. As a result, women cannot work full time;
- The lack of education and vocational skills (women in rural areas mainly complete only compulsory education).

Since the above-mentioned factors have a direct impact on the level of employment of women in rural areas, it is necessary for the measures taken to reduce their impact, to be objectives of local and central institutions in the future.

Awareness campaigns or other activities related to the employment of rural women.

Undertaking awareness campaigns, or even developing informational events that may impact the growth of rural women's employment, is a very important factor, predicted in NSES. The audit team assessed if the municipalities in cooperation with NAES, have developed such events. Based on the results, generally, all municipalities have developed informational activities or fairs with a focus on women in general and, on a case-by-case basis, also women in rural areas. In the Shkodra Municipality, there are even informational meetings or training sessions related to women from rural areas and employment have been held. Regarding these activities, municipalities generally do not have data on how much influence they have had on the employment of women from rural areas. Only in the case of the Shkodra and Delvina municipality, are there data regarding female beneficiaries and the geographical area they live in. On its part, NAES in cooperation with LGU has organized job fairs on a case by case basis. What results is that these activities do not result in other initiatives related to rural women.

Establishing one stop shops near local governing units.

In reference to the NSES specification, one of the events being held in order to ensure the implementation of the services plan in the uncovered areas, will be the establishing one stop shops near local government units.

Of the 13 municipalities under audit, 12 have regional offices or local employment offices, while the Divjak Municipality does not have an office however it is covered by the Lushnje Employment Office. Based on the results, in Divjaka Municipality there are no one stop shops dedicated to the employment service and in the institution there are no employees assigned by AKPA to deal with employment issues. Also, AKPA did not provide us with the list of municipalities that have one stop shop for employment issues, in the absence of local employment offices.

Cooperation between Local Government Units and the National Employment and Skills Agency.

In the framework of the implementation of employment promotion programs, respectively DCM no. 535, dated 8.7.2020 "On the procedures, criteria and rules for implementation of the public community works program", where a large part of the providing institutions are the municipalities, there has been a cooperation between the AKPA and the local units. But this employment program is not particularly related to the employment of rural women. Also, NAES or the municipalities do not have data regarding the female beneficiaries of this program in rural areas. The only process that generally seems to work,

is addressing jobseekers who appear at the offices of the local units to the employment offices, given that 12 of the 13 audited municipalities have local employment offices. Also, it is established that during 2022, NAES, in cooperation with 10 municipalities (Elbasan, Fier, Durrës, Korçë, Lezhë, Shkodër, Belsh, Tirana, Kamëz and Cërrik) and social partners, has started the implementation of a pilot project, for the creation of a reference network of cooperation between the parties with the aim of treatment, empowerment and social and economic integration of individuals belonging to vulnerable groups and returned immigrants. According to the information presented by NAES, even this project does not focus on rural women. As of this moment NAES has a project expected to be implemented in the future, contains a comprehensive package of employment programs and services tailored to women living in rural and other areas which are currently not covered by public employment services. This project will expand to Elbasan, Lushnje and Kamëz Municipality. This project's target group can be described as women living in administrative units that do not have local structures of NAES Employment Services or that are far from any existing one stop shop of NAES.

Monitoring the implementation of employment policies.

In the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019-2022 in implementation of objective A "Opportunities for decent work through effective policies in the labor market" the two goals that were assessed by the audit team are:

- a) "Designing and diversifying ALMPs based on the needs of groups at high risk of becoming long-term unemployed", which will be achieved by making it possible, among others, that active labor market policies are improved, based on monitoring results.
- b) "Development and implementation of the model for monitoring active labor market programs (ALMPs) with sensitivity to gender issues".

a) In the materials consulted by the audit team, it is established that the implementation of the National Strategy on Employment and Skills has been periodically monitored for the four established objectives. Monitoring reports for the years 2020-2021-2022 have been designed for each objective. Apart from the assessment of level of achievement for each objective, monitoring in itself aims to use the results, to improve on the labor market policies in the future. Judging from the evaluation of the results taken by the focused monitoring of our audit objectives, the realization of the activity related to the improvement of active labor market policies based on the monitoring results was analyzed. It is established that, NSES and act no. 15/2019, date 13.03.2019 "On the promotion of Employment" were approved in 2019, where after their approval, a total of four employment programs were designed and approved as follows:

