

ALBANIA COUNTRY GENDER EQUALITY BRIEF 2020



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ACRONYMS & ABBREVIATIONS

ACA	Albania Community Assist
ACPD	Albanian Centre for Population and Development
AD	action document
ADHS	Albania Development and Health Survey
AFMIS	Albania's Financial Management Information System
ALL	Albanian Lekë
ALUIZNI	Agency for Legalization, Urbanization and Integration of Informal Areas/Buildings
APR	annual programme report
AQAA	Agency for Quality Assurance and Accreditation for pre-university education
AROE	Eurostat's At-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion indicator
ASPA	Albanian School of Public Administration
AU	administrative unit
AWP	annual work plan
BpFA	Beijing Platform for Action
CEC	Central Election Commission
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGEB	Country Gender Equality Brief
COVID-19	Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)
CPU	Child Protection Unit
CRM	Coordinated Referral Mechanism (for domestic violence cases at local level)
CRPD	UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability
CS	cesarean section
CSE	comprehensive sexual education
CSO	civil society organization
CSP	country strategy paper
CoE	Council of Europe
DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
DG NEAR	Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations
DPM	Deputy Prime Minister
DV	domestic violence
EAMIS	External Assistance Management Information System
EC	European Commission
ECA	Europe and Central Asia
ECHO	European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
ESCS	economic, social, and cultural status
EU	European Union
EUD	European Union Delegation
EURF	EU Results Framework
EUROSTAT	Statistical office of the European Union
EVAW	elimination of violence against women
FEM	forced and early marriage
GAP	gender action plan
GBV	gender based violence
GE	gender equality
GEE	Gender Equality Employee
GEEW	gender equality and empowerment of women
GEI	Gender Equality Index
GEL	Gender Equality Law (Law on Gender equality in society)
GEO	Gender Equality Officer
GM	gender mainstreaming
GPG	gender pay gap
GRB	gender responsive budgeting
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

HBS	Household Budget Survey
HSAs	household satellite accounts
ILO	International Labour Organization
INSTAT	Albanian Statistical Office
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
IPMG	Integrated Policy Management Group
JEC	One UN Joint Executive Committee
KPI	key performance indicator
LCDV	Local Coordinator against Domestic Violence
LGBTI	lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans and inter-sex people
LGBTI+	lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, trans and inter-sex people and those who may use different formulations to more accurately describe their identity
LGU	Local (self-) Government Unit
LSGSA	Local Self-Government Support Agency
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MESY	Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth
MFE	Ministry of Finance and Economy
MHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
MSWY	Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth
MTT	Multidisciplinary Technical Team
NGO	non-governmental organization
NHRIs	national human rights institutions
NSGE	National Strategy for Gender Equality (2016-2020)
OOPs	out-of-pocket payments
PHC	primary health care
PLASC	Primary Legal Aid Service Center
PLGP	Planning and Local Government Project of USAID
PoCSD	Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development
PR	public relations
PVoT	potential victim of trafficking
RBM	results-based monitoring
SAA	Stabilization and Association Agreement
SBS	sector budget support
SC	steering committee
SDC	Swiss Development Cooperation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
Sida	Swedish International Development Agency
SILC	European Union statistics on income and living conditions
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
STIs	sexually-transmitted infections
SWG	sector working group
TA	technical assistance
TG	thematic group
ToR	terms of reference
UN	United Nations
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Plan
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
USD	United States Dollar
VAW	violence against women
VoT	victim of trafficking
WEE	women's economic empowerment
WPS	women, peace and security

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of UN Women's Country Gender Equality Brief (CGEB) is to provide a snapshot of gender equality and the situation of women in Albania, particularly against the gender-related indicators across the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Following the UN Women corporate methodology and template, and in consultation with the UN Country Team (UNCT) in Albania, the CGEB is based on a literature review and uses official data produced before (and partially during) the COVID-19-induced crisis. No primary research or analyses was carried out in developing the CGEB, nor did the review process or interpret raw data.

The CGEB covers all gender-related SDG indicators by goal. Since in Albania, the latest available "Country Gender Profile" dates back to 2016, the document was expanded to provide additional quantitative and qualitative information on gender equality that illustrates trends for specific women's rights issues since then. It also covers areas for which, so far, no gender-sensitive SDG indicators have been developed, such as for environmental sustainability. **This information is essential for understanding how gender and other forms of discrimination - which already existed before the COVID-19 induced crisis – intersect, negatively impacting on women's status and gender equality, and undermining efforts to support socio-economic development in Albania today. Economic and health shocks in the context of existing gender inequalities tend to trigger rapid deterioration in women's well-being. Therefore, the CGEB specifically highlights the need for prioritizing women's and girls' needs in the entirety of policy responses, and for a deliberate re-allocation of resources across all sectors that match these needs.** The CGEB closes with a country-specific Matrix of gender-related SDG Indicators for Albania, providing the full collection of relevant gender data currently available. Enhancing country capacity to produce and report on disaggregated and gender-sensitive indicators will be key for monitoring the effectiveness of government measures in actually reaching and benefiting women and girls, and for close tracking of the gendered impact of concrete COVID-19 mitigation and recovery plans.

Global gender indices. Until 2020, Albania had made gradual progress in all global gender indices.¹ There is

significant variability within the index (sub-)categories: women's formal representation in politics and the high number of female students in tertiary education are in striking contrast with women's lack of essential productive resources, as evidenced by the scores in the domains of 'money', 'care provision', 'time use', and 'social power'.

Overall, Albania has a solid normative framework in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex. UN Women's Global SDG Database gives Albania a scoring of 90.9 percent for overall legislative frameworks on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW); 91.7 percent for overall legislative frameworks on Gender-Based Violence (GBV); 70 percent for overall legislative frameworks on Employment and Economic empowerment; and 90.9 percent for overall legislative frameworks on Marriage and Family. Albania is not a party to the UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962). The Ministry of Finance and Economy in charge of labor issues has initiated the ratification procedure for the ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. The Law on Gender Equality in Society served its purpose when initially drafted in 2008, however, no longer fits the current situation and challenges of gender equality in Albania, and therefore requires thorough revision. The definition of rape in the Albanian Criminal Code remains a force-based definition, where the burden of proving violence/resistance falls on the victim.

Current gaps in administrative sex-disaggregated statistics and gender data are likely to reinforce existing inequalities and the vicious cycle between lack of data and no remedial action. The fact that accurate statistical data is unavailable on the number, sex, age, and poverty level of inhabitants by residence area, raises concern on service delivery that responds to needs and vulnerabilities, supports women's human capital and economic opportunities, and increases individual and community resilience. Accurate recent and sex-disaggregated administrative data is unavailable on: the share of people living below 50 percent median income/ below the minimum wage; forced and early ("child") marriage rates; the number of intersex born babies and

1. Such as the Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum Women, the Peace & Security (WPS) Index, and gender indices reported on in the UNDP Human Development Report.

information about the surgeries performed on them; the proportion of young women and men aged 18 to 29 years who experience sexual violence by age 18; the number of managerial positions held by women broken down into senior, middle and junior management; gender differences in digital skills among Albania's population; the gender dimension of the informal sector in Albania; coverage of the population with pension by sex, and coverage with child/family allowances; the proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labor; and the gender-specific impact of environmental pollution in Albania.

Efforts need to be stepped up to ensure effective, inclusive and affordable health care, and access to adequate information and services on sexual and reproductive health, particularly for adolescent girls and boys, and for women and men from vulnerable, rural, and lower-income populations. Albania spends roughly three percent of GDP on health², compared to the average of 9.9 percent of GDP spent by governments in EU-28.³ Out-of-pocket payments (OOPs) are significant: in 2016, one quarter of Albanian households was at risk of impoverishment after out-of-pocket payments, and 12 percent of households were characterized by catastrophic health spending.⁴ Especially women living in rural and remote areas, and Roma and Egyptian women, face limited access to primary health care, and to sexual and reproductive health-care services, and are often unaware of the availability of such services. The use of modern contraceptives among currently married women has dropped from 11 percent in 2008-09⁵ to four percent in 2017-18⁶, considered the lowest in the region.⁷ Only nine percent of the demand for modern family planning methods is satisfied.⁸ Access to reproductive health services for adolescents has been found to be inadequate. There is an urgent need to design and tailor appropriate services for this age-group, considering in particular the impact of unwanted pregnancies on girls. Over the past decade, sex-selective

abortion has increased.⁹ LGBTI+ individuals, due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, expression and characteristics keep encountering difficulties in accessing health care and medical services.¹⁰ The situation of intersex individuals is unknown. The exact number of intersex born babies remains unclear, and information about the surgeries performed on them is unavailable. No comprehensive study exists on universal health care coverage and equitable access to health care.

Gendered educational outcomes significantly contribute to gender disparities in the labor market and the gender wage gap.

Major gendered patterns are apparent in higher education, which is characterized by significant horizontal segregation. In vocational education, the vast majority of graduates (roughly 82 percent) are boys. Underlying reasons are the common mentality regarding so-called "male professions", the social climate in vocational schools, the type of curricula offered, and girls' employment perspectives upon graduation. In tertiary education, the majority of students (60 percent) are girls, compared to 40 percent boys. The fields of study most pursued by girls are education sciences (81.4 percent of girl graduates), health and wellbeing (79.1 percent girl graduates), and human sciences (78.2 percent of girl graduates).¹¹ Boys prevail in the field of services (73.6 percent of graduates), followed by engineering, manufacturing, and construction (62.6 percent), and agriculture, forestry, fisheries and veterinary (55.1 percent). Even though more women graduate from university compared to men, they do not enter the labor force in the same numbers and not in line with their professional qualification.¹² Over-qualification has become more prevalent in recent years. Working in a job that has lower educational requirements than one's own education level is associated with a 'wage penalty', which has been shown to be higher for women than men.¹³ The overall rate for Youth not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) is 30.1 percent - the highest in Europe. Gender differences in NEET rates are

2. INSTAT (2019). Albania in Figures 2019. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7176/albania-in-figures.pdf>

3. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Healthcare_expenditure_statistics

4. *ibid.*

5. Albania Demographic and Health Survey I (2008-2009). See: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr230/fr230.pdf>

6. Albania Demographic and Health Survey II (2017-2018). See: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR348/FR348.pdf>

7. https://albania.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/what_has_changed-family_planning.pdf

8. <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/AL>

9. World Vision & UNFPA (2012). Sex imbalances at birth in Albania, https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA_report_Albania2012.pdf; Together for Life (2018) in the framework of "Strengthening democracy in healthcare system through respecting human rights" project, with the support of MATRA program of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. See: <https://togetherforlife.org.al/en/aborti-selektiv-baze-gjinore-ne-shqiperi/>; http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6850/population-on-1-january-2020_.pdf

10. Alliance Against Discrimination of LGBT (2020). SDGs implementation in the context of Albania – An LGBTI+ Perspective.

11. INSTAT (2020). "Women and men in Albania", pg. 57-58. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7376/burra-dhe-gra-2020.pdf>

12. INSTAT (2020). Labour Market 2019. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/labour-market-2019/>

13. ILO (2019). Skills and jobs mismatches in low- and middle-income countries. See: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/-/-ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_726816.pdf

compounded by residence. In rural areas, NEET rates are 2.0 percentage points higher for young women, while in urban areas, rates are 3.5 percent higher for young men.¹⁴

Violence against women/gender based violence remains widespread, affects more than 50 percent of women in Albania, and challenges the integrity of all women and girls. Official statistics on the number of reported cases of domestic violence show a slight decrease over the past three years, indicating that VaW, GBV and domestic violence (DV) are seriously underreported. Not all Coordinated Referral Mechanisms (CRMs)¹⁵ established in municipalities to treat domestic violence cases are effectively functioning. Specialist support services are understaffed, under-budgeted, insufficient, and not tailored to treat all forms of violence and all groups of women, or other family members in need. Some court decisions regarding the issuing of the emergent protection orders/protection orders are incomprehensible and against the philosophy of the law. The current level of practical implementation of legislation, in addition to the numerous cases of sexual abuse reported recently, are a warning sign that the real situation of violence against women and girls is highly critical. The COVID-19-induced crisis exposed several gaps in the law related to the response for protection and provision of services to victims of domestic violence during emergency situations, which need to be addressed. Not all forms of violence against women and girls are prioritized and addressed equally by the state. For example, incest remains a taboo. Data is not published, there are no studies on the issue, and duty bearers are ill-prepared to respond and provide adequate support. Measures, including at the level of legislation, also need to be taken regarding violence against women in elections, physical and sexual harassment in public spaces and at the work place, and online harassment.

While women's formal representation has increased, men hold the vast majority of political and economic positions of power. The introduction of the 30 percent gender quota for National Parliament resulted in an increase in the share of women MPs from 23 percent

in 2015 to 26.2 percent in 2019. At the level of regional assemblies, where a 50 percent quota applies, 35.9 percent of women councillors are women. Recent amendments of the Electoral Code did not increase the gender quota for parliamentary elections (which remains at 30 percent), however, introduced a 30 percent gender quota for the elections of bodies of principal local government units, and for all levels of the electoral administration. The amendment also foresees the rejection of candidate lists of political parties that fail to comply with the gender quota, which replaces the previous ineffective sanction of fines.¹⁶ Additional recommendations - submitted by the Working Group on Gender and Equality in Decision-Making - which aim for gender parity remain highly valid, e.g. introducing a 50 percent quota for candidates during parliamentary elections and for those running for the office of mayor. Women occupy 45.5 percent of ministerial positions, and 26.4 percent of managing positions of largest quoted companies. Women's representation among board members of the Central Bank of Albania is 48.1 percent, which is more than twice the EU-28 average of 20.3 percent.

Gender gaps in economic opportunities include low labor force participation, high levels of informality, gender segregation, and low access to productive inputs.

The overall activity rate for the population aged 15 to 64 steadily increased over the period 2013-2019. However, women's labor force participation (61.6 percent) is lower than men's (77.6 percent), with a persistent average gender gap of 18 percentage points. Occupational stereotypes limit women's choices, with women working predominantly in sectors such as health and social work, education, manufacturing, and agriculture, which are characterized by lower salaries. Agriculture remains the primary sector employing women, with 41.6 percent women compared to 32.3 percent men.

Stereotypical gender roles and the country's unmet child care need significantly contribute to women's inactivity rates. Women carry out 96 of domestic chores and remain out of the labor force mostly because they

14. ILOSTAT (2020): <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/youth/>

15. Information provided by Ministry of Health and Social Protection in the framework of preparing the Draft Fifth Report on the implementation of CEDAW in Albania, version of September 2020.

16. According to the Draft Fifth Report on the implementation of CEDAW in Albania (version of September 2020): "Due to non-compliance with gender quotas in the multi-name lists of candidates for MPs in 2017 central elections, the CEC imposed administrative sanctions with fines in the amount of 1 million ALL for the Socialist Party (non-compliance with the gender quota in Berat region), 1 million ALL for the Socialist Movement Party for Integration (non-compliance with the gender quota in Tirana region), and in the amount of 12 million ALL for the Democratic Party (non-compliance with the gender quota in all 12 regions, the highest financial penalty for a political party since the application of the quota system). During the process of verifying the multi-name lists of candidates for the municipal council, the ascertained cases of non-fulfillment of the gender criterion for the consecutive ranking of genders in the list were returned to the proposers for correction / completion, in compliance with the procedures set out in Electoral Code. Within the legal deadline, the respective entities re-submitted the multi-name lists of candidates for the municipal councils, respecting the gender quota criteria. In terms of correcting and correcting multi-name lists regarding the observance of gender quotas, the CEC **did not apply** to any electoral subject the sanction set out in the Electoral Code regarding gender equality: that of **rejecting the list of candidates** for the municipal council..."

perform unpaid care work at home (18.0 percent of women compared to just 1 percent of men), or are attending school (22.3 percent female versus 28.1 percent male students/pupils). In 2019, informal employment in Albania as a percentage of total non-agricultural employment was 35.6 percent for men and 21.8 percent for women, showing a reduction of 4.8 percent for men but just 2.2 percent for women since 2015.¹⁷ When informal employment in agriculture is included, the rate of informality in Albania is 61.0 percent, representing more than half of the employed population.¹⁸

In 2019, the unemployment rate for men aged 15-64 was 12.2 percent versus 11.8 percent for women. Overall, the unemployment rate declined for both women and men compared to the previous year, yet decreased for men by almost one percentage point, while for women only by 0.5 percentage points.

The proportion of women protected by state insurance or social security was found to have increased significantly for women, namely from 26 percent to 46 percent, while for men, the increase was only modest, from 34 percent to 37 percent.¹⁹ Yet, public social protection expenditure (excluding health) on people of working age was only 0.2 percent of national GDP²⁰, compared to the EU-28 average of 28.1 percent.²¹

The gender pay gap (GPG) - calculated for the formal sector - was 10.7 percent in 2018, and 10.1 in 2019 in favor of men. In comparison with the EU-28 average, Albania's GPG is significantly lower, which can be explained as a result of women's lower participation in the labor market and the persistent labor participation gender gap. GPG is highest in sectors where women are concentrated, reflecting the impact of horizontal segregation on women's wages. The concentration

of women in the informal economy and in just a few sectors limits economic growth at a time when Albania needs to increase productivity and diversify its sectors of employment, in particular toward science, information and communication, and entrepreneurship.

The presence of women in business increased during the last decade. In 2019, the percentage of women owning or managing a business was 25.4 percent.²² The majority of women's enterprises are under-capitalized micro and small businesses in predominantly informal and lower value-added sectors.²³ The pace of women's economic inclusion through private sector development remains slow, especially for women in rural areas, and the impact of gender norms that result in direct and indirect discrimination is found at all levels. By law, women have equal rights to inheritance as well as ownership and disposal of land and property. However, the land registration and legalization processes have resulted in more than 80 percent of land titles being in the name of the 'head of household' or former head of household (husband, father-in-law, brother, father, grandfather), limiting women's entitlements to productive resources and services that directly derive from holding a land title (such as registering as farming business, credit, and extension service).^{24,25} While during the last six years, improvement has been noticeable for women to access credit, the number of women taking loans is almost half the number of men, as is the average amount of loan taken by women compared to men.

Access to justice remains an area where women face significant barriers in claiming their social, economic and human rights. A significant share of the population says that the justice system does not protect their rights, and this notion is more pronounced among women (68.8 percent) than men (31.2 percent).²⁶ Low awareness-raising,

17. INSTAT (2020). Women and Men in Albania 2020.

18. ILO (2018). *Women and Men in the Informal Economy: A Statistical Picture*. Geneva: ILO. Available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_626831.pdf; Employment in the informal economy = Employment in the informal sector + informal employment outside of the informal sector (i.e. informal employment in the formal sector + informal employment in households). The criteria and sequence were applied systematically to a person's main job in 119 countries with available data from the national labour force survey or similar national household survey. The main purpose is to allow international comparisons. They may differ from the approach adopted at the national level resulting in slightly different estimates of employment in the informal sector and informal employment.

19. INSTAT (2018). Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2018/albania-demographic-and-health-survey-2017-2018/>

20. ILO (2019). World Social Protection Report 2017-19. See: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_604882.pdf

21. Eurostat (2020). Social protection statistics. Statistics explained. September 2020. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/3975.pdf>

22. INSTAT (2020). "Women and Men in Albania". See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/women-and-men-in-albania-2020/>

23. INSTAT (2019) Business Register 2019: See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7172/regjistri-i-ndermarrjeve-2020.pdf>

24. UN Women (2016). National study on economic diversification for women living in Albania rural areas, Tirana: UN Women.

25. UN Women & UNDP (2016). Gender Brief Albania 2016. Prepared by Monika Kocaqi, Ani Plaku and Dolly Wittberger. Tirana: UN Women.

26. UNDP (2017). Survey of access to justice in Albania. See: <https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/survey-on-access-to-justice-in-albania.html>

lack of legal clinics country-wide, cultural resistance among duty-bearers, multiple forms of discrimination, and unfavorable economic standing contribute to victims of gender-based violence, Roma and Egyptian, LGBTI+, disabled and elderly women, children victims of crime or in conflict with the law having limited access to justice, including difficulties in obtaining specialized free legal aid services. The persistent non-execution of court decisions in Albania - including orders concerning the payment of alimony - is a widespread problem.²⁷ Administrative data from 2016 to 2020 indicate that the percentage of non-executed court decisions related to alimony varies from 25 to 40 percent with an increasing trend. Only a limited number of criminal charges have been filed against the debtor parent, i.e. the father.²⁸ Non-execution of court decisions granting protection orders (POs) to victims of gender-based violence, and increasing numbers of documented violations of Protection Orders²⁹ are of concern. The share of gender-based violence cases among those benefiting from legal aid remains low, and in 2019 was less than six percent.³⁰ Significant improvements are needed to make remedies work for women and respond to women's needs.

Data/information on the gender-related aspects of natural resource management, environmental pollution, and the impacts of climate change remains highly limited in Albania, which reveals a clear omission/gap in awareness, discourse and policy. However, cases recently addressed by citizens³¹ reveal clear gender-specific implications, such as the loss of productivity of arable land and children's low birth weight. No information exists on the extent to which gender equality goals have been mainstreamed into the national legal and policy framework on environment and climate change. Similarly, previous floods, the 2019 earthquake, and the 2020 COVID-19-related lockdown have shown that adequate measures in support of women and the most vulnerable citizens still need to be integrated into Albania's risk reduction and disaster preparedness plans.

Adequate financing of gender equality and women's rights is at the core of a smart, effective and forward-looking development and recovery strategy. Among the 38 budget programmes under the medium-term budgeting programme (MTBP) 2020-2022, half address gender inequality issues in sectors such as health, social protection, education, justice, business, and agriculture. Respective gender-responsive budget elements constitute 7.2 percent of the total planned annual budget. While this share represents a clear increase compared to the just one percent in 2015, the amount is far from sufficient for implementing Albania's national commitments and obligations on gender equality and women's rights. Furthermore, no tracking system is in place, and limited information is available on the actual implementation and execution of these gender-responsive budget elements. Public expenditure on domestic violence/gender-based violence can serve as an indicator of the degree of budget execution: as per the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020, roughly three quarters of the budget for DV/GBV measures four years were planned to be covered by the State budget (central and local level), and the remaining 27.8 percent to come from donors.

However, government expenditures on DV/GBV measures constitute just 0.1 percent of total funds allocated, are negligible vis-à-vis the overall budget, and in discordance with the Strategy's commitments.³² Thus, (at least) in the area of DV/GBV, resources are not allocated as initially planned. Information on the share of gender-responsive budget elements at municipal level is unavailable. A significant increase in the share of dedicated public (as well as donor) funds for gender equality and women's rights is required, especially in view of the well-documented COVID-19 induced short- and medium-term negative impacts on the well-being of women and girls in the country.

27. CEDAW(2016). Concluding Observations on the 4th periodic report of Albania, 2016. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/840818?ln=en>

28. For the period 01.07.2016 - 31.12.2016 there were 6100 cases out of which in 1593 cases the debtor had no ability to pay and 70 criminal charges have been applied for non-provision of means of subsistence; in 2017 there were 6132 cases of which in 1758 cases the debtor had no ability to pay, and 80 criminal charges were applied for non-provision of means of subsistence; in 2018 there were 6547 cases, out of which in 2488 cases the debtor had no ability to pay, and 65 criminal charges were applied for non-provision of means of subsistence; in 2019 there were 7221 cases from which in 2754 cases the debtor had no ability to pay and 55 criminal charges were applied for non-provision of means of subsistence; for the period 01.01.2020 - 30.04.2020 there were 7309 cases out of which in 2824 cases the debtor had no ability to pay, and 18 criminal charges have been applied for non-payment of means of subsistence.

29. Monitoring report of the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2016-2020, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2017, 2018.

30. Administrative data from the Ministry of Justice in the framework of preparing the Draft Fifth Report on the implementation of CEDAW in Albania (version of September 2020).

31. Albanian Helsinki Committee monitoring results in the "Report of civil society organisations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania - Beijing+25", published in July 2019. See: <https://rrjetikunderdhunesgjinore-monitorime.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Albanian-CSOs-report-on-the-implementation-of-BPFA.pdf>

32. People's Advocate 2019 Annual Report, published online in Albanian: See: <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/Raporti%20Vjetor%202019%20-%20Avokati%20i%20Popullit.pdf>

A-GENERAL INDICATORS AND HUMAN RIGHTS DATA

Albania has made significant improvements in advancing the normative framework for gender equality in recent years. However, inequalities still exist, and the institutional set-up for gender equality remains under-resourced (both in terms of finances and staff), and requires additional human and technical capacity. Challenges in effectively implementing the legal and policy framework on gender equality negatively affect equality between women and men, and the country's development outcomes overall.

1. Global Indices

Albania has made significant improvements in advancing the normative framework for gender equality in recent years. However, inequalities still exist, and the institutional set-up for gender equality remains under-resourced (both in terms of finances and staff), and requires additional human and technical capacity. Challenges in effectively implementing the legal and policy framework on gender equality negatively affect equality between women and men, and the country's development outcomes overall. This is evidenced, for example, by progress in the Global Gender Gap Index of the World Economic Forum since 2006. In the 2020 GAP, Albania ranked 20 among 153 countries.³³ While representing a significant improvement compared to previous years, this is primarily a result of women's increased formal representation in political decision-making and weakly matched by equality scores in all other GAP dimensions. Similarly, Albania scores relatively high in the EU's Gender Equality Index (GEI) published in 2020, with 60.4 out of 100 points, which is seven points below the EU-28 average.³⁴ However, there is significant variability within the index categories: women's formal representation in politics and the high number of women in tertiary

education are in striking contrast with women's lack of essential productive resources, as evidence by the scores in the domains of money, care provision, time use, and social power. This is also illustrated by the 2019 Women, Peace & Security (WPS) Index, in which Albania occupies rank 57 among 167 countries.³⁵ Progress is evident in women's share of ministerial, parliament and local council seats, financial inclusion, anti-discrimination legislation, and community safety, with no improvement in categories such as women's employment, discriminatory norms, son preference/bias, and intimate partner violence. In UNDP's Human Development Report 2019, Albania occupies rank 69 among 189 countries, reflecting an overall and gradual upward tendency over the past decade.³⁶ However, Albania scores in the respectively lowest tercile under the "Women's Empowerment" and "Life-course Gender Gap" categories in the following areas: women's employment in senior and middle management; the number of girls in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM); the sex-ratio at birth; the share of female employment in non-agriculture; and domestic chores and care work.

2. Global Normative Framework - International Treaties and Commitments

This section summarizes the findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 5.1.1: Whether or not legal frameworks are in place to promote, enforce and monitor equality and non-discrimination on the basis of sex.³⁷

In terms of measuring overall percentage of achievement of this indicator, UN Women's Global SDG Database gives Albania a scoring of 90.9 percent for overall legislative frameworks on Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (GEEW); 91.7 percent

33. <https://www.weforum.org/reports/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality>

34. <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/gender-equality-index-for-the-republic-of-albania-2020/>. It is worth mentioning that for the Albania GEI, the dimension of violence against women (VAW) was not computed.

35. <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/country/albania/>

36. <http://hdr.undp.org/sites/default/files/hdr2019.pdf>

37. Scores are arrived at using the SDG Indicator 5.1.1. methodology for measure, which includes consultations, questionnaires and validation with the government. The scores for each country against Indicator 5.1.1. can be found on the UN Women SDG Database: <https://data.unwomen.org/sdg-monitoring>

for overall legislative frameworks on GBV; 70 percent for overall legislative frameworks on Employment and Economic empowerment; and 90.9 percent for overall legislative frameworks on Marriage and Family.

2.1. Human Rights treaty bodies

- In 1993 Albania acceded to the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women** (CEDAW)³⁸, and in 2003 to its Optional Protocol³⁹, related to individual complaints and inquiry procedures. However, despite its ratification in 1993, CEDAW did not become official part of Albania's legislation - and hence enforceable - until in late 2008, when the complete text was finally published in the Official Gazette. So far, no individual complaints have been submitted against Albania.
- The latest **Concluding Observations of CEDAW Committee** addressed to Albania in 2016 highlight a number of concerns, which remain largely relevant.⁴⁰ They include lack of knowledge about the CEDAW Convention among legal professions, law enforcement agencies and public at large, including women; lack of implementation of the legislation on gender equality and non-discrimination; significant legal and practical barriers for women to access justice, including lack of legal aid and non-execution of relevant court orders; decrease in the national human and financial resources allocated to the national gender machinery; barriers for women to participate in political and public life, in particular women belonging to disadvantaged or marginalized groups; high prevalence of gender based violence against women, including low rate of reporting of cases, insufficient implementation of the coordinated referral mechanism for domestic violence (DV) cases at local level; insufficient number of shelters and other rehabilitation services for women survivors of violence; limited access to education for Roma and Egyptian girls, and girls with disabilities, as well as children living in rural and remote areas; barriers related to employment, including women's concentration in the informal labor market, the gender wage gap in the private sector, and limited access to the formal labor market for women from minority groups; the excessive use of abortion as a method of birth control, including gender-biased sex-selection/sex-selective abortion⁴¹, as well as limited access for women living in rural and remote areas, and Roma and Egyptian women to primary health care and sexual and reproductive health-care services; disparities in access to basic services, such as education, employment and health care, of rural women and disadvantaged groups of women - Roma and Egyptian women, women with disabilities, migrant women, lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, women in detention, secluded women, and asylum-seeking women.
- Albania is Party to the **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**; the **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights**; the **Convention on the Rights of the Child**, the **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination**; the **Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment**; the **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families**; the **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance**; and the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

However, Albania it is not a party to the UN Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages (1962).

- The latest **Concluding Observations on Albania of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (2019)** *inter alia* expressed the Committee's concerns about the lack of a gender equality policy and strategy that addresses the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women and girls with disabilities; lack of reliable information on the level of implementation of, and results achieved by, the National Action Plan on Disability 2016–2020 in respect to women and girls with disabilities; the lack of information on the concrete results of the implementation of the law on measures against violence in family relations, and about the unavailability of comprehensive data and statistics on persons with disabilities who are

38. Law no. 7767, dated 09.11.1993 "For adherence to the Convention" On the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women". See: <http://arkiva.km.gov.al/?fq=brenda&m=news&lid=8894>

39. Law no. 9052, dated 17.4.2003, "On the accession of Republic of Albania in the Optional Protocol of Convention "On the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women". See: People's Advocate Report on the implementation of CEDAW in Albania, 2016, pg.8 in: <https://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/CEDAW-Avokati%20-%20AL%20-%20SHTYP.PDF>

40. CEDAW(2016). Concluding Observations on the 4th periodic report of Albania, 2016. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/840818?ln=en>

41. See: <https://www.unfpa.org/gender-biased-sex-selection>

victims of violence, including sexual violence and abuse, or multiple forms of discrimination.⁴²

- The latest **Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on Albania (2019)** *inter alia* expressed the Committee's concerns about the absence of information on the situation of women belonging to minorities and the multiple forms of discrimination they face, as well as the fact that Roma and Egyptian women and children are disproportionately represented among victims of trafficking, particularly for the purposes of sexual and labor exploitation, and for forced begging.⁴³
- The latest **Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families on Albania (2019)** expressed its concern about the absence of disaggregated statistical information that would provide information on the protection of women migrant workers.⁴⁴ The Committee was also concerned about lack of a clear and specific provision prohibiting intersecting and multiple forms of discrimination faced by migrant workers and members of their families, and the fact that existing legislation does not provide special protection to women migrant workers, including domestic migrant workers. In addition, the Committee expressed its great concern about Albania being a source, transit and destination country for victims of trafficking, including for women and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor.

2.2. Universal Periodic Report and Special Procedure

- In 2019, Albania underwent the third cycle of the **Universal Periodical Review (UPR)** - a process that involves a review, of the human rights records of all UN Member States. The UPR Outcome report includes a great number of recommendations related to women's rights, the majority of which focuses on domestic violence and gender-based

violence (around 33 recommendations).⁴⁵ Other UPR recommendations include the effect of climate change on women and girls, lack of economic aid and social services to women affected by blood feud, trafficking of women and girls, and discrimination faced by lesbian, bisexual and transgender women, including with regards to access to health services and education.

- In 2009, Albania issued a Standing Invitation to the UN Special Rapporteurs (UN SRs).
- Since the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, the Government of Albania and women's rights organizations continue to be politically active in engaging in national, regional and global dialogue on the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA). In 2019, the Government prepared its **National Review for implementation of Beijing +25**⁴⁶, and the Monitoring Network against Gender Based Violence⁴⁷ prepared an alternative report.

2.3. Regional instruments

- In 2011, Albania became Party to the **Council of Europe's Convention for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)**, followed by ratification in 2013. In 2017, Albania delivered the first country report, and the first Baseline Evaluation report was issued by GREVIO (group of independent experts in charge of monitoring the Istanbul Convention), which provides a comprehensive analysis of existing gaps in the government's response to domestic and other forms of violence against women and relevant recommendations to address these gaps. The GREVIO 2017 baseline assessment report on Albania⁴⁸ emphasizes that Albania must: (i) ensure that measures taken in accordance with the Convention address all forms of violence against women, in a holistic and comprehensive fashion (paragraph 4); (ii) harmonize the definition of domestic violence

42. CRPD (2019). Concluding observations on the initial report of Albania. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3848317?ln=en>

43. CERD (2019). Concluding observations on the combined 9th to 12th periodic reports of Albania. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3792804?ln=en>

44. CMW (2019). Concluding observations on the second periodic report of Albania. See: <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2FPPrICAqhKb7yhssob6HJ3hv3YNutTMY92Jef2tmYeU3xKk27Rdby9jF5oMzRx29NgdK3cwbMWMnD-NykhzB%2B%2BXygDcZ3UqsGHnkFYA68tgDWKIpsGSNPHIx4M>

45. UNHRC (2019). Universal Periodic Review - Albania. See: <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/ALindex.aspx>

46. https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/RCM_Website/Albania.pdf

47. A Network of women's rights organizations established in 2017 with support of UN Women, to advocate for, and monitor, the implementation of Government's international and national commitments on gender equality and end of violence against women. See: <https://rjetikunderdhunesgjimore-monitorime.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Albanian-CSOs-report-on-the-implementation-of-BPfA.pdf>

48. CoE (2017). GREVIO – Baseline Evaluation Report Albania. See: <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-first-baseline-report-on-albania/16807688a7>

with the Convention (paragraph 9); (iii) promote a clear understanding within society of the gendered nature of violence against women and its unacceptability under any pretext what so ever (paragraph 22); (iv) strengthen the machinery for combating violence against women by providing appropriate human and financial resources at both the central and municipal levels, and giving due regard to the additional proposals made by GREVIO (paragraph 27); (v) provide stable and sustainable funding levels for women's NGOs working to support victims and prevent violence (paragraph 32); (vi) set up rape-crisis centers and/or sexual violence referral centers in the framework of a multi-sectorial response targeting the community at large, aiming at breaking the existing taboos in regard to sexual violence and encouraging reporting (paragraph 110); and (vii) amend the definition of rape so that it is based on lack of freely given consent, does not require demonstration of use of force or resistance, and in the case of rape involving children between 14 and 18, does not depend on whether or not the victim has reached puberty; criminalize the non-consensual sexual behavior described in paragraph 1, indents b and c of Article 36 of the Convention; take the necessary measures to ensure that any act of sexual violence between former or current spouses or partners as recognized by internal law is criminalized (paragraph 139), etc. In 2018, under the lead of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Albania prepared an action plan⁴⁹ for the implementation of GREVIO urgent recommendations⁵⁰. This plan and updates on its implementation are regularly shared in the annual meetings of the Committee of the Parties to the Convention, and the Committee

is expected to publish a comprehensive report on its implementation in early 2021.

- Since 2004, Albania participates in the Western Balkans Stabilization and Association Process. On March 25th 2020, the Council of the European Union decided to open accession negotiations⁵¹, which was endorsed by the European Council the following day.⁵² As part of the EU accession process, Albania receives bilateral financial and technical assistance for adopting the **EU acquis** (a body of EU laws, rules, resolutions, declarations, regulations, directives and treaties), which entails implementing a series of reforms in various sectors and across levels of governance. Compliance with EU gender equality law is part of the *acquis*. The first stage is the correct and timely transposition of gender equality requirements of EU law into national legislation. The second stage is the subsequent correct application of the rules by duty bearers, including the enforcement of the rules by public authorities, if gender equality criteria and targets are not met. During the pre-accession period, GoA made significant progress on gender equality at the normative level.⁵³ However, as evidenced by EU Annual Reports⁵⁴, recommendation from international reporting (UPR 2013, CEDAW periodic reporting 2016, BPfA progress report 2014, GREVIO report 2017), and analysis of national gender indicators, implementation significantly lags behind. While Albania is expected to gradually approximate also implementation to the EU Gender Equality *acquis*, achievement of substantive gender equality targets across relevant sectors has not been made conditional in the EU accession process.

49. This action plan prepared with UN Women support was presented by GoA in the fourth meeting of the Committee of the Parties to the Convention, held in Strasbourg on 30 January 2018.

50. As sent through the communication IC-CP (2018) 4prov (cf. item 9 of the draft agenda of the 4th meeting), dated 22 January 2018, point A.

51. <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-7002-2020-INIT/en/pdf>

52. <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/43076/26-vc-euco-statement-en.pdf>; Albania will have to meet certain conditions - the primary concerns raised in the Council's decision are implementation of justice and electoral reforms, fight against crime and corruption, Albanian asylum seekers in the EU, amendment of media laws in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission.

53. Law on Gender Equality (2008); Law on Measures Against Violence in Family Relations (2006 and amendments in 2008, 2010 and 2018 and currently in the process of approval for other amendments as presented and discussed in the Commission of Legal Issues, Public Administration and Human Rights on June 2020); Law on Protection from Discrimination (2010); National Strategy on Development and Integration (2009-2013 and NSDI II 2015-2020); National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence (2007-2010); National Strategy on Gender Equality and the Reduction of Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence (2011-2015); National Strategy on Gender Equality (2016-2020); National Strategy on Employment and Skills (2014-2020), National Strategy on Social Housing (2016-2025), National Strategy on Social Protection (2015-2020), Policy Document of Social Inclusion (2016-2020), National Action Plan for Youth (2015-2020), National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptian Communities (2016-2020), National Action Plan for LGBTI (2016-2020), etc.

54. See various European Commission Staff Working Documents: Albania 2018 Report: <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-first-baseline-report-on-albania/16807688a7>; Albania 2019 Report: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-albania-report.pdf>; Albania 2020 Report: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf

3. General demographic indicators

Population: The population of Albania on 1st January 2020 was 2,845,955 inhabitants (1,425,342 women and 1,420,613 men), representing a 0.6 percent decrease compared to 1st January 2019. The natural population (births-deaths) has been decreasing over the past years, and it is lower for men than for women, with respectively 3122 and 3512 units. During 2019, emigration increased by 13.3 percent. Net migration (immigration-emigration) is negative and amounted to minus 23,082 inhabitants in 2019.⁵⁵

Rural versus urban: According to population estimates on distribution by residence area, roughly one third of the population (31 percent) lives in the capital of Albania, Tirana.⁵⁶ Since population figures are not disaggregated by rural and urban location, accurate data on the number, sex, and age of inhabitants by residence is unavailable.

Age demographics: Albania's population is characterized by ageing. The median age of the population increased from 36.7 years in 2019 to 37.2 years in 2020. The youth dependency ratio (ratio between the number of persons under working age 0-14 and the number of persons of working age 15 to 64) decreased from 25.1 percent to 24.6 percent. During the same period, the old age dependency ratio (ratio between the number of persons above the working age 65+ and the number of persons of working age 15 to 64) increased from 20.5 percent to 21.6 percent.⁵⁷ The overall sex ratio is 109, with a prevalence of men among the population up to the age of 35-39 years old.

Life expectancy at birth has steadily increased over the past two decades, and in 2018 was 78.5 years.⁵⁸ It is 76.8 years for men and 80.2 years for women. Men's life expectancy is 1.5 years below the male EU average, whereas it is 3.7 years below the EU average for women.⁵⁹ Data on healthy life expectancy and on life expectancy at 64+ disaggregated by sex and by urban-rural residency is unavailable.

The total **fertility rate** is 1.8 children per woman⁶⁰, which has increased from 1.6 children per woman in 2008-09.⁶¹

Structure of households: The mean household size is 3.3. Household size in urban areas is smaller (3.1 members) compared to rural areas (3.5 members). During the past decade, the household size decreased from 3.8 to 3.3. This decline is especially noticeable in rural areas, where household size declined from 4.1 to 3.5. Still, the average household size in Albania is higher than the EU-average of 2.3 members⁶², since (patrilocal) multi-generational co-habitation is common in rural as well as urban areas.