- DCM no. 17, dated 15.01.2020, "On Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of Employment Promotion Programs through Employment, On-The-Job Training and Internships", as amended;
- DCM No. 348, dated 29.04.2020, "On the Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the Promotion Program through Self-employment";
- DCM No. 535, dated 08.07.2020 "On Procedures, Criteria and Rules for the Implementation of the Public Community Works Program";
- DCM No. 608, dated 29.07.2020, "On the Procedures, Criteria and Rules on the Implementation of the Employment Promotion Program through the Employment of Unemployed People as a result of COVID-19", as amended.

As noted, all employment programs have been approved during 2020, or the first year of implementation of the employment strategy. On the other hand, in the monitoring reports, the activity for drafting active labor market policies improved based on the monitoring results, is completed in 2021. As mentioned above, the audit team appeared to not have employment programs based on the results of the monitoring of strategies, and it is not clear how this activity is classified as carried out by NAES. It is not clear how concretely the results of the monitoring have been used to improve employment policies, or what are the specific improvements that have been made in reference to the results of the monitoring.

b) During the implementation of objective A.4 for the development and implementation of the model for the monitoring of Active Labor Market Programs (ALMP) with sensitivity for gender issues, it appears that the methodological framework of evaluation and monitoring designed for ALMPs is in progress. NAES has implemented the post incentive tracking process for all participants of the employment incentive programs that had benefited during 2020. In order to complete this activity related to gender issues, the focus of NAES has been only on the assessment of the level of employability by gender for each indicator. Even the tracking report for EPP participants presents employment results or other aspects with a female/male desegregation. As mentioned above, as per the results, there is no data on employment or unemployed jobseekers in the “rural women” group, on any aspect of the monitoring of the implementation of the objectives of the strategy. Based on the results, during the monitoring process, no information or reports were drawn up, no data were collected related to the problems that resulted in the completion of this activity.



Findings:

1. Audit findings:

The obligations defined in the agreements signed by Lushnje, Lezha, and Elbasan Municipalities were not implemented. The activities carried out to promote employment were not documented. Administrative Units located far away from Local Employment Offices did not record jobseekers in a register to be periodically submitted to the Local Employment Office.

Furthermore, no responsible person was assigned at Administrative Units to coordinate the work and keep in constant contact with the local Employment Office in order to address employment issues.

On the other hand, the NAES did not record the progress of the implementation of agreements concluded with the Municipalities of Elbasan, Lushnja and Lezha. Moreover, no assessment was conducted with regard to their effectiveness in improving the employment situation.

2. Audit findings:

The National Agency for Employment and Skills did not establish one-stop shops at Local Self-Government Units, which lack local employment offices, thus not complying with the National Strategy on Employment and Skills.

3. Audit findings:

The employment services provided by the National Agency for Employment and Skills, are not fully coordinated with Local Self-Government Units. The communication among central and local structures failed to identify the needs of women in general and rural women in particular.

4. Audit findings:

With regard to the National Agency for Employment and Skills, despite the periodic monitoring of the implementation of the activities to be carried out for the purpose of achieving the goals of the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019-2022, there is no information on the actual use of the monitoring results to improve employment policies, or as to which are the specific improvements made in reference to the monitoring results.