Households in Albania continue to be dominated by families that have men as head of household: they are 5.4 times more in number than households that have a woman head of household. Findings from the Household Budget Survey in 2018 show that in Albania, there are 772,664 families of which 84.5 percent have a man, and 15.5 percent a woman as head of household.⁶³ The age group 55-64 years old represents the highest number of families with male heads of households, and the age group 65-74 years for women.⁶⁴ The likelihood of women to be head of household is 2.6 times greater compared to men under the category of "lone person". This means that women are more likely to be head of households, when they live alone (single, or after divorce or death of husband). This is partially a result of women's higher life expectancy, and is more likely to occur after divorce and when a husband passes away, since women's likelihood to re-marry is lower compared to men's. There are more single mothers than single fathers: the number of women living alone with their children is higher than the number of men under the same conditions for all age groups, reflecting men's higher propensity to leaving their families and re-marry after divorce or death of spouse. On average, women-headed households tend to be smaller than male-headed ones. Alimony payments are very rare.⁶⁵

55. INSTAT (2020). "Women and Men in Albania". See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/women-and-men-in-albania-2020/>

56. *ibid.*

57. *ibid.*

58. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=AL>

59. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.DYN.LE00.IN?locations=AL-EU>

60. Albania Demographic and Health Survey II (2017-2018). See: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR348/FR348.pdf>

61. Albania Demographic and Health Survey I (2008-2009). See: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr230/fr230.pdf>

62. EUROSTAT EU-SILC survey 2019. See: https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=ilc_lvpho1&lang=en

63. 1 USD (US Dollar) = 110 ALL (Albanian Lekë)

64. INSTAT (2020). "Women and Men in Albania". See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/women-and-men-in-albania-2020/>

65. See also sections o8-1 Enforcement of Court Decisions, and o8-2 Access to free legal aid.

B-SDG GENDER INDICATORS

The National Institute of Statistics has been conducting the Income and Living Condition Survey (SILC) since 2017, which provides data on relative poverty, income, social exclusion and living standards in the country. One of the innovations and benefits of SILC is that, in principle, the SILC methodology allows exploring gender differences in poverty and inequality by taking into consideration well-being indicators related to education, health, income, and labor at the level of the individual level (and not – as has been the practice so far – at the aggregated household level).

1. Poverty

This section summarizes the findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 1.2.1 “Proportion of population living below national poverty line, by sex”; SDG Indicator 1.2.2 “Multidimensional poverty by sex”; SDG Indicator 10.2.1 “Proportion of people living below 50 of median income by sex”. For SDG Indicators 1.2.2. and 10.2.1., data is unavailable, and therefore, this section aims at explaining the current challenge related to sex-disaggregated poverty data provision in Albania.

The National Institute of Statistics has been conducting the Income and Living Condition Survey (SILC) since 2017, which provides data on relative poverty, income, social exclusion and living standards in the country. One of the innovations and benefits of SILC is that, in principle, the SILC methodology allows exploring gender differences in poverty and inequality by taking into consideration well-being indicators related to education, health, income, and labor at the level of the individual level (and not – as has been the practice so far – at the aggregated household level).

However, the limitations of measuring poverty in Albania lie in the currently applied methodological approach and tools in SILC computation, which remains based on the aggregated income level of the household, applying the OECD equivalence scales.⁶⁶ The same approach of aggregation at the household level is also used in Albania’s Household Budget Survey (HBS) for calculating the absolute poverty rate based on consumption. However, measures that analyze poverty at the household level – such as HBS and Albania’s EU SILC – assume that decisions on household consumption and expenditure are based on fair and equal negotiation amongst all household members. Yet, it is a proven fact that household resources are not distributed equally among its members. If the methodology applied for computing the share of population at risk of poverty does not capture gender-specific differences and inequalities between female and male household members, as is the case in Albania’s SILC, then gender analysis of poverty becomes difficult, even if sex-disaggregated data is provided.⁶⁷ Deeper analysis is needed which considers the influence of life stages, household composition (including presence of children), and the distribution of unpaid care and domestic work to provide insight into how gender inequalities within the family contribute to women’s exposure and vulnerability to poverty.

Keeping the above methodological limitations in mind, data from EU SILC 2017-2018 identified the relative national poverty rate measured as the percentage of population at risk-of-poverty as 23.4 percent in 2018, showing a 0.3 percent decrease compared to 23.7 percent in 2017.⁶⁸ The estimated relative national poverty rate by sex shows a slight and statistically insignificant difference between women and men within the household, which is mainly related to the methodology of computation as described above, rather than reflecting the real gender differences.⁶⁹

66. <http://www.oecd.org/economy/growth/OECD-Note-EquivalenceScales.pdf>

67. For an illustration of the methodological challenges in computing gender-sensitive poverty data, see: UNECE & UN Women (2019). Understanding gender differences in poverty: A global snapshot. See: http://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/stats/documents/ece/ces/ge.15/2019/mtg2/3_UN_Women.pdf

68. The indicators of ‘at-risk-of-poverty’ or ‘social exclusion’ are based on the concept of relative poverty, which takes into account household disposable income, number of household members, and income distribution of the total population. Main indicator definitions: The at-risk-of-poverty threshold represents the lowest annual disposable income above which a person would not be considered at risk of poverty. The at-risk-of-poverty threshold is defined as 60 percent of the median equivalent disposable income for all households. The at-risk-of-poverty rate indicates the percentage of persons living in households where equivalent disposable income is below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold.

69. INSTAT (2019). See: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6543/anketa-e-t%C3%AB-ardhurave-dhe-nivelit-t%C3%AB-jetes%C3%ABs-2017-2018_.pdf

TABLE 1. At risk of poverty rate by activity status and sex in 2017 and 2018

Activity status	2017			2018		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Employed (18 years old and over)	18.6	16.8	17.9	16.9	15.9	16.5
Not employed	26.8	24.3	25.3	26.6	25.1	25.7
Unemployed	42.0	35.7	38.8	43.5	31.8	37.1
Retired	13.3	13.5	13.4	12.5	15.5	14.2
Inactive population - Other	23.5	26.5	25.6	24.2	29.5	27.9

Source: INSTAT, *Women and Men in Albania 2020*

In 2018, the Eurostat at-risk-of-poverty-or-social-exclusion (AROPE) indicator, which corresponds to the share of population either at risk of poverty, or severely materially deprived, or living in a household with a very low work intensity, was half the population, namely 49 percent, showing a reduction by 2.8 percent compared to 2017. According to AROPE, girls and women have a higher risk of social exclusion or risk to fall into poverty compared to boys and men. This higher risk is at a similar level for 2017 and 2018, and across all indicators which define poverty risk.⁷⁰

By employment status, unemployed individuals are at a higher risk of falling into poverty. This was at a similar level in both 2017 and 2018. Unemployed men show a higher risk of poverty than unemployed women. For the population inactive in the labor market, the risk of poverty increased from 2017 to 2018, and the increase was significantly higher for women (plus 3 percent) compared to men (plus 0.7 percent). The age group 0-17 years has the highest risk of poverty.

In 2018, the monthly average consumption expenditure per household was ALL 75,935.⁷¹ Food and non-alcoholic beverages represent the main expenditure category for Albanian households, with an average monthly expenditure value of ALL 33,436⁷², or 44.0 percent of household budget, which is significantly higher compared to the 2018 EU average of 11.0 percent.⁷³ For this consumption category, women heads of household spend 47.0 percent of their total budget,

whereas men heads of households spend 43.6 percent of their budget. Overall, women heads of household spend more on food, water, energy, etc., compared to men, who have higher expenditures for transport, restaurants, and hotels.⁷⁴

Information on the share of population below the minimum wage, disaggregated by sex, is unavailable, but – in principle – could be determined using LFS or SILC data as the source.

So far, Household Satellite Accounts (HSAs) – an HBS-accompanying tool – have not been introduced in Albania yet. HSAs use data already included in national accounts, but cover important gender-specific elements beyond the HBS core system, such as unpaid care work. Among other things, this would help monetize unpaid care work by calculating its value as a significant contributor to GDP.

2. Malnutrition

According to the 2020 Global Nutrition Report, Albania is on course to meet the global targets for under-five overweight, under-five stunting, under-five wasting, and low birth weight, but is off course to meet the targets for infant exclusive breastfeeding, anemia in women of reproductive age, and diabetes and obesity among both women and men.⁷⁵ Albania still experiences a malnutrition burden among

70. INSTAT (2019). See: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6543/anketa-e-t%C3%AB-ardhurave-dhe-nivelit-t%C3%AB-jetes%C3%ABs-2017-2018_.pdf

71. Approx. 700 USD

72. Approx. 300 USD

73. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/news/themes-in-the-spotlight/household-expenditure-2018>

74. INSTAT (2020). *Women and Men in Albania 2020*. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/women-and-men-in-albania-2020/>

75. Albania Nutrition Profiles (2018, 2020). See: <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/europe/southern-europe/albania/#profile>

its under-five population. As of 2017, the national prevalence of under-five overweight is 16.4 percent, which has decreased from 23.2 percent in 2009.⁷⁶ The national prevalence of under-five stunting is 11.3 percent, which is the highest among Western Balkan countries.⁷⁷ Albania's under-five wasting prevalence is 1.6 percent.

Breastfeeding significantly contributes to preventing common childhood illnesses and reducing child mortality, and has been shown to have a positive impact on child stunting and wasting. Hence, Agenda 2030 sets the target at a minimum 50 percent rate. In Albania, 36.5 percent of infants under-6 months are exclusively breastfed. Albania's 2015 low birth weight prevalence of 4.6 percent (compared to the sub-region's average of 7.3 percent⁷⁸) decreased slightly from 4.9 percent in 2000.⁷⁹

Albania's adult population also faces a malnutrition burden. 25.3 percent of women of reproductive age have anemia⁸⁰, and 7.7 percent of adult men suffer from diabetes, compared to 7.1 percent of women. Meanwhile, 21.8 percent of adult women and 21.6 percent of adult men are considered obese. The prevalence of overweight and obesity is pronounced in the capital, where diabetes (type two) has also been on the rise, which is the result of various factors related to lifestyle and diet. Progress in developing sound public health systems has been slow, thwarting efforts to reduce under-nutrition, while rapid urbanization and the adoption of diets high in refined carbohydrates, saturated fats and sugars, combined with a more sedentary lifestyle are commonly cited as the major contributors to the increase in overweight and chronic diseases.

3. Health

This section summarizes the findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 3.1.1 "Maternal Mortality Ratio (MMR)"; SDG Indicator 3.3.1 "Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations"; SDG Indicator 3.7.1 "Percentage of women of reproductive age who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods"; SDG Indicator 5.6.1 "Proportion of women aged 15-49 who make their own decisions regarding sexual relations, contraceptive use and reproductive health care"; SDG Indicator 3.7.2 "Adolescent birth rate". In 2017, the vast majority of the population over 16 years old perceived their overall health condition as 'very good' or 'good'. Men seem to be more self-satisfied than women about their overall health condition⁸¹, also highlighted in the Gender Equality Index (GEI) for the Republic of Albania 2020: "Persons who assess their health as good or very good are less represented among women (78.9 percent) than men (83.9 percent)".⁸² However, men (21 percent) have a significantly higher likelihood to prematurely die from non-communicable diseases than women (13 percent).⁸³

Out-of-pocket payments are significant in Albania. In 2018, Albania spent 3.05 percent of GDP on health⁸⁴, compared to the average of 9.9 percent of GDP spent by governments in EU-28.⁸⁵ WHO estimates that almost 58 percent of total health expenditure in 2016 was on out-of-pocket payments (OOPs), including formal co-payments for services.⁸⁶ High OOPs are an indication that not only un-insured individuals, but also those who are contributing to the scheme, face direct formal and informal payments at facilities. In 2016, one quarter of Albanian households was at risk of impoverishment after out-of-pocket payments, and roughly 12 percent of households were characterized by catastrophic health spending (i.e. out-of-pocket payments greater than 40 percent of household capacity to pay for health care).⁸⁷ The high share of OOPs prevents households with low incomes from seeking care and increases their

76. <https://globalnutritionreport.org/media/profiles/v1.9.5/pdfs/albania.pdf>

77. <https://globalnutritionreport.org/resources/nutrition-profiles/europe/southern-europe/>

78. *ibid.*

79. <https://globalnutritionreport.org/media/profiles/v1.9.5/pdfs/albania.pdf>

80. The prevalence of anemia among women of reproductive age (% of women ages 15-49) in European Union was reported at 19.1 % in 2016, according to the World Bank. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SH.ANM.ALLW.ZS>

81. Albania Demographic and Health Survey II (2017-2018), October 2018.

82. See: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6661/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_albania_2020.pdf

83. WHO (2018). Noncommunicable Diseases Country Profile Albania. See: https://www.who.int/nmh/countries/alb_en.pdf?ua=1

84. INSTAT (2019). Albania in Figures 2019. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7176/albania-in-figures.pdf>

85. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Healthcare_expenditure_statistics

86. WHO (2019). Primary Health Care on the road to universal health care coverage. 2019 Monitoring Report. See: https://www.who.int/healthinfo/universal_health_coverage/report/uhc_report_2019.pdf?ua=1

87. *ibid.*

financial risk. In rural areas, costs related to travel to health facilities in particular, coupled with potential cost for services that are not available in the public sector, prevent the population from accessing health facilities. Analyses of the impact of impoverishing health spending have so far focused on households in general, obscuring differences in area of residence and the gender-specific impact of out-of-pocket payments on women and men. Women's higher unmet health care need might therefore be related to the gender-specific need of sexual and reproductive health, but also to their economically weaker situation and related (in)capacity to pay. No comprehensive study exists on universal health care coverage and equitable access to health care. A WHO study identified un-pooled financial flows and lack of government stewardship in the sector as reasons for limited financial incentives to increase efficiency, affordability, and service quality.⁸⁸ Comprehensive analysis is needed for shedding light on the drivers of OOPs and, in particular, on the specific impact of OOPs on women and men from various population groups.

As evidenced in UN Women's Albania Rapid Gender Assessment, during the COVID-19-induced crisis, access to health care services was negatively impacted, with almost every fifth respondent mentioning major or some difficulties in seeking health services for any purpose.⁸⁹ See also section C – Women, gender equality, and the COVID-19 period.

3.1. Related National Health Policies

The **National Health Strategy 2016-2020**⁹⁰ has set four main strategic priorities: (i) investing in the health of the population through a life-course approach; (ii) provision of universal healthcare for all; (iii) strengthening citizen-centered health systems; and (iv) improving governance and cross-sector cooperation for health. Various measures are foreseen to achieve these strategic priorities. Measures include awareness raising for healthier lifestyle choices, improvement of existing health programs including health screening and check-ups, as well as provision

of new preventative and health promotion programs with a focus on rural areas. Further measures include increased availability of diagnostic, treatment and rehabilitation services at the regional and local level. Gender specific goals are not mainstreamed; however, they are present in measures aimed to provide better care for mothers and new-born, access of mothers to support groups for promoting breastfeeding, and free screening of breast cancer, as well as screening of other types of women-specific cancers.⁹¹

The Strategic Document and Action Plan 2017-2021 for Sexual and Reproductive Health⁹², is an integral part of the Health Sector Strategy 2016-2020 and identifies four major strategic objectives related to sexual and reproductive health of the population: (i) family planning and maternal health; (ii) newborn health, infant, child, and adolescent; (iii) disease of the reproductive system (tumor diseases, infections sexually transmitted, HIV and AIDS and infertility); and (iv) electronic health (E-health).

The Albanian National Contraceptive Security Strategy 2017-2021⁹³ outlines a priority for family planning and provides a framework for contraceptive security by stating the strategic goal of achieving a 20 percent increase in the 2016 level of prevalence of using modern contraceptive methods by 2021. The strategic document envisages provision of contraceptives and free family planning services for every citizen who needs them, throughout the territory. The strategy also outlines the efforts to implement the "Total Market Approach"-concept, by taking into account the roles of the public sector, commercial sector, and non-governmental organizations in ensuring the continuous supply of the population with contraceptives. This approach is based on the presumption that not all individuals who need family planning are able or willing to pay the full market price for contraceptives, and promotes the provision of free or subsidized contraceptives to those who cannot afford the market price. In this way, the entire population who has a demand for contraceptives, including marginalized and under-served population

88. Assessment of sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health in the context of universal health coverage in Albania. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2019. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO, pg. 8. See: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/330457/9789289054706-eng.pdf>

89. UN Women (2020). The impact of COVID-19 on women's and men's lives and livelihoods in Europe and Central Asia: Preliminary results from a rapid gender assessment. <https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/07/the-impact-of-covid19-on-womens-and-mens-lives-and-livelihoods>

90. http://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Health-Strategy-2020_eng.pdf

91. Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania 2020, pg.25 See: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6661/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_albania_2020.pdf

92. <https://albania.un.org/sites/default/files/2020-05/no.39-%20Dokumenti%20Strategjik%20dhe%20Plani%20i%20Veprimt%20p%C3%ABr%20Sh%C3%ABndetin%20Seksual%20dhe%20Riprodhues%202017-2021.pdf>

93. <http://www.un.org/sites/default/files/Contraceptive%20Security%20Strategy%202017-2021%20%28%29.pdf>

groups, should be provided with access to a wide range of quality contraceptives at an affordable price.

The Basic Primary Healthcare Service Package⁹⁴ also provides care pre-, during- and post-partum for mother and child, family planning, prevention and early detection of breast cancer and cervical cancer, sexual health, management of violence and abuse of women, domestic violence, prevention and management of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), as well as other infections of the reproductive system, etc. The section on “Adult care” recommends referrals for pregnant women with severe hypertension and pregnancy-induced diabetes. Albuminuria and oedema are indications for referral but not specifically in relation to pregnancy. The “Antenatal care” package is included in the section on “Women’s health care and reproductive health”. The contents address WHO-recommended components for healthy eating, iron and folic acid supplementation, screening, prevention and treatment of infections including syphilis and HIV, screening for anemia, and interventions for physiological symptoms. The package includes ten antenatal visits for primiparous women and seven for multiparous women, and four free-of-charge ultrasonography examinations during 0–10 weeks, 13 weeks, 20–21 weeks and 33–34 weeks. The “Emergency care” part of the “non-traumatic medical emergencies (including referral and transportation)” section of the “Basic package of services” includes management of bleeding and first aid in pre-eclampsia and eclampsia during pregnancy. It also includes a list of recommended referrals. Pregnancy conditions are not specifically mentioned, but could be subsumed under “life-threatening diseases and injuries”.⁹⁵

3.2. Maternal mortality rate

The **maternal mortality rate** (MMR) was 3.4 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2018, and 7 in 2019.⁹⁶ Data on MMR disaggregated by area of residence is not available.

3.3. HIV infection

Albania remains a country with a low prevalence of **HIV infection** (0.03 percent), and the incidence is 0.003 percent.⁹⁷ However, there is an increasing trend of new cases in recent years, with more newly infected men than women.

TABLE 2. Number of registered HIV/AIDS infections 2016-2019 by gender

Year	Number		Percent	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
2016	105	23	82.0	18.0
2017	69	25	73.4	26.6
2018	76	26	74.5	25.5
2019	72	29	71.3	28.7

Source: Institute of Public Health 2020.

ADHS 2017-2018 identified a low level of comprehensive knowledge of HIV/AIDS among the population, which has more or less remained unchanged between 2008-09 and 2017-18. Knowledge was found to be higher among women (30 percent) compared to men (21 percent). Over the last decade HIV testing increased among both women and men. The percentage of women ever tested and who received the result, increased from two percent in 2008-09 to four percent in 2017-18. The proportion of women tested during the past 12 months increased from less than one percent to two percent. However, only one percent of men respondents were found to have been tested during the past 12 months.⁹⁸ Approximately 44 percent of people living with HIV currently are receiving anti-retroviral therapy.⁹⁹ Civil society organizations have repeatedly reported a distressing situation of continuously interrupted services, inefficient treatment plans and procurement mechanism, and major deficits in drug availability, outreach to high-risk population groups, and public awareness-raising.¹⁰⁰

94. Approved by DCM. No. 101 dated 04.02.2015. See: www.shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Paketa_e_rishikuar_e_miraturar.pdf

95. Assessment of sexual, reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health in the context of universal health coverage in Albania. Copenhagen: WHO Regional Office for Europe; 2019. License: CC BY-NC-SA 3.0 IGO, pg. 20. See: <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/330457/9789289054706-eng.pdf>

96. INSTAT (2020). “Women and Men in Albania”. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/women-and-men-in-albania-2020/>

97. Comparison of administrative data (Institute of Public Health, 2019) with respective UNAIDS figures (<https://www.unaids.org/en/regionscountries/countries/albania>).

98. INSTAT (2018). Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18. See: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR348/FR348.pdf>

99. WHO (2019). Primary Health Care on the Road to Universal Health Coverage 2019 Monitoring Report. See: https://www.who.int/healthinfo/universal_health_coverage/report/uhc_report_2019.pdf?ua=1

100. <https://www.lgbti-era.org/news/shocking-and-unacceptable-2020-albania-fails-its-hiv-aids-fight>

TABLE 3. Cumulative number of HIV-positive individuals receiving anti-retroviral treatment

	Year				
	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Women	130	145	157	179	187
Men	293	352	411	402	424
Total	423	497	568	581	611

Source: Institute of Public Health, 2020

3.4. Reproductive Health Care and Contraception

The 2002 Law on Reproductive Health regulates the management, administration, functioning and supervision of all reproductive health services and activities in public and private health institutions. According to the 1991 legislation on abortion, abortion is allowed until week 12 of the pregnancy and after that, depending on the health of mother and fetus, special permission is required, which is given by a specialized medical commission.

Women living in rural and remote areas, and Roma and Egyptian women, face limited access to primary health care and sexual and reproductive health-care services, and are often unaware of the availability of such services. This is an issue raised also by the CEDAW Committee in its 2016 Concluding Observations on Albania, together with the excessive use of abortion as a method of birth control, including sex-selective abortion.¹⁰¹ Civil society organizations in Albania have raised the need for amendments to the reproductive health legislation with the view of ensuring better access for disadvantaged communities.¹⁰²

The use of modern contraceptives among currently married women has dropped from 11 percent in 2008-09¹⁰³ to four percent in 2017-18.¹⁰⁴ This finding is noteworthy, given the fact that family planning knowledge is almost universal in Albania, with 97 percent of all women and 96 percent of all men

aged 15-49 years familiar with at least one method.¹⁰⁵ Usage of modern contraceptive methods in Albania is probably the lowest in the region.¹⁰⁶ The total demand for family planning among currently married women decreased from 82 percent in 2008-09 to 61 percent in 2017-18. Only 9 percent of demand for modern family planning methods was found to be satisfied.¹⁰⁷ The unmet need for family planning is 17 percent among currently married women, and 12 percent among all women.¹⁰⁸ Access to reproductive health services for adolescents has been found to be inadequate. There is an urgent need to design and tailor appropriate services for this age-group, considering in particular the impact of unwanted pregnancies on girls.

Over the past 20 years, there has been a sharp increase in the percentage of deliveries by caesarean section (CS) in Albania, from 13.4 percent of births in 2002 to 31 percent of births in 2018.¹⁰⁹ This is above the EU average.¹¹⁰ Globally, a C-section rate of approximately 19 percent is considered to be ideal for the health of both women and newborns. Sharp increases in CS births have been shown to be related to the emergence of private sector health facilities and suggest a trend towards the commercialization of giving birth in Albania.

LGBTI+ individuals, due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sexual characteristics, in addition to their economic status, background, gender, ethnicity and other characteristic that make them targets of multiple discrimination, keep encountering difficulties in accessing health care

101. CEDAW(2016). Concluding Observations on the 4th periodic report of Albania, 2016. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/840818?ln=en>

102. <https://www.naibisummitcpd.org/commitment/ensure-access-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-especially-under-served-albania>

103. Albania Demographic and Health Survey I (2008-2009). See: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/fr230/fr230.pdf>

104. Albania Demographic and Health Survey II (2017-2018). See: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR348/FR348.pdf>

105. *ibid.*

106. https://albania.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/pub-pdf/what_has_changed-family_planning.pdf

107. <https://www.unfpa.org/data/world-population/AL>

108. *ibid.*

109. <https://data.unicef.org/country/alb/>

110. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-eurostat-news/-/DDN-20191217-1>

TABLE 4. Number of births per 1000 girls of the age group 15-19 years old

Disaggregation unit	Year								
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
per 1,000 females in the respective age group	20.6	21	20.6	22	20.1	17.5	16.2	14.5	14.2

Source: INSTAT, "Women and Men", 2019 and 2020

and medical services.¹¹¹ The situation of intersex individuals remains extremely vague, as the exact figures regarding the number of intersex born babies remains unclear, and information about the surgeries performed on them is unavailable. Health personnel generally lack information, training, and a general understanding of intersex issues. At the same time, it is acknowledged that infantile surgeries performed on intersex children are common in Albania.

3.5. Sex-selection

Sex-selective abortion is clearly defined in the European Commission's Convention of Human Rights and Biomedicine as gender discrimination. As evidenced in the 2012 World Vision-UNFPA study¹¹², and by research conducted in 2018¹¹³, the phenomenon is present in Albanian society. According to official data of INSTAT, from 1990 onwards, in Albania more males than females have been born, surpassing the natural sex-ratio. Sex ratio at birth has increased, marking 109.0 in 2019, from 108.0 in 2018.¹¹⁴ Districts such as Gjirokastra, Korça, Kukës and Lezha have a male-to-female sex-ratio of over 1,11 which means 111 boys are born for 100 girls, while the natural sex-ratio is 105 males for 100 females. Among medical staff participating in the research, 87 percent stated that couples show a pronounced preference for a male child, and this preference is particularly pronounced among men (i.e. in 75 percent of the cases). While the practice of selective abortion has been tentatively mentioned in the National Review for the implementation of Beijing+25¹¹⁵, it has not been addressed yet as violence

against women and gender discrimination in relevant health and gender policy. Informative, educational and awareness raising materials on sex-selective abortion are lacking. No further research has been conducted, and reporting by public hospitals, private clinics, and the Institute of Public Health is insufficient and requires coordination.

3.6. Adolescent birth rate

The adolescent birth number decreased from 20.6 births per 1000 girls in the age 15-19 years old in 2011 to 14.2 in 2019, but is higher than the EU average of 9.8 births per 1000 girls in the age of 15-19 years old.¹¹⁶ According to ADHS 2018, teenage pregnancy is slightly higher in rural areas (five percent) compared to urban areas (three percent). Educational background and household wealth influence the likelihood, with six percent of teenage mothers in the lowest wealth quintile compared to one percent in the highest quintile. The percentage of teenage mothers is nine percent among those with a primary-eight-year education, and one percent among girls with secondary, professional, or technical education.¹¹⁷

4. Education

This section summarizes the findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 4.5.1 " % of women and men with Graduate level degree of higher" / "Primary School Enrollment, by %" / "Secondary School Enrollment, by %" / "Tertiary school enrollment, by %". While global

111. Alliance Against Discrimination of LGBT (2020). SDGs implementation in the context of Albania – An LGBTI+ Perspective.

112. World Vision & UNFPA (2012). Sex imbalances at birth in Albania, https://www.unfpa.org/sites/default/files/resource-pdf/UNFPA_report_Albania2012.pdf

113. Conducted by "Together for Life" organization in the framework of "Strengthening democracy in healthcare system through respecting human rights" project, with the support of MATRA program of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. See: <https://togetherforlife.org.al/en/aborti-selektiv-baze-gjinore-ne-shqiperi/>

114. http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6850/population-on-1-january-2020_.pdf

115. https://www.unecce.org/fileadmin/DAM/RCM_Website/Albania.pdf

116. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SP.ADO.TFRT?locations=EU>

117. INSTAT (2018). Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017 – 2018. See: <https://dhsprogram.com/pubs/pdf/FR348/FR348.pdf>

education indicators refer to “parity”, the administrative data available in Albania is provided in percentages.

The most recent data in education does not reflect any education participation gap until the age of upper secondary level. The participation at upper secondary level is lower for girls, more specifically 99.3 percent for boys and 91.7 percent for girls. Higher education is characterized by significant horizontal segregation. The gender gap in participation in vocational education is very high in favor of boys. The underlying reasons are the common mentality regarding so-called “male professions”, the social climate in vocational schools, the type of curricula offered, and girls’ employment perspectives upon graduation.

At higher (tertiary) education level, the gender gap is in favor of girls (71.8 percent for girls and 48.7 percent for boys). There is significant horizontal gender segregation: the field of study most pursued by girls graduated is education sciences, where 81.4 percent of graduates are girls, followed by health and wellbeing, with 79.1 percent girl graduates, as well as arts and human sciences, where 78.2 percent of girls graduate.¹¹⁸ Even though more women graduate from university compared to men, they do not enter the labor force in the same numbers and not in line with their professional qualification.¹¹⁹ The stereotypical patterns of girls’ and boys’ participation in all levels of the education system, in conjunction with the stereotypical division of family responsibilities upon marriage, significantly contribute to the gender disparities in the labor market and the gender wage gap. Over-qualification has become more prevalent in recent years. However, working in a job that has lower educational requirements than one’s own education level is associated with a wage penalty, which has been shown to be higher for women than men.¹²⁰

Women’s employment is shaped by domestic and caregiving responsibilities in ways that men’s is not: when juxtaposing LFS employment data with women’s civil status and the number of dependent children, the negative impact of marriage and child-birth on women’s presence in the labour market becomes readily apparent. This points to the obstacles women face in entering, remaining, and progressing in the labor

market, which is partially related to gender-stereotyped patterns in education, but also to the lack of affirmative action, and scarce or missing social care policies and investments, particularly for child care provision. The overall rate for Youth not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET) is 30.1 percent (the highest in Europe). It is high for both sexes, with an overall average 0.7 percentage points higher for young men. However, gender differences in NEET rates are compounded by residence. In rural areas, NEET rates are 2.0 percentage points higher for young women, while in urban areas, rates are 3.5 percent higher for young men.¹²¹

In the educational system, bullying and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity continue to be widespread. As an illustration, out of the 421 cases of violence and discrimination reported to the LGBT Alliance in 2018, 25 percent of them occurred on the premises of educational institutions.¹²² However, the number of reported cases of discrimination and violence to the school authorities is extremely low. Educational staff is ill-prepared to manage conflict and mitigate common gender stereotypes. Although revision of curricula and a series of awareness-raising activities focusing on the education system are foreseen in the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020 and in the National Action Plan for LGBTI people 2016-2020, they remain unimplemented.¹²³

During the COVID-19-induced crisis, accessing online-schooling turned out to be jeopardized by unavailability of computers, laptops and tablets, and insufficient connectivity to the internet in both urban and rural areas, particularly among poorer and disadvantaged population groups. Apart from that, the educational system was ill-prepared for a sudden and unprecedented shift to online-schooling. Furthermore, schools had already been closed since the earthquake in November 2019. This raises serious questions not only on skill outcomes but also on the wider aspect of girls’ socializing and peer interaction, since due to gendered norms, girls are far more confined to homes than boys.

Administrative data supporting *SDG Indicators 4.2.1 and 4.2.2 “Enrollment into pre-primary/day care, by sex”* at national level is incomplete. As a result of

118. INSTAT (2020). “Women and men in Albania”, pg. 57-58. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7376/burra-dhe-gra-2020.pdf>

119. INSTAT (2020). Labour Market 2019. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/labour-market-2019/>

120. ILO (2019). Skills and jobs mismatches in low- and middle-income countries. See: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_726816.pdf

121. ILOSTAT (2020): <https://ilostat.ilo.org/topics/youth/>

122. Alliance Against Discrimination of LGBT (2020). SDGs implementation in the context of Albania – An LGBTI+ Perspective.

123. In the 3rd Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in 2019, Albania received 19 recommendations based on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics, out of which five were rejected, among them revision of curricula and same-sex partnership recognition. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/ALindex.aspx>

reforms in decentralization, the collection of data on enrollment in early childhood education/day care of age groups 3-5 years has become one of the new responsibilities of local government units. However, the statistical system linking the local with the central level of government is currently being established, and data flow from local to central level requires significant strengthening. Overall enrolment into pre-primary education dropped from 80 percent in 2018 to roughly 76 percent, with an insignificant difference between girls and boys.¹²⁴ The specific preparatory pre-school year for children age 5 is obligatory in Albania. In 2018, 73 percent of children age 3-4 were found to attend an organized early childhood program.¹²⁵ However, attendance is dependent on a child's area of residence and socio-economic background: 88 percent of children in the highest quintile versus 62 percent of children in the lowest quintile participate in early childhood/learning programs.¹²⁶

5. Women's Empowerment

5.1. National Legal Framework on Equality and Non-Discrimination

- The Albanian Constitution prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender (Article 18/2); the definition of discrimination against women in Law 9970/2008 on Gender Equality (article 4/3) is fully in line with Article 1 of CEDAW; and the Law on Protection from Discrimination (2010) provides a detailed regulation of protection measures against different forms of discrimination, including on the basis of gender. According to this law, a person, or group of persons, who claims to have been discriminated based on gender or other grounds is entitled to submit complaints to the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and/or to the court. However, the number of complaints on gender-based discrimination to the Commissioner and courts remains very low due lack of information among women about the existence of such redress mechanisms, and to lack of awareness among women rights organizations on this issue.¹²⁷
- Amendments to the Labor Code in 2015 included an improved definition of sexual harassment in the workplace; the reverse of the burden of proof for sexual harassment; additional guarantees for women's return to work after maternity leave; and non-discriminatory remuneration for all. The reverse of the burden of proof in matters of discrimination was also included in the Code of Administrative Procedures (2015). However, this principle has not been reflected in the Albanian Code of Civil Procedures, despite requests for its revision by national human rights institutions (NHRIs) when the Code was amended in 2017, based on the relevant recommendation of the 2016 CEDAW Concluding Observations. Recent positive steps include amendments related to breastfeeding mothers, and the introduction of flexi-time. The Law on Protection from Discrimination, which is currently under review by the Parliament, also needs to fully align its provision regarding reversal of burden of proof in accordance with the respective CEDAW recommendation.
- The Law on Gender Equality (2008) regulates fundamental issues of gender equality in public life, the protection and equal treatment of women and men with regards to equal opportunities for the exercise of their rights, as well as their participation and contribution in the advancement of all social spheres. The law established the gender equality mechanism/"machinery", including the National Council on Gender Equality, which is an advisory body composed of government and civil society representatives. However, the gender machinery in Albania - including the respective Sector of Policies and Strategies for Social Inclusion and Gender Equality (Gender Equality Unit) in the Ministry of Health and Social Protection - and other bodies tasked with implementing this law, have faced challenges of technical capacities and limited national budgetary allocations, as raised also by the CEDAW Committee.¹²⁸ While this law served its purpose when initially drafted in 2008, it no longer fits the current situation and challenges of gender equality in Albania, and therefore requires thorough revision.

124. See: <http://uis.unesco.org/country/AL?undefined&wbdisable=true>

125. INSTAT (2018). Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-18.

126. *ibid.*

127. Draft Report on the implementation of CEDAW in Albania (2020, forthcoming): "During the period 2016-2020 Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination has handled a total of 39 cases, of which 12 cases of gender based discrimination, 21 cases of a combination of gender-based discrimination plus concomitant causes and 6 cases of discrimination at work".

128. CEDAW(2016). Concluding Observations on the 4th periodic report of Albania, 2016. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/840818?ln=en>

5.2. National Policy, Programmes, and Action Plans

Gender Equality: In 2016, Albania adopted the third national Strategy on Gender Equality and its Action Plan 2016-2020 (NSGE 2016-2020). The four strategic goals of the NSGE 2016-2020 are: (i) economic empowerment of women and men; (ii) effective and equal (*de facto*) participation of women in public and political decision-making processes; (iii) reduction of gender-based and domestic violence; and (iv) strengthening of the coordinating and monitoring role of the National Mechanism on Gender Equality, and of society's awareness to advance on gender equality. The ministry responsible for gender issues (i.e. the Ministry of Health and Social Protection) prepares and submits the annual monitoring report on the implementation of NSGE 2016-2020 to the National Council for Gender Equality. However, CSOs - including the ones who are members of the NCGE - have highlighted that the reports' content "*is neither related to the objectives of the National Strategy nor its indicators*",¹²⁹ Furthermore, monitoring reports from civil society¹³⁰ and NHRIs¹³¹, particularly with regards to Strategic Goal no.3 "Reduction of Gender-Based and Domestic Violence", indicate a low level of implementation of activities under this objective, including minimal fund allocation by both central and local government for respective activities. The funding gap was one of the main shortcomings of the Strategy at the time of its adoption, as the document itself acknowledges a 27.8 percent financial gap for the activities under all four objectives. This gap is more pronounced for Strategic Goal 3 "Reducing gender-based violence and domestic violence", with 64.0 percent of funds unavailable that are required for implementing activities. Another important aspect to be highlighted regarding Strategic Goal no.4 is related to the fact that after the parliamentary elections of 2017, the GoA decided to merge some ministries, which directly impacted on the previously dedicated Sector for Gender Equality. The Sector was transformed and incorporated into the Sector for Policies and Strategies on Social Inclusion and Gender Equality under the new Ministry of Health and Social Protection. While the previous Sector for Gender Equality had already been notoriously under-staffed, until July 2020, only two persons remained responsible for all national issues on gender equality and violence against women. In July 2020, an additional person

was appointed as part of this sector. Supported by UN Women, MHSP is currently preparing the evaluation report on the implementation of the NSGE 2016-2020, as the preliminary step that will guide the process of drafting the new NSGE for the period 2021-2025.

Human Rights: In 2017, the Government of Albania adopted an Action Plan on the Implementation of recommendations received during the second UPR cycle (2014) and CEDAW reporting (2016). The Action Plan needs to be updated with measures for the implementation of the new UPR recommendations issued in 2019 during the third cycle.

Human Trafficking and Exploitation: The National Strategy on the Fight against Human Trafficking 2018-2020 for the first time included a budget and financial costing of activities. It is organized around four main pillars: (i) investigation and criminal prosecution; (ii) victim protection and assistance; (iii) prevention; and (iv) coordination. The issue is also addressed by the Cross-sectoral Strategy on the Fight against Organized Crime, Illicit Trafficking and Terrorism 2013-2020, increasing the efforts in the fight against trafficking of persons. In addition, the Council of Ministers adopted Decision No. 499, dated 29.08.2018 "On the adoption of standard operating procedures (SoPs) for the protection of victims and potential victims of trafficking". The main objective of these documents is the provision of protection, including timely and appropriate identification of potential victims of trafficking, adults or children, Albanians, foreigners or stateless persons, for all types of exploitation, internal or international trafficking, linked to organized crime or not. The procedures are drafted in the same spirit as international instruments, addressing issues of prevention and combating trafficking in persons, and they reflect the recommendations given on this issue by international bodies.

Women, Peace and Security (WPS): In 2018, the Government adopted the first National Action Plan for the implementation of the provisions of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security (2018-2020). The Implementation of the Action Plan is being monitored by a coalition of civil society organizations. The first report on the implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Albania, launched in

129. See: "Report of CSOs for the implementation of Beijing+25 in Albania", pg. 26. <https://rrjetikunderdhunesgjimore-monitorime.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Albanian-CSOs-report-on-the-implementation-of-BPFA.pdf>

130. Monitoring Reports of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020 from 2017 to 2020 in around 11 municipalities, prepared by Gender Alliance for Development Centre (GADC) and Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN), with the support of UN Women, EU and SIDA.

131. Forthcoming report of the People's Advocate on the monitoring of the gender budgeting of measures to address violence against women by local and central governments, during 2018.

October 2019, highlighted that 63 percent of the plan had been achieved, leaving several actions that had to be taken to increase GoA's commitment to the WPS agenda. Given the findings of the report, the first year of implementation of UNSCR 1325 in Albania led to an increase in women's participation in decision-making positions: a woman heads the Parliamentary Security Commission, which now has five women members; and the Parliament is represented by one woman in NATO and one in the UN Security Council. Following the launch of the Action Plan, the number of women officers in the army increased by eight percent and of non-commissioned officers by 10.7 percent. Also, the curricula of the Military Academy, Police College, and the Faculty of Crime Investigation were reviewed, and the topic of gender mainstreaming included.¹³² Recently, Municipalities have been requested by MHSP to provide information on the implementation of the UNSCR 1325 NAP in the framework of GoA preparing the second monitoring report for the period 2019-2020.