Conclusions:

1. The National Strategy on Gender Equality 2021–2030 aims at the economic empowerment of women through their socio-economic empowerment, including “rural women”. On the other hand, the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2023 – 2030 (the draft is currently undergoing public consultation), defines the decent employment of women and men through the implementation of comprehensive labor market policies as a strategic goal. The Employment Strategy does not define any other classifications within the women’s group, unlike the Strategy on Gender Equality, which even includes “women from rural areas” as a separate group. So, the NSES 2023–2030 (draft) did not observe the general principle of national strategies aligning with the NSDEI 2030 framework that also includes the NSGE 2021–2030.
2. In regards to our audit objective “the employment of women in rural areas”, seen from the point of view that municipalities are the first institution where individuals turn for any problem, including the request for employment, it is not found that women in general, or women in rural areas are defined as a separate group. In the documents that define the commitments of the municipalities or the NAES, such as the agreements, no goals or specific activities have been set for women in general or for women in rural areas in particular, with the aim of informing them about the opportunities of employment.
3. In the implementation of employment policies for our focus group i.e “rural women” but not only, cross-institutional collaboration and coordination with local self-government units also plays a fundamental role. Currently, despite the existing cooperation between the National Agency for Employment and Skills and the municipalities, the services delivered to jobseekers, i.e. rural women in our case, are ineffective. The information exchange with Local Self-Government Units does not lead to the addressing of issues that prevent rural women from accessing the labor market.
4. Periodic monitoring of the implementation of the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2019–2022 was carried out for each activity and the relevant monitoring reports were drawn up. Based on the audit focus, the data were grouped into women and men. No strategy activity data pertain to rural women. Moreover, there is no finding as to whether the monitoring of the activities carried out to implement employment goals has facilitated the identification of issues or the addressing of issues for improvement. There is no clear indication as to the drafting of employment promotion policies in reference to the monitoring results and if so, what type of policies.



Recommendations:

1.1 Recommendation:

The National Agency for Employment and Skills shall monitor the implementation of the terms of the active agreements it has with the Local Self-Government Units. In the future the aim shall be the gathering information according to administrative units in order to identify rural women who want to be employed. Also, the agreements to be concluded with the municipalities in the future, shall include activities with a focus on the rural women group. [Until September 2024 and so on](#)

2.1 Recommendation:

The National Agency for Employment and Skills shall collaborate with Local Self-Government Units in order to establish one stop shops for dealing with employment issues in those municipalities where there are no local employment offices. [Until September 2024](#)

3.1 Recommendation:

The National Agency for Employment and Skills in collaboration with Local Self-Government Units shall identify rural women's needs to participate in the labor market as well as to plan funds in order to finance their employment encouraging programs. [Until September 2024 and so on](#)

4.1 Recommendation:

The National Agency of Employment and Skills shall analyze the results of the monitoring of the activities developed in fulfillment of the objectives of the National Employment Strategy and undertake specific activities that address the problems found by the results of the monitoring. [Continuing](#)

Audit Team

Ermira Vojka - Head of the audit team
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ALBANIAN SUPREME AUDIT INSTITUTION

6

ANNEXES

Entities comments

National Employment and Skills Agency sent its comments no. 1178/3 Protocol. dated 19.01.2024, on the Draft Audit Report administered in the Supreme Audit Institution no. 262/30 Protocol, dated 23.01.2024:

1. Entity claims:

The entity in relation to audit findings no. 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, pages 36–37 of the draft report, has no objections, but through claims, NAES has clarified the manner of its operation, employment programs and work processes which were initiated during this audit's implementation phase and are currently **in process**.

On finding no.1 Explanation:

National Agency for Employment and Skills supports the integration of people who are actively looking for a job, into the labor market. Employment Offices register and treat every job seeker who appears, with employment services every job seeker. Registered unemployed jobseekers agree to be included in the labor market through participation in employment promotion programs.

On finding no.2 Explanation:

Employment Promotion Programs for 2020 have started on the 4th quarter of the year. This programs will be concluded on the second quarter of 2021. Therefore, the post-incentive tracking, which must be carried out 6 months after the end of these programs, coincides with the second 3 months of 2022. The survey/tracking stage started in March 2022 and ended in July 2022. The database containing the tracking results was submitted to the Central NAES to proceed with the Report validation, analysis and preparation processes which was finalized within 2022. According to the process and deadlines mentioned above, during the period March–July 2023, the process of tracking the participants in the 2021–2022 EPP was carried out. As of this moment the validation of data has been completed and now we are on the process of designing the report.