5.3. Institutional framework/arrangement for gender equality

In Albania, several structures are responsible for addressing issues of gender equality and gender-based violence and domestic violence on ministerial, local, and parliamentary levels.¹³³

- According to Law No. 9970, dated 24.7.2008 "On Gender Equality in Society", and Law No.9669, dated 18.12.2006 "On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations", the responsible state authority for gender equality and combating domestic violence is the minister who covers the issues of gender equality. With the organization of the new government in September 2017, based on point e) of DCM No.508, dated 13.09.2017, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) was charged with the responsibility of gender equality issues and on combating domestic violence. The Ministry exercises this function through the leading role of the Minister at the National Council on Gender Equality and through the work of the Sector of Policies and Strategies on Social Inclusion and Gender Equality, as part of the General Directorate of Policies and Development in the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

According to Law No.9770, dated 18.12.2008 "On Gender Equality in Society", articles 11 and 12, the National Council on Gender Equality (NCGE) is the highest advisory body in charge of issues related to gender equality, and of ensuring gender mainstreaming in all fields, especially in political, social, economic and cultural fields. The Council is established by order of the Prime Minister and its composition is renewed once every four years. The NCGE is chaired by the Minister of MHSP and composed of nine representatives of line ministries at the rank of deputy minister and top management, as well as three representatives of civil society, who are selected through an open competition, by applying the criteria of having the expertise and making a contribution to these fields. The composition of the NCGE was renewed in 2018, reflecting changes in the composition of ministries and their representatives after the 2017 elections. CSO representation was made stronger and more comprehensive, and now includes AWEN (a network), CLCI (managing the UN Women Monitoring Network) and CRCA (representing some children's rights NGOs). The NCGE composition is renewed every four years.

- Central and local state institutions shall have the legal obligation to collaborate with the respective minister responsible for gender equality issues for exchanging information and facilitating the accomplishment of the minister's function. For this reason, there shall be gender equality officers (GEO) appointed in every ministry, who deal with gender equality issues; similarly, every municipality shall appoint one or several local GEOs in their structures.
- Order of Prime Minister No. 32, dated 12.2.2018 "On appointing the national coordinator for gender equality" appoints the Deputy Prime Minister (DPM) as the national coordinator for gender equality, as well as authorizes the DPM to strengthen gender equality mechanism at the central level and to undertake a coordinating role.
- At the level of the Assembly of Albania, on 4th December 2017, the Assembly approved the resolution "On condemning violence against women and girls and increasing efficiency of legal mechanisms for its prevention". In implementation of the commitments made in

¹³² See: <https://albania.unwomen.org/en/news-and-events/stories/2019/10/the-first-report-on-the-implementation-of-resolution-1325-in-albania-launched>

¹³³ Albania: National review on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action – Beijing+25 (2019). See: https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/RCM_Website/Albania.pdf

this resolution and based on Article 19 of this Regulation, with the Assembly's Decision No. 113/2017 dated 4 December 2017, the establishment of the parliamentary sub-committee "On Gender Equality and Ending Violence Against Women", under the permanent Committee on Labour, Social Affairs and Health was approved. In the framework of the process of parliamentary control, this sub-committee continuously requests information on the implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality; reports on the situation of domestic violence and on the scope and functioning of CRMs, as well as on issues of discrimination against women; and conducts hearings with interest groups and institutions. During the legislative process for reviewing the draft law "On some additions and amendments to Law No.9669, dated 18.12.2006 "On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations", as amended in 2018, the deputies of this sub-committee played an important role as members of other parliamentary committees.

- The Alliance of Women Parliamentarians (AWP), which was established in 2013 and re-composed in 2017, is the result of a lobbying movement initiated by women deputies with the aim of promoting gender equality in Parliament and advocating for gender mainstreaming in laws.

Gender equality mechanism at central level: The Sector of Policies and Strategies for Social Inclusion and Gender Equality in the Ministry of Health and Social Protection lacks staff to adequately address the vast responsibilities stipulated in the Law 9970/2008 "For Gender Equality in Society", including coordination and monitoring of the gender equality mechanism/machinery at local government unit (LGU) level. Implementation is hampered by a persistent funding gap, and the institutional mechanism for guaranteeing gender equality needs to be improved.¹³⁴ Over the past years, the formal power of this structure has been progressively weakened. In its current capacity, the Sector has neither political backing, nor the human and financial resources to ensure co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of gender mainstreaming

in policies and programs, including at the local level.¹³⁵ Human and technical support, as well as adequate financial allocations are required for Gender Equality Officers in ministries to effectively exercise their mandate and assume their intended role. With the aim of strengthening the overall national gender equality mechanism, in February 2018, the Prime Minister appointed the Deputy Prime Minister as the National Coordinator on Gender Equality. However, roles and responsibilities of this National Coordinator on the one hand, and the Sector of Policies and Strategies for Social Inclusion and Gender Equality on the other, have not been delineated and coordination still remains to be defined. At the parliamentary level, the sub-committee on Gender Equality and prevention of VAW was also established in December 2017. The National Council on Gender Equality - chaired by the Minister of Health and Social Protection, and composed of nine Deputy Ministers from all lines ministries and three representatives from CSOs - convenes according to statutes, yet assumes a minor decision-making and weak political role. In 2019, on the initiative of EUD and UN Women, gender donor coordination - which had been dormant for a decade - was resumed, yet after a brief revival has been inactive for more than a year.

Gender equality mechanism at local self-government unit level: Making sure that all citizens in need can access essential services and support poses a major challenge to local governments. The period after the November 2019 earthquakes and the current Covid-19-induced crisis show that any response needs to consider women's and men's particular circumstances and specific needs. Developing such socially- and gender-responsive measures, and delivering services to all citizens in need, requires human resources, specific skills, capacities, knowledge and decision-making authority embedded within the local administration. Ensuring that these tasks are supported, coordinated, and monitored in a professional and effective way, the legislation European countries, including Albania, foresees dedicated human resources to operate in a specific position and function: the Gender Equality Officer (GEO).

134. European Commission (2019). Albania 2019 Report. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20190529-albania-report.pdf>; European Commission (2020). Albania 2020 Report https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/albania_report_2020.pdf

135. See e.g. the latest Report on the Evaluation of the implementation of the NSGE 2016 – 2020: "...Specialists (three women and a man) together with the head of the sector have the obligation to coordinate and monitor a set of actions **focused not only on gender equality**, gender-based violence and domestic violence, but also on minorities, diversity, children's rights, etc. (as reflected in the name of the sector). In financial terms there is an **increase in the budget but only for staff salaries**, while other activities related to awareness-raising activities, capacity building, monitoring and evaluation processes, are **carried out mainly with the support of international organizations**. **Technical assistance** through experts who are constantly attached to this sector is also considered **necessary**..."

The GEO function and position has – until now – received limited attention and remains a weak, under-sourced element within Albania’s public administration. However, as revealed by a recent Functional Analysis of Gender Equality Officers at Local Government Unit level¹³⁶, the dedicated GEO position would play an essential role within local government to respond to the manifold (post-) COVID-19 related challenges, and thereby contribute to more self-reliant, thriving, and resilient communities.

GEOs at LGU level are a core element of the national gender equality mechanism. They are foreseen to work across sectors; coordinate integration of gender equality goals into local governance processes (planning, budgeting, monitoring, and reporting); and translate national gender policies, EU Gender Directives and international obligations on concrete actions to achieve equality between women and men to the local level. According to the Albanian Gender Equality Law, GEOs are foreseen to hold a full-time dedicated position within the public administration.¹³⁷ A dedicated position is needed for effective implementation of the respective legislative goals, and - in line with the civil service law - such positions are naturally to be included as civil service positions. However, in the case of GEOs, the interpretation so far has been to consider both dedicated and non-dedicated positions as “acceptable” under the Gender Equality Law.¹³⁸ The majority of LGUs have not appointed a full-time person dedicated exclusively to gender equality issues. Instead, a full-time person, who in several municipalities lacks civil servant status, assumes a multi-functional role, primarily covering the duties and responsibilities of the Local Coordinator against Domestic Violence, combined also with the duties of the Specialist for Child Protection. In many cases, these individuals perform numerous additional tasks related to persons with disabilities, minorities, culture, education, etc. In particular the management of domestic violence

cases occupies a disproportionately large share of GEOs’ attention and working time.

In addition to the identified lack of a uniformed approach, a further challenge arises from the tendency of attaching both positions (LCDV and GEO) to the Social Service Sector/Directory of the municipality. This is in line with the finding that Gender Equality Officers are in fact required to dedicate a large part of their work to DV case management. However, when considering the concrete functions and activities of each of these two positions, only the LCDV is engaging in service delivery to citizens and consequently fits a service position. On the other hand, a Gender Equality Officer primarily engages in gender mainstreaming into policies, plans, processes, procedures and budgets, and therefore qualifies for a policy coordination position. A detailed set of concrete recommendations for required legal, policy, administrative, procedural, and budgetary changes has recently been tabled.¹³⁹

Although not required by law (but foreseen in the European Charter for Equality of women and men in local life), some LGUs have established a Gender Equality Commission. In a number of municipalities, self-organized Alliances of Women Councilors¹⁴⁰ (similar to the Alliance of Women MPs) exist as part of the Municipal Council.

Local self-government and gender-responsive service delivery: The 2015 Law on Local Self-Government (LSGL) substantially increased the role of democratically elected local governments in Albania by assigning to them several new own-functions¹⁴¹, including the provision of a number of social services. When the LSGL was passed, it contained a provision that allowed these new own functions to be financed by conditional grants (“Specific Transfers”) for three years. This transitional period was put in place to give the national government time to both harmonize sectoral legislation and to

136. USAID (2020). Planning and Local Governance Project: “Gender Equality Officers at local level: *condicio sine qua non* for gender mainstreaming in Local Government Units”. Overall Report and White Paper. Key findings were presented in a high-level technical working meeting on 23 June 2020 in Tirana.

137. According to the Law no 9970 date 24.07.2008 “For Gender Equality in Society”, Article 14, point 4 “Local government bodies **appoint one or more local officials who deal with gender equality issues**, next to them” (highlight added). According to Article 4, point 7 of the same law “An official who deals with gender equality issues, is a central or local public administration employee who has specific training and knowledge in the field of gender equality and devotes time to achieving gender equality and gender mainstreaming in the sector or territory covered”. Hence, an official who deals with gender equality issues in line with these provisions is a “gender equality employee”.

138. MoHSP data base, as of February 2020.

139. USAID (2020). Planning and Local Governance Project (PLGP) 2020. “Gender Equality Officers at local level: *condicio sine qua non* for gender mainstreaming in Local Government Units”. Overall Report and White Paper. Key findings were presented in a high-level technical working meeting on 23 June 2020 in Tirana.

140. Established mainly with support of UN Women.

141. For example, running preschools, fire protection, irrigation and drainage, providing counselling services to farmers, and managing and maintaining forests, pastures, and rural roads.

introduce changes in the inter-governmental finance system that would allow municipalities to pay for these new responsibilities from their general revenues. It was expected that municipalities would not only exercise greater managerial control over these functions, but start financing from their general revenues, i.e. from local fees, charges and taxes in combination with transfers they receive from the national government.

This transition period expired at the end of 2019, and financing service provision at local government level has remained a major challenge. These relate to historical underfunding of particularly social services in general; the size of the Unconditional Grant that the national government is currently spending on these functions; collection of local own tax revenues; and limited LGU familiarity with completely new social services that need to be established.

Tasks such as planning for gender equality, mainstreaming gender equality across governance areas including private sector development, gender-responsive resource allocation and budgeting (GRB), supporting services around sexual and reproductive health, and preventing and adequately responding to harmful practices (e.g. child marriage), require significant support, if improvements are to be seen in the near future. General awareness, knowledge and skills among staff remain low. Relevant standard operational protocols and procedures – such as the EU Forced/Early Marriage Road Map - still need to be fully operationalized. Good practice examples of addressing gender equality in all aspects of local governance – such as LGUs adopting and adhering to the articles of the European Charter for Equality of women and men in local life¹⁴², and engaging in GRB as mandated by law - are just emerging and need to be promoted, supported, and sustained.

Additional reasons why measures and services promoting women's rights remain particularly inadequate are (i) weak or missing gender-sensitive

needs analysis, and (ii) limited information available on the related budgetary implications. For example, a number of municipal Social Plans have not been costed (or have been costed only partially), and in the absence of concrete figures, it is difficult for LGUs to make respective budget allocations. Furthermore, technical support for costing of services is needed that is based on objective measures of need, such as a municipality's population, composition, poverty level, and the territory it needs to cover with a particular service. However, respective accurate administrative data is currently unavailable. Availability of information on the estimated costs of service delivery is also essential for supporting a system, in which the national government allocates Unconditional Transfers to all local governments. It must therefore be based on objective measures of the relative needs of delivering these services across the country as a whole.¹⁴³

5.4. Rights in the Family and Marriage

The Albanian Constitution recognizes everyone's right to get married and have a family, which enjoy special protection of the state. The Albanian Family Code guarantees the right to free choice and consent in (heterosexual) marriage, and forced marriage is considered a criminal offence by the Albanian Criminal Code. Same-sex partnership recognition was one of the recommendations of the latest UPR (2019).

The latest available administrative data on legal family issues is "*divorce at request of the spouse for 2018*" by the Ministry of Justice, reported for the year 2018: at the request of the husband, there were 3,001, and at the request of the wife 3,578 divorce cases.¹⁴⁴

The Family Code ensures the same legal age of marriage for both women and men (18 years of age) but the court may authorize marriage under the legal age on important grounds. Under Article 7 of the Family Code, marriage can be concluded between a man and a woman who are 18 years or older. The court in the

142. See: https://www.ccre.org/docs/charte_egalite_en.pdf. Albanian signatories so far are Gjirokastrë, Tirana, Shkodra, Korça, Durrës, Përmet and Elbasan (supported from UN Women/EU GEF I project), as well as Cërrik, Bulqiza, Kamza, Librazhd, Pogradec and Dibra (supported by USAID's PLGP project). Tirana, Shkodra, Korça, Elbasan and Durrës developed respective Local Gender Action Plans (LGAPs) 2018-2020 and approved them in their respective Municipal Councils in 2018. While Cërrik, Bulqiza, Librazhd, Pogradec and Dibra developed the LGAPs 2021-2023 and so far Cërrik, Pogradec, Bulqiza and Librazhd have approved these plans in their respective Municipal Councils (in 2020).

143. With regard to social services, related costing efforts have been undertaken in relation to pre-school provision, supporting a system in which the national government allocates Unconditional Transfers to all local governments based on objective measures of their relative needs. (USAID, 2015. Creating and equitable, transparent, and predictable unconditional grant formula). In addition to adding new funds into the system, municipalities need to be provided with legal authority and technical support. (USAID, 2018. Financing the new own functions of local governments in Albania).

144. INSTAT (2020). "Women and Men in Albania". See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/women-and-men-in-albania-2020/>

location where the marriage is to be concluded may, for sufficient reasons, allow marriage prior to this age. When a minor seeks to enter into underage marriage, this situation is not a competence of the civil registrar. In these exceptional cases, the Court has a special role. While it is aware of the minor age of the applicant, the Court needs to carefully consider the importance of the cause presented or claimed to allow the binding of underage marriage compared to the violation of the legal obligation of the age for marriage. Case by case, the Court must verify whether or not the important causes stand, and according to the case, it may or may not allow the marriage. Arranged marriages or those with mediation (matchmaking) are still evident in Albania, and this is the reason why in such cases, the Court should take into account the risks that this kind of marriage poses to the principle of ‘free consent.’ In some areas of the country, the customs and traditions of the past still have a greater impact. What can be noticed from the monitoring of the judicial practice and the analysis of the decisions related to the permission to enter into under-age marriage is that there is no case when the request to enter into underage marriage was made for a man.¹⁴⁵

GREVIO, in its assessment report on Albania, points out as shortcomings the absence of a provision setting the minimum age under which derogations to the legal age to marry would not be permitted, and lack of clear guidelines for the court when conducting the judicial review of any request by a minor seeking the authorization to conclude marriage. The Istanbul Convention contains three important articles that need to be kept in mind especially in cases of underage marriages. Additionally, the CEDAW Committee was seriously concerned about the practice of child marriage, especially among the Roma and Egyptian communities, often authorized by court decision as an exception to the minimum age of marriage of 18 years.

Furthermore, the Committee was concerned about secluded women and girls who live in isolation imposed as a result of blood feuds for lengthy periods, and about their extremely limited access to education, health care, participation in public and political life and freedom of movement.

Albanian parents who are aware of the gender identity or sexual orientation of their children, put pressure on them not to appear in public as LGBTI, fearing the opinion of relatives and society, but also prejudice and discrimination. As reflected in a perception study conducted in 2017, 76 percent of respondents stated that LGBTI+ people should try to hide their sexual orientation and gender identity, so as to not infringe on their “honor”, and the one of their families and friends.¹⁴⁶ The report also found that lesbians and transgender people experience high levels of domestic violence, but are the least likely to report it, even though acts committed on the basis of sexual orientation and/or gender identity are explicitly criminalized by the provisions in the Albanian Criminal Code.

5.5. Access to assets and financial resources within the household

Census data over the last two decades shows that 98 percent of Albanians own a house. However, it has been very difficult to sex-disaggregate this figure. According to dominant mentality and also defined in some laws, the head of household is the owner of the house or land. In 88 percent of households, a man is the head of household. Qualitative research of laws and practices in property rights confirms that women are strongly discriminated compare to men in term of access to property.¹⁴⁷ The “Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018” gathered some data on property rights by sex, which confirms the disparities between women and men in access to property. Only 30 percent of women declare to own a house compared to 52 percent of men. However, survey findings do not reflect the deeply gendered issue of registration status: while women may believe that they are socially and culturally included, property tends to not be in their name legally. In particular, women’s ownership status regarding agriculture land has deteriorated: only 14 percent of women declare to have any ownership of agriculture land, which is half the rate declared by men (28 percent).

The situation is enhanced when considering access to financial resources in conjunction with ownership of assets within the household. Data on the control over earnings of household members show that 82 percent of married women age 15-59, who receive

145. Observatory for Children and Youth Rights, ‘Marriage in Court? The Rights of Children, Underage Marriage and the Role of the Court’ (Tirana: Observatory for Children and Youth Rights, 2017) See: <https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Early-marriage-report-english.pdf>

146. UNDP (2017). Being LGBTI in Eastern Europe: Albania Country Report. See: https://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/democratic_governance/being-lgbti-in-eastern-europe--albania-country-report.html

147. UN Women (2013, 2016). Women’s property rights in Albania. An Analysis of Legal Standards and their Application. See: http://www.un.org/sites/default/files/WOMEN%E2%80%99SPROPERTY%20RIGHTS%20IN%20ALBANIA_o.pdf

cash earnings, decide together with their husband or partner how to use the money; eight percent decide mainly themselves. For one out of ten women, it is the husband who decides how her earnings are used.¹⁴⁸

5.6. Gender-based violence, Violence against Women, and Domestic Violence

This section summarizes the findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 5.2.1. “Proportion of ever partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual, psychological, economic violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and age”; SDG Indicator 5.2.2 “Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence”; SDG Indicators 5.2.2 and 16.2.3 “Proportion of young women and men aged 18 to 20 years who experience sexual violence by age 18”; SDG Indicator 11.7.2 “Victims of physical or sexual harassment, by sex”; SDG Indicator 16.1.1 “Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age”.

In 2006, Albania adopted the “Law on Measures against Violence in Family Relations” (DV Law), which was subsequently amended in 2008, 2010, 2018, and in October 2020. The 2018 amendments significantly improved the law in accordance with the Istanbul Convention by including provisions for better protection of women and children in situations of immediate danger; adding also preliminary protection measures to be issued by the police for the period up to the issuance of an emergent protection order; more effective judiciary procedures; and extension of protection to victims of violence who are not necessarily cohabitating but involved in an intimate relationship with their perpetrators. Changes of 2020 refer primarily to Article 10/1: The court, as a protective measure of domestic violence, immediately orders the removal of the perpetrator from the house for a certain period of time, in case victim and abuser reside in the same house. The court, when appropriate, shall take into account the needs of the juvenile, elderly or disabled perpetrator and in these cases, the order to remove the perpetrator from the house is issued only when no other measures guarantee the victim’s protection from violence. Other changes are related to “Perpetrator rehabilitation”, specifying e.g. the responsibility of police officers to send the case for criminal proceeding of the perpetrator.¹⁴⁹

Among the new proposals approved in October 2020 are also changes to Article 13/1 by adding point 3/1: “When in the country or in a part of its territory extraordinary measures are taken, the head of the responsible structure of the State Police is obliged to issue the order for the precautionary measures for immediate protection, according to point 2 of this article, in any case when she/he finds that violence has been used. Throughout the period of extraordinary measures, in the request addressed to the court for the evaluation of the preliminary measures of protection obtained through the order for precautionary measures for immediate protection, the police must ask the court to issue a protection order, without first requesting the issuance of immediate protection order”. This specific additional point materialized as a direct result of gaps made evident during the COVID-19 induced emergency in April/May 2020.

The COVID-19-induced crisis exposed additional gaps in the law related to the response for protection and provision of services to victims of domestic violence during emergency situations, which need to be addressed.

- Over the years, secondary legislation to the DV law has been adopted, including the Council of Ministers’ Decision (DCM) No.334/2011 on the establishment and functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism against domestic violence at local level, which is the centerpiece of the country’s coordinated multi-agency response to domestic violence. This DCM is currently under revision; improvements will reflect the changes in the territorial and administrative organization of LGUs, and the aim to increase CRM effectiveness based on the lessons learned from its implementation. In addition to the improvements of the DV Law in 2018, the Joint Directive of the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection No. 912, dated 27.12.2018 “On the procedures and the model of the order for preliminary measures of emergent protection” was approved. This directive aims to establish the procedures that should be followed by the responsible State Police structure for issuing the “Order for preliminary measures of emergent protection”. In addition, the Joint Directive of the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Health and Social Protection No. 866, dated 20.12.2018 “On the procedures and model of risk assessment for cases of domestic violence” was

148. Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018, October 2018.

149. See: <http://www.parlament.al/Files/ProjektLigje/20201020143653ligje%20nr.%20125%20dt.%2015.10.2020.pdf>

and Social Protection no.253, dated 10 April 2020, “For the case management of children in need for protection during the COVID-19 emergency”.¹⁵⁴

- Victims of domestic and other forms of violence and human trafficking are entitled to a number of benefits, such as specialized services and sheltering, as foreseen in the 2016 Law on Social Care Services¹⁵⁸; free legal aid based on the 2017 Law on Legal Aid¹⁵⁹; priority for social housing

159. Which among other things guarantees free legal aid for special categories: victims of domestic violence, sexual abuse, trafficking in human beings, minors in conflict with the law, children in social care institutions, persons who have been harmed the right through an act or omission that constitutes discrimination, etc.

based on the 2018 Law on Social Housing¹⁶⁰; and economic assistance based on the 2019 Law on Social Assistance.¹⁶¹ For further details see section 08-2 Access to free legal aid.

- In terms of criminal law, amendments in 2012-2013 to the Criminal Code included new criminal offences and improved definitions related to gender-based violence, in accordance with the Istanbul Convention. The Criminal Code was also amended in 2020, recognizing psychological violence as well as intimate partner violence as forms of family violence, and increasing prison sentences for perpetrators of domestic violence. Furthermore, in 2017, additional protection measures for victims of human trafficking and sexual violence were included in the Code of Criminal Procedure.
- Despite these improvements, the definition of rape in the Albanian Criminal Code remains a force-based definition, where the burden of proving violence/resistance falls on the victim. In cases when the victim is unable or unwilling to demonstrate resistance, this can lead to cases of rape going unreported or unprosecuted. According to GREVIO, this definition is not in accordance with the Istanbul Convention's requirements and should be amended. Furthermore, the Albanian legislation does not include comprehensive prevention and protection measures for all forms of violence against women. Apart from Albania's criminal legislation, there is no other legislative framework to require authorities to provide immediate protection to victims of crimes other than domestic violence, such as stalking, harassment or sexual assault, and hence the local Coordinated Referral Mechanism for DV cases is not legally required to either manage such cases nor to provide the required protection and services to victims. This is one of the main gaps in the legislation, raised by GREVIO in its first assessment report on Albania in 2017. In this context, there are ongoing discussions and consultations with state and non-state actors on the adoption of a new law that would address

preventive and protection measures for all forms of violence against women.

- In 2019, the Albania tripartite delegation unanimously endorsed the ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work. The Ministry of Finance and Economy in charge of labor issues has initiated the ratification procedure for the ILO Convention 190 following the national legal framework gap analysis with regard to the ILO Convention 190 and Protocol 202.

Violence against women (VaW) is not a new phenomenon in Albania. Such violence is rooted deeply in patriarchal traditions and customs that have long shaped Albanian society, such as strict gender roles and identities, patriarchal authority, respect for the code of honor and shame, power and control of old generations over the entire family, poverty, inequality in the area of employment or education, and gender-based migration.¹⁶² Over the years, several studies conducted in Albania by national and international institutions confirm that violence against women is a wide-spread phenomenon, both in geographical terms, as well as in terms of social groups (see statistics further below). Likewise, in the various analyses and evaluations undertaken over the past years, suggestions on priority treatment of all forms of violence against women and girls have been presented. One of the recommendations given in this regard is that of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) in 2017, which emphasizes “...the need to ensure that all the measures taken in accordance with the Istanbul Convention should be able to address all forms of violence against women in a comprehensive and thorough way...”¹⁶³. However, although acknowledged and mentioned, it should be recognized that not all forms of violence against women and girls have been prioritized and addressed equally by the state over the last five years. For example, **violence against women during elections** has not been specifically addressed, which has left it silent, unidentified and unreported. Rather than violence for political reasons, it constitutes gender-based

160. Which emphasizes the principle of non-discrimination, for planning, equipping, distributing and managing housing for social groups in need of housing. The specialized housing program benefits vulnerable groups including victims of trafficking, domestic violence and mother daughters.

161. Where the beneficiaries of economic assistance are defined as victims of trafficking, after leaving the social care institutions, until the moment of their employment, as well as the victims of domestic violence, for the period of validity of the protection order or immediate protection, which are not treated in social care institutions.

162. VaW is embedded within a generally aggressive family climate: according to DHS 2018, almost 50 percent of children aged 1-14 years were found to experience physical punishment and/or psychological aggression by caregivers. See: <https://data.unicef.org/country/alb/>

163. Albania: GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), published on 24 November 2017. See: <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-first-baseline-report-on-albania/16807688a7>

TABLE 5. Number of reported victims of physical or sexual harassment 2015-18, by sex and age

Year	Total	Women	Men	Juveniles (<18years)	Adults (>18 years)
2015	28	23	5	6	22
2016	43	38	5	20	23
2017	31	30	1	15	16
2018	37	36	1	15	22

Source: General Directorate of Police

violence aimed at “...not just the individuals specifically targeted, but all women from expressing their political voice and agency”.¹⁶⁴ It is manifested as physical, psychological, and sexual violence, hate speech, and discrimination on the grounds of gender. It prevents women candidates and those who exercise various functions from taking part in elections and politics, as well as women and girls at large from exercising their right to vote. To date, efforts of the Albanian lawmaker have narrowly focused on consolidating the gender quota system in elections. However, mechanisms are needed that will prevent and combat gender-based violence in elections and politics. Identifying, preventing and combating this type of violence, which is also perpetuated by the media¹⁶⁵, remains one of the biggest challenges for the development of democratic elections and the realization of equal representation in decision-making. A set of respective recommendations for amending Albanian legislation and explicitly prohibiting harassment and violence against women during elections is available¹⁶⁶, yet has not been reflected in the recently revised Electoral Code, into which normative standards on gender equality still need to be introduced.

Physical and sexual harassment in public spaces has been shown to be wide-spread.¹⁶⁷ Perception surveys on the incidence of sexual harassment and abuse in public spaces have so far been undertaken in various neighborhoods of

Tirana¹⁶⁸, Durrës¹⁶⁹, Fier¹⁷⁰, Shkodra and Korça¹⁷¹. Focusing mainly on women and girls’ perceptions in the two latter municipalities, a study conducted in 2019 showed that 16 percent of women and girls surveyed have been at risk of, or exposed to, sexual harassment or other forms of sexual violence in their lifetime. Outdated thoughts and the phenomenon of victim blaming are prevalent issues: out of all respondents, 40 percent agreed that “[g]irls/women who are sexually harassed or sexually abused provoke it themselves.” Results also showed that violent acts against women and girls in public spaces - especially verbal sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence - are widely underreported to the responsible institutions. This situation of underreported sexual assault is attributed to lack of information on where to make a complaint and to seek help, lack of trust in the responsible institutions, and the fear of being labelled or judged. More than half of the women, who had experienced sexual harassment, did not report such cases because they were too ashamed or afraid of stigmatization.

Incest remains a taboo. Data is not published, there are no studies on the issue, and duty bearers are ill-prepared to respond and provide adequate support.

Data on **cases of sexual violence** and on **sexual harassment** is incomplete. Related to *SDG Indicator 5.2.2 “Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and*

164. UN Women – OHCHR Expert Group Meeting on Violence against Women in Politics, 8 March 2018, New York.

165. Kosh, J. (2019). Gender inequality through the lenses of the Albanian media. *ANGLISTICUM. Journal of the Association-Institute for English Language and American Studies*, 8(1), 10-24. <http://anglisticum.org.mk/index.php/JLLIS/article/view/1823>, cited in: IDS HelpDesk Report (2020). Gender and the media in the Western Balkans.

166. UN Women (2020). Analysis of the Albanian legislation on protection from violence against women in elections.

167. UN Women & IDRA Research & Consulting (2019). Sexual harassment and other forms of gender based violence in urban spaces in Albania. See: <https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/05/sexual-harassment-gender-based-violence-in-albania>

168. Around seven neighborhoods of Tirana were surveyed from 2016-2019 respectively from: UN Women and the Observatory for Children’s Rights (2016 - the first pilot study “On Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Against Women and Girls in Urban Spaces”), UN Women and IDRA Research & Consulting in 2018 and Observatory for Children’s Rights and CFLI during 2019.

169. UN Women and IDRA Research & Consulting in 2018.

170. *ibid.*

171. Both Shkodra and Korça neighborhoods were surveyed by UN Women and IDRA Research & Consulting in 2019.

older subjected to sexual violence by persons other than intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by age and place of occurrence”, the National Population Survey on Violence against Women and Girls in Albania 2018 identified non-partner violence during the previous 12 months as zero percent, and the same type of violence “ever in life” as 1.3 percent.¹⁷²

Data on *SDG Indicator 16.2.3 “Proportion of young women and men aged 18 to 29 years who experience sexual violence by age 18”* is unavailable. In principle, this data can be provided by the Victimization Survey, which is not conducted in Albania yet.

Regarding *SDG Indicator 11.7.2 “Proportion of victims of physical or sexual harassment, by sex, age, disability status and place of occurrence, in the previous 12 months”*, data from the General Directorate of Police can serve as a proxy. Data is collected according to Article 180/a of the Criminal Code, which includes sexual harassment.¹⁷³ However, figures refer to all cases until the end of the reference period, and not exclusively to those of the previous 12 months. The overall reported number of cases is low, and the majority of cases are adolescent girls.

TABLE 6. Share of women victims of sexual harassment during the previous 12 months, by age group

Age group	Sexual harassment last 12 months
18-24	12.6%
25-34	12.6%
35-44	10.7%
45-54	7.0%
55-64	4.3%
65-74	2.1%
Total	8.5%

Source: National Population Survey on Violence against Women and Girls in Albania 2018

The National Population Survey on Violence against Women and Girls in Albania 2018 identified the overall share of women victims of sexual harassment for the previous 12 months as 8.5 percent. Women in the younger age cohorts 18-34 have a 30 percent higher experience of sexual harassment. Data refers to women only, since the survey did not target the male population.¹⁷⁴

Government follow-up actions in response to GREVIO recommendations: In 2018, MHSP reported in the fourth meeting of the Committee of the Parties of the Convention, conducted in Strasbourg, regarding the preliminary measures undertaken. In accordance with urgent recommendations no. 2, 14 and 15, some amendments in the Law no. 9669/2006 “On measures against violence in family relations” (as amended in July 2018) were made in accordance with recommendations of GREVIO and those of the CEDAW Committee.

The approval of the Code of the Criminal Justice for Minors (entered into force on 1 January 2018) also supports the implementation of the urgent recommendation no.17. Amendments in the Code of Criminal Procedure in 2017 (which regulate - among others - the rights of victims of criminal acts during the criminal proceedings, including the rights of abused minors, and the rights of victims of sexual assault and victims of trafficking) fully support implementation of Urgent Recommendations no.17 and 18.

Regarding implementation of Urgent Recommendation no.3 focusing on promoting a clear understanding within society of the gendered nature of violence against women and its unacceptability under any pretext whatsoever, in 2019, INSTAT published the third national survey on violence against women and girls in Albania.

In terms of implementing Urgent Recommendation no.4, on financial resources, the inclusion of the principle of gender equality in the Organic Budget Law in 2016 already obliges all line ministries and other budgetary institutions to clearly review and present their gender policies, without exception. Furthermore, the provision of the inclusion of gender-responsive

172. UN Women, INSTAT & partners (2019). National Population Survey on Violence against Women and Girls in Albania 2018. See: <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/national-population-survey-2018-violence-against-women-and-girls-albania>

173. Article 108/a “Sexual harassment”: *Commitment of actions of a sexual nature which infringe the dignity of a person, by any means or form, by creating a threatening, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment shall constitute a criminal offense and is punishable with one to five years of imprisonment. When this offense is committed in complicity, against several persons, more than once, or against children, it shall be punishable by three to seven years of imprisonment.*

174. UN Women, INSTAT & partners (2019). National Population Survey on Violence against Women and Girls in Albania 2018. See: <https://data.unwomen.org/publications/national-population-survey-2018-violence-against-women-and-girls-albania>

TABLE 7. Financial support provided by the state for specialist support centers for VoT

Centers of Services	Transferred fund according to years (in ALL)				
	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking	21,704,000	22,219,660	22,476,939	20,910,000	20,820,000
“Different&Equal” NGO, Tirana	6,473,439	9,804,597	8,467,317	9,054,487	9,054,487
“Other Vision” NGO, Elbasan	7,769,002	5,792,615	7,599,365	7,982,615	7,982,615
“Vatra” Center NGO, Vlora	7,635,367	10,489,020	10,729,920	11,283,364	11,283,364

Source: Draft V-th National Report on the implementation of CEDAW in Albania (version of October 2020)

budgeting in the 2017 Law on local self-government finances lays the ground for improved application of GRB at all stages of the local, annual, or medium-term financial management cycle. Consequently, at the end of the first phase of preparing the MTBP 2020-2022, 36 out of 75 budgetary programs had included GRB elements in budget expenditures at the central government, in support of gender equality goals in business, agriculture, education and vocational training, health, justice, science, etc.

Regarding the implementation of Urgent Recommendation no.5, during 2019, MHSP provided financial support to state specialist support services, such as the National Centre for the Treatment of Victims of Domestic Violence and the National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking. In addition, it continues to manage the “LILIUM” Centre, the first center for victims of sexual violence in Albania, opened in 2018 and supported by the state budget.¹⁷⁵ Establishment and operation of this center is in accordance with implementing Urgent Recommendation no.9. In 2019, through the Social Fund, the state also supported three specialized services set up and/or managed by civil society, such as the National Hotline for Women and Girls 116 117, the National Helpline for Children ALO 116 111, and the Residential Center “Streha” (“Shelter”) for members of the LGBTI+ community. The state budget support for

the specialist support services for victims/potential victims of trafficking has more or less remained constant over the years and is as follows:

The operation of “sheltering” as a specialist support service in Albania is based on a set of national standards. Approved standards exist for: shelters of victims of domestic violence providing long term service¹⁷⁶, shelters for victims/potential victims of trafficking¹⁷⁷, short term (emergency) shelters for domestic violence victims¹⁷⁸; as well as for emergency crisis centers for victims of sexual violence.¹⁷⁹ Standards of services for the National Hotline for Domestic Violence Victims were also approved.¹⁸⁰

In accordance with Urgent Recommendation no.8, in the framework of actions to address all cases of domestic violence and gender-based violence with priority and effectiveness, MHSP approved the Standard Operating Procedures for health care workers and social care services, and conducted a series of related on-line training sessions in July 2020 for representatives of the health and social care sector, and for local coordinators against domestic violence in each municipality.

Over the past years, surveys have shown that violence against women and domestic violence is seriously under-reported, and that measures need to be both sustainable and multi-dimensional. The

175. Its reconstruction is supported by UNDP.

176. DCM No. 505 dated 13.07.2011 “On adopting social care service standards for domestic violence victims in public and non-public residential centers”, and Regulation No. 13 dated 17.12.2012 “On the implementation of social care service standards for domestic violence victims in public and non-public residential centers”.

177. DCM No. 195, dated 11.04.2007 “On adopting social care services standards in residential centers for trafficked persons or persons at risk of being trafficked”.

178. Instruction No. 774 dated 15.11.2019 “On adopting minimum social care service standards for gender based violence and domestic violence victims/survivors in public and nonpublic emergency (short term) residential centers (emergency shelters)”.

179. Instruction No. 816, dated 27.11.2018 “On adopting service provision standards for sexual violence cases crisis management centers”.

180. DCM no.430 date 08.06.2016

National Survey on violence against women and girls conducted by INSTAT during 2018¹⁸¹, which applied international standards to collecting data on violence against women and girls from a sample of women age 18-74, found that:

- Overall, 1 out of 2 (or 52.9 percent) of women ‘ever’ experienced one or more of the five different types of violence (intimate partner violence, dating violence, non-partner violence, sexual harassment and/or stalking) during their lifetime.
- In terms of intimate partner violence, 47.0 percent of women (those who were or had been married and/or lived with a partner) ‘ever’ experienced intimate partner domestic violence, and 2 out of 3 (or 65.8 percent) of women (those who were never been married and never lived with a male partner, but have been involved in a relationship with a male without living together) ‘ever’ experienced dating violence.
- 18.2 percent of women ‘ever’ experienced non-partner violence, 18.1 percent ‘ever’ experienced sexual harassment, and, 12.6 percent ‘ever’ experienced stalking.
- 1 out of 3 (or 36.6 percent) women ‘currently’ experienced violence. In particular, 1 out of 3 or 33.7 percent of women (those who were or had been married and/or lived with a male partner) ‘currently’ experienced intimate partner domestic violence, and 2 out of 3 (or 61.8 percent) women (those who were never been married and never lived with a male partner, but had been involved in a relationship with a male without living together, such as dating or engaged) ‘currently’ experienced dating violence.
- 3.4 percent of women ‘currently’ experienced non-partner violence, 8.5 percent were experiencing sexual harassment, and 6.9 percent were experiencing stalking.
- 3 out of 4 women (or 75.8 percent) who experienced non-partner violence since age 15 also experienced intimate partner domestic violence; women who had experienced non-partner violence since age 15 were two times more likely to experience intimate partner domestic violence (75.8 percent), compared

to women who did not experience non-partner violence since age 15 (32.1 percent).

- 3.1 percent of women had been sexually abused during childhood (had been touched sexually when they did not want or was made to do something sexual that they did not want).
- Women who had experienced child sexual abuse were more likely to experience sexual and/or gender-based violence in their lifetime (88.8 percent), compared to women who did not experience child sexual abuse (51.5 percent). In addition, women who experienced child sexual abuse were significantly more likely to experience intimate partner violence (64.6 percent) and two times more likely to experience non-partner violence (41.9 percent), compared to women who did not experience child sexual abuse (39.2 percent and 17.7 percent respectively).
- With regard to the prevailing social norms and taboos related to violence against women, the survey found that 1 out of 2, or 52.2 percent of women, maintained that “all or most people in the community believe violence between a husband and wife is a private matter” and that “others should not intervene”; and 46.5 percent maintained that “all or most people in the community believe a woman should tolerate some violence to keep her family together”. In addition, 1 out of 4, or 27.5 percent of women, maintained that “all or most people in the community believe that when a woman is beaten by her husband she is partly to blame or at fault”, and that “a woman should be ashamed or embarrassed to talk to anyone outside of her family about abuse or violence in her marriage”.

Data from the Albanian State Police shows that there has been a slight decrease in the number of reported DV cases for the year 2019 compared to 2018. The same can be said for the first six months of 2020 compared to the same period in 2019. During the period January – December 2019¹⁸²:

- There were reported and treated 4,629 cases of domestic violence (or 6.5 percent cases less than the same period of 2018 when there were reported and treated 4,951 domestic violence cases).

¹⁸¹. INSTAT (2019): National Population Survey on Violence against women and girls, supported by UNDP and UN Women and with financial contribution by the Government of Australia. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6123/publication-violence-against-women.pdf>

¹⁸². Information provided by the Ministry of Interior to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection regarding the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality for the year 2019, with official letter with Protocol No. 1799/3 date 16.04.2020.