On finding no.3 Explanation:

We again emphasize that, the National Agency for Employment and Skills, supports the integration of people who are actively looking for a job, and have appeared before our Employment offices with the intent to register, into the labor market.

On finding no.4 Explanation:

Pursuant to Law No. 57/2019 "On Social Assistance in the Republic of Albania", and DCM No. 597/2019 "On the definition of procedures, documentation, and monthly allowance of the economic aid and the use of the additional conditional funding for the economic aid", active working age members capable of working, whose families own/use agricultural land and reside in the village, do not have the obligation to appear and register at the Labor Office. However, pursuant to DCM No. 822, dated 24.12.2019 "On inter-institutional work coordination mechanism for the employment referral of working age individuals and members from economic assistance beneficiary families", of Joint Order between the Ministry of Finance and Economy and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection No. 52, dated 26.01.2022 "On the Approval of the Referral Mechanism for the Employment and Social Integration of Active Working Age

Individuals”, 12 regional commissions, which assess and refer members of active working age for employment and social integration, were established and are still operating in all regions. These commissions consist of representatives from the State Social Service, the Regional Directorates of Employment and the Directorates of Social Services in the municipality. NAES is totally engaged in handling all cases of Economic Assistance beneficiaries and their integration into the labor market.

On finding no.5 Explanation:

The NAES possesses data on vocational training course participants according to their relevant municipality of residence. Even though Vocational Training Centers are localized in the major cities and, based on demands and specific needs, they have also provided courses in smaller municipalities in cooperation with Vocational Secondary Schools and businesses. For the northeastern region, vocational training courses are provided by the Mobile Vocational Training Center, which delivers courses in several local units in the region.

Audit Team’s opinion:

As per the above, regarding the entity claims, they provide a broad view and clarify the processes of the employment programs. The audit team considers these efforts, which will be addressed in the audit report, but the findings and recommendations remain unchanged because NAES must ensure that all initiatives launched in 2023 are finalized and developed successfully. Moreover, based on the audit topic, the audit team encourages NAES to foster cooperation with other central and local institutions in order to integrate rural women into the labor market.

2. Entity claims:

-Regarding audit findings “The National Agency for Employment and Skills did not establish one-stop shops at Local Self-Government Units, which lack local employment offices, thus not complying with the National Strategy on Employment and Skills”, the explanation is as follows: In order to achieve the territorial cohesion of employment services, the structure of the Regional Employment Directorates has been revised and approved. For the first time, 2 local mobile employment offices have been set up in Tirana and Durrës, where specialists will be engaged in uncovered units and areas. Furthermore, many administrative units without offices have dedicated specialists. We can mention: Rrogozhina, Shijaku, Policani, Vau i Dejës, Patosi etj. However, a significant innovation is the digitization of employment services. NAES has given online access to all the main employment services through the e-Albania portal. In this framework, the improvement of the NAES official website was carried out, expanding the range of information and its functionalities, and recently, the employment portal puna.gov.al. Online services are easily accessible, and in many cases, they avoid showing up in person at the counter.

Audit Team’s opinion:

The information received by NAES shows that efforts have been made and alternatives have been found to offer employment services in areas without local employment offices. The audit team considers these efforts, but the finding and recommendation are valid as NAES should ensure that all uncovered areas receive employment services in the most effective way with mobile employment offices or specialists engagement.

3. Entity claims:

Regarding what is addressed in the Draft Audit Report, claims have been presented by the Municipality of Elbasan 54/4, dated 30.01.2024, administered by the Supreme State Audit with Prot. No. 262/31, dated 05.01.2024. The Municipality of Elbasan has filled in the information regarding the data of the administrative units and investments in kindergartens, crèches, and infrastructure in 2023.

Audit Team’s opinion:

Referring to the data submitted by Elbasan Municipality No. 54/4, dated 30.01.2024, available to the audit team on 06.02.2024, this municipality has sent the data missing, and these data have been addressed in the final report.