- There were treated with request for protection order/emergent protection order 2.836 DV cases, which was 6.6 percent cases less than during the same period in 2018, when 3.037 DV cases were treated with request for emergent protection order/protection order.
- Criminal proceeding based on Article 130 (on domestic violence) of the Criminal Code were initiated for 1.341 cases, compared to 1.373 cases in 2018.
- 535 authors of these criminal acts were arrested, while 76 were detained, 68 escaped, and the vast majority, namely 760 authors, were followed in a free state.
- There were 131 cases of brokering of protection orders in 2019, compared to 148 cases in 2018.
- During 2019, 14 murders happened within the family accounting for 17 victims, compared to 11 murders with 20 victims in 2018. Victims of these murders were 12 women/girls and five men/boys, namely eight wives, two parents, one brother, and six 'others' (grandfather, sister in law, mother/father in law, and nephew).
- There were 54 cases of violation of protection orders during the first six months of 2020, compared to 64 cases during the same period in 2019.
- There happened four murders in the family with five victims, compared to 10 murders with 12 victims for the same period in 2019. Victims of these murders were two wives, one ex-wife, one ex-brother-in-law, and one sister-in-law (in total four women and one man).
- During the first six months of 2020, 2.126 persons were damaged by violence and other crimes in family relations. 1.574 (71.7 percent) were women/girls. Among the total of damaged persons, 728 (34.4 percent) were wives.

Regarding the first six months of 2020, data from the Albania State Police¹⁸³ show that:

- There were reported and treated 2.053 cases of domestic violence and of other crimes in family relations, which is 7.6 percent cases less than during the same period in 2019, when 2.237 cases were reported and treated.
- There were treated with request for protection order/emergent protection order 1.206 DV cases, or 11.6 percent cases less than during the same period in 2019, when 1.364 DV cases were treated with request for emergent protection order/protection order.
- Criminal proceedings based on Article 130/a (domestic violence) of the Criminal Code was initiated for 674 cases, and 270 authors of these criminal acts were arrested.
- Although official statistics for the reported cases of domestic violence show a slight decrease every year for the last two to three years, we cannot conclude that the phenomenon has started to be minimized. There are many factors that influence the reduction in the number of reported DV-cases and we have to go deeper in our analysis and consider the circumstances, challenges and improvements. So far, Coordinated Referral Mechanisms (CRMs)¹⁸⁴ have been established to treat domestic violence cases in 55 out of 61 Municipalities in the country. However, reality shows that not all of these CRMs are effectively functioning, as highlighted also in the most recent evaluation survey conducted for this purpose during May 2019: according to the report, from the total of 40 CRMs established until May 2019, 35 were functioning and with different levels of effectiveness.¹⁸⁵ Main improvements are required in the following areas:

- Not all responsible institutions/actors share the same level of commitment regarding DV case management. Municipalities have not appointed full-time dedicated staff as Local Coordinators against Domestic Violence (LCDV), as foreseen under the DV Law, and usually, these LCDVs are also in charge of dealing with other functions related to gender equality, child protection, people with disabilities, minorities, etc. In municipalities, where the majority of responsible actors are located at

183. Information provided by the Albanian State Police to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection regarding the cases of domestic violence for January – June 2020, with official letter with Protocol No. 837 date 13.07.2020.

184. Information provided by Ministry of Health and Social Protection in the framework of preparing the Draft Fifth Report on the implementation of CEDAW in Albania, version of September 2020.

185. "Analysis of the functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism of cases of domestic violence at the local level in Albania" commissioned by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in partnership with UNDP Albania, in the framework of the UN Joint Program "Ending Violence against Women in Albania" funded by Government of Sweden and implemented by UNDP, UN Women and UNFPA and published in December 2019. See: https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/womens_empowerment/analiza-e-funksionimit-te-mekanizmit-te-koordinuar-te-referimit-.html

regional level or in neighboring municipalities, their participation in coordination meetings of the Multidisciplinary Technical Team (MTT) for DV cases management becomes difficult.

- Meetings of the Leading Committee of the CRMs tend to happen rarely and without significant decisions related i.e. to the allocation of required resources. The composition of members of MTTs keeps being changed frequently, and this jeopardizes the effectiveness and sustainability of MTTs and the CRM itself.
- Specialist support services are understaffed, under-budgeted, insufficient and not tailored to treat all forms of violence and for all groups of women, or other family members in need (i.e. boys over a certain age, people with mental health problems, or with different types of disabilities, etc.). Data and statistics on the cases managed under the multidisciplinary coordinated approach are not updated periodically in all municipalities, despite the existence of a dedicated database established for this purpose – the REVALB system. Recently, additional challenges have emerged on the issue of which kind of system to use, since there are several initiatives currently under way to upgrade the system of data collection for different social problems. However, these initiatives are not matched with required dedicated new staff. In practice, one person is obliged to cover different responsibilities, work in the field, maintain several databases, while nothing is changed in terms of support (i.e. increase in salary, improved infrastructure, dedicated resources, etc.).
- The obligatory risk assessment procedure prior to deciding for case management - which foresees to be undertaken by the police in the presence of/in collaboration with the LCDV (and the Child Protection Unit specialist, in cases where children are involved)- is not happening on a routine basis. In many situations, there is also a lack of coordination between police and LCDV (or Child Protection Unit). The Order for Preliminary Measures of Emergent Protection - which can also be issued by the police in emergency situations - is not widely applied. Not all physical and psychological cases of violence are treated as criminal acts, but only those that are considered as “severe” or “really serious”, despite the fact that the Albanian Criminal Code does consider these forms of violence as criminal acts.
- There are situations when abusers are not sent to jail, despite the clear level of violence exercised on their

victims, and this is frequently linked to the victim’s decision to withdraw from the case, even though the underlying reasons for withdrawing the case are well known: the high level of victims’ blaming and shaming, prejudice, and victims’ dependency from perpetrators in terms of housing and food.

- Some court decisions regarding the issuing of the emergent protection orders/protection orders are incomprehensible and completely against the philosophy of the law. For example, the decision that victim and abuser stay in the same house, and the abuser keeps the distance of two meters; or despite the fact that a mother and brother have abused the under-aged daughter very badly and repeatedly, they are not arrested, and the court considers it most important for a child to be with her/his family, so the minor is being sent back to her abusers. These findings on the practical implementation of the legislation, in addition to many cases of sexual abuse and incest which have been reported recently, are a warning sign that the real situation of violence against women and girls and domestic violence is highly critical. Additional urgent measures must be undertaken, not so much on legislative change, but primarily on the level of implementation.

5.7. Victims of trafficking in human beings

This section summarizes the findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 16.2.2 “Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population by sex, age and form of exploitation”.

During the period 2001 to 2013, the Criminal Code was amended several times to include provisions and definitions of human trafficking in accordance with international standards. The latest amendments in 2013 recognized internal trafficking and the 2017 amendments of the Criminal Procedural Code improved the position of victims of trafficking and their access to the criminal process. The legislation on social care services, as well as the one on social housing and social assistance, place a requirement on all institutions responsible for the treatment of a trafficked person to take specific measures and a range of actions for their assistance and support, in order to find a lasting solution. The 2014 Law ‘On State Police’ also provides for additional safeguards for the protection and comprehensive support for victims of trafficking, especially for women and children.

However, the CEDAW Committee and other human rights mechanisms, including the UPR, raise a number of concerns related to the effective implementation

of anti-trafficking legislation, including the fact that Albania remains a source and destination country for trafficking in women and girls, especially trafficking linked to tourism in coastal areas. Based on the cases identified by the police structures from 2015 to 2018, women remain the majority of victims exploited for prostitution, while the fewest identified cases are those of men exploited mainly for begging. In general, government data indicates women and girls as the group most vulnerable to becoming potential victims of trafficking, including exploitation for prostitution and other forms. In terms of background, victims of trafficking are mainly girls from disadvantaged communities, with divorced parents, or in a difficult economic situation. The recruiters use deception and coercion, including through social media.¹⁸⁶

According to the US State Department report of 2020, Albania remains classified as a Tier 2 country¹⁸⁷ of human trafficking. One of the main concerns is the low number of convictions: in both 2018 and 2019, only five traffickers were convicted, which is the lowest number of convictions since 2014. However, the number of investigations has been higher: the Albanian State Police (ASP) investigated 41 cases with 62 suspects in 2019 (38 cases with 51 suspects in 2018), of which 34 cases with 45 suspects concerned adult trafficking (30 cases with 42 suspects in 2018), and seven cases with 17 suspects concerned child trafficking (eight cases with nine suspects in 2018). Also, data from the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator indicates a higher number of victims of trafficking in 2019, with 103 in total: 7 Victims of Trafficking (VoT) and 96 Potential Victims of Trafficking (PVoT); 67 minors and 36 adults; 19 female and 9 male; 98 Albanian and 5 foreigners. These figures confirm the US State Department concern about the low number of convictions of traffickers by the Courts, despite the identification of a considerably higher number of VoT or PVoT.

Other remaining critical issues in the area of human trafficking include (i) lack of screening efforts for vulnerable populations, particularly for migrants, asylum-seekers, individuals engaging in commercial

sex, and children; (ii) delay of funding for NGO-run shelters; and (iii) lack of government resource allocation/funding for social services for long-term care and re-integration efforts, particularly for child victims and victims with children.¹⁸⁸ The US Department of State report also mentions the issues of migrant women and domestic workers¹⁸⁹: Observers continue to report that authorities do not consistently screen or implement Standard Operational Procedures for migrants and asylum-seekers, and that police does not screen individuals in commercial sex for indicators of trafficking during raids and investigations of commercial sex establishments. Foreign victims from European countries and the Philippines are exploited in sex trafficking and forced labor. Irregular migrants from Asia are employed as domestic workers by wealthy families and are vulnerable to domestic servitude.

5.8. Forced and Early Marriage

This section summarizes the findings on SDG Indicator 5.3.1 “Proportion of women aged 20-24 who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18”. Albania has a strong legislative framework to tackle child marriage, however, official data indicates that one fifth of all marriages involve an under-aged spouse, with the vast majority being under-aged girls.^{190,191}

This figure does not include unregistered marriages; hence the real prevalence rate is in fact higher. Child marriage rates are known to be elevated in rural and remote areas, and among Roma communities, however accurate statistical data is unavailable.

This is made evident also in INSTAT’s 2020 edition of “Women and Men” according to which the number of married girls before the age of 18 in 2019 was 20. This number has decreased compared to the previous year when there were 24 marriages before the age of 18. The percentage of married girls at the age of 15-17 is very low, meanwhile the percentage of married girls at the age of 18 and 19 is higher, respectively 9.3 and 6.8 percent respectively. On the other hand, there are no marriages for boys before the age of 18, and the percentage of

186. Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire for the evaluation of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the Parties, submitted to Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), in June 2019, <https://rm.coe.int/greta-2018-26-alb-rep-en/168097fa81>

187. Tier 2 classifies countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards of the US Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.

188. US Department of State (June 2020). Trafficking in Persons Report, 20th edition. See: <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/2020-TIP-Report-Complete-062420-FINAL.pdf>

189. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-trafficking-in-persons-report/albania/>

190. UNICEF & UNFPA (2018). Child Marriage. Knowledge, Attitudes, and Perceptions among affected communities in Albania. Report prepared by the Observatory for Children and Youth Rights (Observatory). See: https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/1031/file/Child_marriage_report_2018.pdf

191. Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018, October 2018.

married boys at the age of 18-19 is under 1.0 percent.¹⁹² Other sources report higher early marriage rates for Albania^{193,194}, and the issue requires additional attention, deeper exploration, and further analysis.

Qualitative research on the issue in Albania confirms findings at the regional and global level, that child marriage in Albania is strongly linked to restrictive gender norms, and to poverty and social exclusion.¹⁹⁵ In terms of impacts, qualitative research and data indicate that school drop-out, early motherhood, and women's lack of autonomy and decision-making power in the household and in public are fueling child marriage in Albania.¹⁹⁶ The overall recommendation resulting from recent research confirms that government needs to address child marriage through policy measures at the central and local level, determining the interventions, related budgets, as well as roles and responsibilities of various public entities. Considering the complex challenges of this phenomenon, actions with regard to child marriage need to be mainstreamed in relevant policy documents and address the cross-sectorial nature of public responses. Policies and action plans that play a significant role in countering child marriage are those in the areas of gender equality, women's and girls' economic empowerment, comprehensive sexual education, sexual and reproductive health, justice, rural development, youth, social inclusion, and education and vocational training. These policy measures address the national as well as local government on the following levels:

- Strengthening government responses/services
- Sensitizing and educating front-line service providers
- Increasing awareness among adolescents, parents, educators, communities, and the general public
- Support for children affected by child marriage
- Promoting and creating alternatives to marriage, especially for girls

Learning about sexuality in an age-appropriate manner is an integral part of growing up. Starting from an early age, comprehensive sexuality education has been shown to help young people avoid unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, including HIV, and potentially abusive situations, while learning how to develop safe, healthy, equal and satisfying relationships with others. As a result of taboos around the topic and misinformation about its purpose, too few young people - and their educators and parents - have access to comprehensive sexuality education. Health and sexuality education started to become part of the Albanian educational system in 1995, and Albania has made significant progress in adopting regulations supportive of comprehensive sexuality education, training large numbers of teachers in the subject, and getting teachers, young people and health professionals involved in related planning and implementation processes. Starting from 2015, around 3000 (three thousand) teachers were trained to professionally teach the subject of sexuality education. Meanwhile, the sexuality education programme entitled "Life Skills and Sexuality Education" consists of a number of modules included in the content of subjects: biology, physical education and health education. Programmes for age groups of 10-12, 12-16 and 16-18 years are mandatory, and the total number of teaching hours is 140. Some civil society organizations focusing on the fight against addiction to narcotic substances or protection of LGBTI+ community rights also deliver educational hours on such topics, including youth-friendly and non-discriminatory services for youth, etc. Awareness-raising has been supported - especially for areas of ICPD, such as reproductive health, gender equality, and empowered youth - through the creation of the platform "Voice of youth", which comprises 20 youth organizations and civil societies, the creation of youth clubs, the peer educators network, and the media platform for sexual and reproductive health and gender issues.¹⁹⁷ At the same time, challenges remain in ensuring sustainable funding, reaching marginalized groups, and overcoming resistance from conservative segments of society.

192. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/temat/treguesit-demografik%C3%AB-dhe-social%C3%AB/barazia-gjinore/publikimet/2020/burra-dhe-gra-n%C3%AB-shqip%C3%ABri-2020/> (page 19)

193. UNICEF & UNFPA (2018). Child Marriage. Knowledge, Attitudes, and Perceptions among affected communities in Albania. Report prepared by the Observatory for Children and Youth Rights (Observatory). See: https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/1031/file/Child_marriage_report_2018.pdf

194. UNECE (forthcoming). Synergies for Youth. A Situation Analysis of the intersection of decent work, quality education, and gender equality in South-East Europe.

195. "Household survey data shows the prevalence of early marriage throughout the region, which disproportionately affects girls. [...] Albania, for example, sees the highest rate of marriage by age 18, including for boys. Along with Montenegro and Turkey, Albania also has one of the highest rates of marriage by the age of 15." See: UNECE (forthcoming). Synergies for Youth. A Situation Analysis of the intersection of decent work, quality education, and gender equality in South-East Europe.

196. UNICEF & UNFPA (2018). Child Marriage. Knowledge, Attitudes, and Perceptions among affected communities in Albania. Report prepared by the Observatory for Children and Youth Rights (Observatory). Pg. 10. See: https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/1031/file/Child_marriage_report_2018.pdf

197. National Review on the implementation of Beijing+25 in Albania (pg.24). See: <https://www.unece.org/fileadmin/DAM/RCM/Website/Albania.pdf>

5.9. Unpaid care work

This section summarizes the findings of desk research on SDG Indicator 5.4.1 “Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex age and location”.

The results of the most recent available Time Use Survey in Albania¹⁹⁸ - conducted in 2010/2011– clearly confirmed the stereotypically gendered division in paid and unpaid work: men are seen as the financial household pillar that provides income for the family, while women are expected to carry out household chores and take care of children and dependents, including the elderly. According to the Time Use Survey, women carry out 86 per cent of unpaid work and 96 per cent of domestic chores. While women spend on average 5 hours 43 minutes per day on unpaid domestic and care work, men devote only 2 hours 6 minutes to these tasks. This results in time poverty, negatively impacting women’s engagement in the labor market and in life-long learning, limiting their productive opportunities that improve livelihoods. Labor statistics and more recent perception studies¹⁹⁹ confirm the inter-generational transmission of gendered social behavior norms and values.

The COVID-19 pandemic enhanced the trends and traditional gender roles within the Albanian household. (See also Section 05-5 “Access to assets and financial resources within the household”). Since home-schooling and care for the elderly tend to demand more of women’s time, women’s care-providing burden was enhanced during COVID-19 lock-down and the ensuing months. Concomitantly, the likelihood of women to reduce paid working time has increased, too. The proportion of individuals who reported increased cooking time during lockdown is 29.8 percent, and 53.8 percent of respondents declared to have increased cleaning time at household level, as well.²⁰⁰ This increment is higher among women. Among other chores reported to take more time than before the COVID-19-induced crisis, are spending time with kids (increase by 30.6 percent), helping or caring about old/sick or disabled people (increase by 54.8 percent), and time to teach kids (increase by 27 percent). Shopping time was found to have decreased, which reflects the lock-down restrictions in opening times and people’s mobility.

5.10. Women’s Representation and Leadership

This section summarizes the findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 5.5.1 “Proportion of seats held by women in (a) national parliaments and (b) local governments”; SDG Indicator 5.5.2 “Proportion of women in managerial positions overall”; SDG Indicator 16.7.2 “Perception of women and men as leaders and as decision-makers, and overall perceptions of gender roles”.

The measure for guaranteeing at least 30 percent representation of the under-represented sex in political and public decision-making positions has been in place since 2008 (Law for Gender Equality in Society).²⁰¹ It aims to (i) ensure efficient protection against discrimination on grounds of gender; (ii) define safeguards for equal opportunities between men and women, in order to eliminate gender-based discrimination; (iii) define the responsibilities of state authorities at all levels in drafting and implementing legislative acts and policies that support gender equality. The Law on Gender Equality stipulates that gender mainstreaming shall be the approach to ensure gender equality in society, by reflecting the perspectives of all genders into the law-making, policymaking, planning, implementing and monitoring processes.

Amendment to the Electoral Code in 2012 made specific improvements in accordance with the gender equality legislation, increasing the minimum quota for women’s candidates in general elections to 30 percent. In the amendments introduced to the Electoral Code with Law 74/2012, Article 67(6) stipulates that: “For each electoral zone, at least 30 percent of the multi-name list, and one of the first three names on the multi-name list, shall belong to both genders”. Point 1 of the amended Article 175 – “Sanctions related to gender equality” states that “Failure by the electoral subject to comply with the obligations specified in Article 67(6) of this Code, regarding the composition of the list, is punishable by the Central Election Commission (CEC) with a fine of ALL 1,000,000 in the case of elections to the Assembly, and with ALL 50,000 for elections for local government bodies”.

198. INSTAT (2011). Albania Time Use Survey 2010-2011. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2011/albania-time-use-survey-2010-2011/>

199. UNDP (2016). Public perceptions and attitude towards gender equality in Albania. See: <https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/public-perceptions-and-attitude-towards-gender-equality-in-alban.html>

200. UN Women (2020). COVID-19 Rapid Gender Assessment. Albania: Summary of Key Findings of “Socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on women’s and men’s empowerment and livelihood”.

201. Law No 9970, dated 24.07.2008 “On gender equality in society, as published in the Official Gazette No. 125, dated 01.08.2008, see: <http://www.osce.org/albania/36682>

In April 2015, legal amendments to the Electoral Code were adopted by setting the quota of 50 percent men and 50 percent women in the local lists of candidates for the election of councilors. These changes reflected the new territorial administrative division, and addressed a long-standing recommendation given by the OSCE/ODIHR to promote women candidates by increasing gender quotas in the municipal council candidates' lists to 50 percent, via alternating the gender in each second name. In addition, in the event of a vacancy in the council, substitution should be done with the next candidate of the same sex ranked highest in the list. For political parties that fail to comply with the requirements, sanctions are foreseen to be imposed in the form of fines.

However, no gender quota requirements were applied to the election of mayors, heads of administrative units, heads of villages, etc. Additionally, the enforcement system through fines turned out to not guarantee gender equality during elections, since political parties opted for paying the fine, rather than respecting the gender quota.²⁰²

According to the Gender Equality Index (GEI) report of Albania 2020, the domain of "power" is the one in which Albania scores nine points above the EU-28 average of 60.9 points.²⁰³ This is due to Albania's higher scores on subdomains of political and economic power, while in regard to social power the score for Albania is lower. Women occupy ministerial positions with 45.4 percent, which is significantly higher than the 28.1 percent EU-28 average. Similarly, women are better represented among members of regional assemblies in Albania (35.9 percent) compared to the EU-28 average (28.5 percent). However, women are slightly less represented among MPs in the National Parliament (26.2 percent in Albania compared to 29.3 percent in EU-28).

The share of women in managing positions of largest quoted companies is slightly higher in Albania than the EU-28 average (26.4 percent versus 25.0 percent respectively). Women's representation among board members of the Central Bank of Albania is 48.1 percent,

which is more than twice the EU-28 average of 20.3 percent. Despite these positive results regarding women's representation in positions of political and economic power in Albania, it is important to note that significant gender gaps remain in several other important domains which are key determinants of the status of women and gender equality. Overall, men continue to hold the majority of all political and economic positions of power.²⁰⁴

In 2020, the Working Group on Gender and Equality in Decision-Making²⁰⁵ submitted a set of recommendations to the Albanian Parliament in the context of ongoing political discussions of amendments to the Electoral Code, with the aim of incorporating gender equality as one of the leading principles of the Code. The Working Group proposed *inter alia* an increase of the gender quota to 50 percent for candidates during the parliamentary elections and for those running for the position of mayor, as well as the refusal of the list of candidates of political parties that fail to comply with the gender quota requirement as a sanction replacing the current ineffective practice of fines. These recommendations address also the important but largely neglected issue of violence against women in elections, proposing specific provisions in the Code to prevent and fight this form of gender-based violence.²⁰⁶ Some of these recommendations are in line with the CEDAW Concluding Observations, which recommend Albania to ensure enforcement of gender quotas. The Committee has also expressed concern about the lack of participation in political and public life of women belonging to disadvantaged or marginalized groups (such as Roma and Egyptian women, and women with disabilities), and about existing barriers such as civil registration requirements or physical barriers.²⁰⁷

Some of the recommendations of the Working Group were reflected in the recent amendments of the Electoral Code of July 2020 (Law 101/2020), which includes a specific provision on gender equality (Article 4).²⁰⁸ According to this provision, all electoral subjects, the election administration, and courts are required

202. See ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Reports of the 2017 parliamentary elections (<https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/4/d/346661.pdf>) and the 2019 local elections (https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/1/f/429230_o.pdf)

203. http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6661/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_albania_2020.pdf

204. *Ibid.*

205. A group of international and national organizations including UN Women and OSCE.

206. According to UN Women and UNDP, violence against women in elections is a form of violence against women intended to impact the realization of women's political rights in an electoral context. It is manifested in different forms, including physical and psychological violence, through gender-based hate speech, intimidation, harassment and even sexual violence and includes women's participation as candidates, voters, activists, party supporters, observers, election workers, or public officials.

207. CEDAW(2016). Concluding Observations on the 4th periodic report of Albania, 2016. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/840818?ln=en>

208. <https://www.parlament.al/Files/Akte/20200730163747ligj%20nr.%20101,%20dt.%2023.7.2020.pdf>

to respect the gender equality principle. The Central Electoral Commission has the authority to monitor and uphold the implementation of the gender equality principles by all involved actors. The amendments also aim to address gender inequality in elections through measures to eliminate voting on behalf of other individuals, and family voting. Furthermore, the law requires authorities to collect and publish data on voters disaggregated by sex, which will enable gender analysis of participation during the election and the development of measures to promote participation in the future. While the amendments of the Electoral Code did not increase the gender quota for parliamentary elections (which remain 30 percent), they introduced a 30 percent gender quota for the elections of bodies of principal local government units. A 30 percent gender quota was also established for all levels of the electoral administration.

Furthermore, a highly positive development in this regard is the rejection of lists of candidates of political parties that fail to comply with the gender quota, which replaces the previous (ineffective) sanction of fines.²⁰⁹

Also in July 2020, (through Law 115/2020), the Albanian Constitution was amended, stipulating an open-list electoral system, according to which voters will be able to choose two thirds of the deputies in party list. The constitutional amendments also require the electoral legislation to guarantee 30 percent gender representation in this system.²¹⁰

The latest available public perception study on women in politics and decision-making dates back to 2013.²¹¹ A report on the national index of women's electoral participation was published in 2017.²¹² Upcoming elections in 2021 provide an opportunity to update and expand available information, and to also assess the impact of recent amendments and current efforts to address violence against women in elections and politics.

In 2019, 34.7 percent of all managerial positions were held by women.²¹³ Data further broken down into senior, middle and junior management is unavailable. Officially published administrative data supporting *SDG Indicator 16.7.1 “% of civil servants, by gender (and by level)”* is unavailable.

5.11. Property rights/ownership and secure rights over agricultural land

This section summarizes the findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 5.a.2 “The percentage of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women’s equal rights to land ownership and/or control”; SDG Indicators 1.4.2, 5.a.1 and 5.1.2 “Ownership or secure rights over agricultural land, by sex”.

Until 2019, there had been a general lack of sex-disaggregated administrative data, indicating a significant reluctance to address this particular women's rights issue. According to a 2013 study by the World Bank, Albania had one of the lowest scores (137 of 148 countries) globally in terms of overall equality in property rights, particularly regarding immovable property. There are almost twice as many men landowners than women landowners, and most women landowners have a property share of less than 25 percent. The Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018 found that 31 percent of women aged 15-59 owned a house, compared to 52 percent of men. One in seven women, or 14 percent, own land, compared to 28 percent of men. Of those women who own property or land, 76 percent have their name on the property title or deed for a house.

In 2019, a “freedom of information law”-request to the National Cadaster Agency made by the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network revealed that “[b]ased on the 43.6 per cent of the data that has been

209. According to the Draft Fifth Report on the implementation of CEDAW in Albania (version of September 2020): “Due to non-compliance with gender quotas in the multi-name lists of candidates for MPs in 2017 central elections, the CEC imposed administrative sanctions with fines in the amount of 1 million ALL for the Socialist Party (non-compliance with the gender quota in Berat region), 1 million ALL for the Socialist Movement Party for Integration (non-compliance with the gender quota in Tirana region), and in the amount of 12 million ALL for the Democratic Party (non-compliance with the gender quota in all 12 regions, the highest financial penalty for a political party since the application of the quota system). During the process of verifying the multi-name lists of candidates for the municipal council, the ascertained cases of non-fulfillment of the gender criterion for the consecutive ranking of genders in the list were returned to the proposers for correction / completion, in compliance with the procedures set out in Electoral Code. Within the legal deadline, the respective entities re-submitted the multi-name lists of candidates for the municipal councils, respecting the gender quota criteria. In terms of correcting and correcting multi-name lists regarding the observance of gender quotas, the CEC **did not apply** to any electoral subject the sanction set out in the Electoral Code regarding gender equality: that of **rejecting the list of candidates** for the municipal council...”.

210. <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/ligj/2020/07/30/115/bb177cb8-c339-4af4-8de1-c5ce7b60bb86;q=kushtetutes>

211. UN Women (2013). Women's participation in politics and decision making in Albania. See: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2013/11/womens-participation-in-politics-albania>

212. UN Women (2017). Obstacles to Women's Participation in Elections in Albania - A National Index of Women's Electoral Participation, including across 12 Regions. See: https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20albania/attachments/publications/2018/06/pope_report_eng_al.pdf?la=en&vs=648

213. INSTAT & General Directorate of Taxes.

digitalized, 19.1 per cent of private property is registered in the name of women and 80.9 per cent in the name of men". According to the Cadaster Agency's written response, "[o]wnership of immovable properties of the type [including] construction plots, agricultural land, forests and pastures forms a ratio of 18.5 per cent in the name of women to 81.5 per cent in the name of men", while "[o]wnership of homes and apartments is in a ratio of 18.7 per cent in the name of women to 81.3 per cent in the name of men".²¹⁴

In 2020, in the framework of piloting the methodology for measuring *SDG indicator 5.a.2 "Percentage of countries where the legal framework (including customary law) guarantees women's equal rights to land ownership and/or control"*, GIZ and FAO conducted an analysis of all existing legal provisions to determine the existence of six proxies, which are considered international good practice in guaranteeing gender equality in land ownership and control. The scan revealed limited progress in guaranteeing women's equal rights to land ownership, particularly at the level of implementation.²¹⁵

The 2003 Family Code of Albania recognizes the property gained during marriage as joint property. The law on the Registration of Immovable Property (2012) contains provisions on registering immovable property under joint ownership and the *sine-qua-non* requirement that unregistered female spouses give their consent to any property sale procedures carried out at notaries' public offices. However, the implementation of the legislation has been too often hindered by discriminatory cultural and social attitudes, practices at the institutional and community levels, and women's lack of knowledge of their rights.

Law 111/2018 "On the cadaster" makes the joint registration of marital property compulsory. It was followed by adoption of Order No. 1150, dated 3 June 2019, which sets forth the procedure for correcting immovable property files data, when the corresponding portion of ownership between spouses was registered in the name of one of the spouses only. Enactment of

secondary legislation was accompanied by significant technical assistance provided to notaries country-wide.²¹⁶

In the past, notaries had often failed to include the wife's name on the contract of ownership, and property was frequently registered under the male spouses only. In addition, the law on registration of immovable properties, while marking an important step towards guaranteeing women's right to joint property ownership, is not applicable to properties registered before 2012 and does not provide for joint ownership in the case of co-habitation. As a consequence, during the administration of the property, especially in the legalization of dwellings or civil contracts carried out by husbands, women have not been registered as legal (co-)owners of property. This, *inter alia*, has affected women's inheritance rights. Being not entitled as co-owners, it has been impossible for women to make their own will, and the presumed share owned by the wife is not calculated during the division of the property among heirs.

Rural women in Albania have been particularly affected by the legislation on property registration and ownership rights, which foresees the issuing of the certificate of ownership of agricultural land in the name of the head of household only. Consequently, for the past 25 years, land has almost exclusively been registered in the name of men. Women must claim their ownership right in court, for example, in cases of divorce or inheritance. However, complex legal procedures, financial implications, and social pressure are strongly discouraging factors, and respective claims made by women are very rare.^{217,218} Registering agricultural land exclusively in the name of men also has excluded women farmers from entitlements, such as accessing agricultural extension and financial support services, as well as from issuing formal contracts with traders, thereby limiting productivity and pushing women further into informality and precarious economic circumstances.²¹⁹

With regards to the formalization of illegal properties, the Agency for Legalization, Urban Planning and Integration of Informal Areas/Construction (ALUIZNI)

214. <https://balkaninsight.com/2019/09/03/tradition-denies-albanian-women-right-to-property/#gsc.tab=0>

215. FAO and GIZ (2020). Achieving SDG indicator 5.a.2 in the Western Balkans and beyond. Partnerships for gender equality in land ownership and control. See: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/cbo173en/>

216. FAO and GIZ (2019). Guidelines on strengthening gender equality in notarial practices – South-East Europe. See: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca2953en/CA2953EN.pdf>

217. GIZ (2016). Draft Albania Country Profile on Landrights (unpublished), prepared for FAO's Gender and Land Rights Database.

218. UN Women (2016). Women's Property Rights in Albania (Second Edition). See: http://www.un.org.al/sites/default/files/WOM-EN%E2%80%99SPROPERTY%20RIGHTS%20IN%20ALBANIA_o.pdf

219. TETRA TECH (2019). Gender-Sensitive Approaches in Value Chain Development: Briefing Paper. Prepared and published in the framework of USAID's Planning and Local Governance Project in Albania. <https://www.plgp.al/briefing-paper-gender-sensitive-approaches-in-value-chain-development/>

has followed an incorrect property registration practice, whereby informal property has been registered under the name of the so-called “head of household”, discriminating against women in practice, since the vast majority of heads of household are men.

The adoption of the new Law on the Notary in 2018 aims at addressing some of these issues by establishing clear procedures for issuing of inheritance certificates, as well as procedures for the transfer of immovable property. The law makes it obligatory for the notary to cite as purchaser/co-owner the non-present spouse, *ipso jure*, due to gaining the ownership rights during marriage, in compliance with the Family Code. However, the 2012 Law on the Registration of Immovable Property still needs to be revised to regulate the registration of co-ownership of property earned during the period of marriage before its entry into force, as well as with regards to co-habitation property rights.

Some of these issues have been raised by the CEDAW Committee, which noted with concern that only a small percentage of women in Albania own land, that Law No. 33/2012 is not being implemented effectively, and that women are frequently discriminated against in matters of inheritance. CEDAW has also raised as a concern the incorrect registration practice of ALUIZNI.²²⁰

5.12. Women’s access to business and credit (loans)

The presence of women in business has increased during the last decade. In 2019, the percentage of women owning or managing a business was 25.4 percent.²²¹ While this share is roughly comparable to the situation in other countries in the region, the majority of women’s enterprises are under-capitalized micro and small businesses in predominantly informal and lower value-added sectors.²²² The Business and Investment Development Strategy (2014-2020) identifies commitments to sustainable economic development by focusing on and augmenting the contribution that women make to the economy. The document contains the Women’s Entrepreneurship Action Plan as an official Annex. However, the pace of

women’s economic inclusion through private sector development remains slow, especially for women in rural areas. The impact of gender norms that result in discrimination can be found at all levels. At the macro-level, policies, regulations, and informal social norms and patriarchal practices all influence the position of women in enterprise development. They can unintentionally restrict or exclude women and thus limit their access to opportunities, resources and power. At the meso-level, such as institutional support for market development, women tend to lack access to the same resources as men, including social capital, market information, legal support, and benefiting from enterprise development initiatives. This lack of equal access to productive resources makes women less influential compared to men and keeps them in economically marginal and often hidden roles in value chains. At the micro-level, women are less likely to be formal and paid family workers, and are likely to suffer more from decent work deficits compared to their male counterparts.

While women who own/manage a business encounter various challenges and social barriers common to those faced by women and entrepreneurs globally, in less than a year, Albanian women entrepreneurs have had to cope with the consequences of the November 2019 earthquakes and the COVID-19-induced crisis in 2020. The impact is expected to be long-lasting for the Albanian business sector in general and particularly for women-run business. Yet, a recent survey among 200 women entrepreneurs in the areas hit most by the November 2019 earthquakes concludes that responses by the government and financial institutions so far do not seem to adequately address the existing gender inequalities in entrepreneurship.²²³

During the last six years, improvement has been noticeable for women to access credit, but still, the credit (loan) registry data of the Bank of Albania show that the number of women taking loans is almost half the number of men, as is the average amount of loan taken by women compared to men.

In 2019, the number of borrowers in commercial banks was 312,046, of whom 56.5 percent were men and 43.5 percent were women. During the period 2017-2019,

220. CEDAW (2016). Concluding Observations on the 4th periodic report of Albania, 2016. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/840818?ln=en>

221. INSTAT (2020). “Women and Men in Albania”. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/women-and-men-in-albania-2020/>

222. INSTAT (2019). Business Register 2019. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/7172/regjistri-i-ndermarrjeve-2020.pdf>

223. TFL (2020). Study Report. The overall business climate and the impact of autumn 2019 earthquakes and COVID-19 among women in business.

the number of women borrowers, although still lower than that of men, increased.

The number of depositors in commercial banks in 2019 was 2,431,342, of which 57.1 percent are men and 42.9 percent are women. Compared to 2018, the number of women depositors decreased by 3.7 percent.

5.13. Women and technology - Mobile phones, internet, STEM

The results of the Survey “Information and Communication Technologies usage in Households and by Individuals (ICT)” conducted by INSTAT in 2018/2019 reveal preliminary gender differences in the distribution of use of technology within the household in favor of men. The overall use of technology increased by 1.7 percent and showed a slight decrease in the gender gap in use of technology in 2019. In terms of online purchases, men were found to invest into more expensive items such as computers and sport dresses, while women reported to buy more clothes for all members of the household. The survey data/results published do not provide disaggregation by area of residence (urban-rural) or age.

The Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (MESY) reports an increase in the percentage of female students in Science, Technology and Innovation from 4.1 percent in the academic year 2016-2017 to 4.8 percent in the academic year 2018-2019.²²⁴ While not exactly STEM data in a strict sense, figures for 2019 show a relatively high share of women graduates: 37.4 percent women and 62.6 percent men graduated from Engineering, manufacturing and construction; 76 percent women and 24 percent men from Mathematic sciences (including statistics); and 45.7 percent women and 54.3 percent men from Information and communication technologies.²²⁵ This indicates a significant drop-out rate among male students, who – conforming to the gender role of “male breadwinner” - tend to seek, and also find, employment prior to graduation. Data on gender differences in digital skills among Albania’s population is unavailable, as are comprehensive studies on STEM- and ICT-related gendered employment outcomes, including in digital

entrepreneurship, where women remain under-represented. Existing gender gaps raise the question why young men have more experience with both basic and advanced computer tasks, and importantly, why, despite variable gender differences in skills level, girls consistently have lower levels of confidence and perceived competence.

Further analysis and qualitative research are needed to produce currently missing data and information on the gender digital divide. For example, the COVID-19-induced crisis revealed the limitations of online service provision, including tele-schooling, due to lack of computers, laptops and tablets at household level in both urban and rural areas, and in particularly among poorer and disadvantaged population groups. In addition to schools’ limited ability to provide distance learning, unequal familiarity with accessing this type of material, and unequal rates of ICT access, such as having a computer to use for school work, contribute to inequitable learning loss, with the greatest impact on the most vulnerable. Poorer children and those from disadvantaged families are much less likely to have access to this technology than their more advantaged peers. According to the World Bank, 97 percent or more of children in the top economic, social, and cultural status (ESCS) quintile in Albania have a computer for schoolwork, compared to just 27 percent of children from the bottom quintile.²²⁶

There is no gender difference in having a mobile phone; however, even before the crisis, women’s and girls’ mobile phone usage had been shown to be frequently controlled by male family members. Current ICT data and information gaps include (i) household connectivity, and use and access by members within households in different geographical locations and among various socio-economic population segments; (ii) gendered access to essential online services and transactions; and (iii) gender skill gaps. Furthermore, dedicated reforms in the educational sector are required to pro-actively support girls’ ICT skills, enhance their enrolment in STEM studies, and in particular support girls’ school-to-work transition with the perspective to create equal opportunities for women on the labor market.

224. Data from the Draft Fifth Report on the implementation of CEDAW in Albania (version of September 2020).

225. INSTAT (2020). “Women and Men in Albania”. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/women-and-men-in-albania-2020/>

226. World Bank. (2020a). *Western Balkans Regular Economic Report No. 17: The Economic and Social Impact of COVID-19. Education*.

TABLE 8. Informal employment as a percentage of total non-agricultural employment, by sex

Year 2017		Year 2018		Year 2019	
men	women	men	women	men	women
35.8%	22.1%	34.7%	21.5%	35.6%	21.8%

Source: INSTAT Women and Men in Albania 2020

6. Employment

This section summarizes the findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 8.5.2 “Unemployment rate by sex, age and persons with disabilities”; SDG Indicator 8.5.1 “Average hourly earnings of women and men employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities”; SDG Indicator 8.3.1 “Proportion of informal employment in non-agricultural employment, by sex”.

Policy frameworks that aim to advance the economic empowerment of women and mainstream gender equality through relevant objectives and indicators include the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015 -2020, the National Strategy for Employment and Skills 2014-2020 together with specific objectives of the first strategic goal of the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2016-2020. However, CSOs are skeptic about the effective implementation of these policies due to lack of detailed and thorough analysis of the employment and labor market trends over the last years, to show their direct impact on women, particularly on those from disadvantaged communities.²²⁷ Similar concerns were raised also by the CEADW Committee, including about

- (i) women’s concentration in the informal labor market, especially in the textile and shoe industries, without adequate labor and social protection, and
- (ii) the absence of disaggregated data on the number of women in the informal economy. The Committee was also concerned about the gender wage gap in the private sector; the low minimum wage, which disproportionately affects women; limited access to the formal labor market for women belonging to ethnic and linguistic minorities and women with disabilities; and the lack of sex-disaggregated information on labor migration to third countries.²²⁸

6.1. Informality

In the countries of the Western Balkans and Eastern Europe, the share of informal employment (31.5 percent) is substantially higher than the average for the whole of Europe and Central Asia (25.1 percent). In 2019, informal employment in Albania as a percentage of total non-agricultural employment by sex was 35.6 percent for men and 21.8 percent for women, and this share has remained without major change since 2017.²²⁹ When informal employment in agriculture is included, the rate of informality in Serbia is 18.7 percent, compared to 30.5 percent in Bosnia and Herzegovina and 61.0 percent in Albania, the highest in the region and representing more than half of the population that is employed. However, gender disparities do not show the whole picture. Although informality rates are lower for women than for men, this does not imply women’s greater access to formal employment, but rather inequitable access to labor for women in general. Women tend to be found in the most vulnerable situations in informal employment, including as own-account workers, or contributing family workers. Official country-specific studies or analyses of the gender dimension of the informal sector in Albania are currently unavailable.

6.2. Women in the Labor Market

In Albania, the overall activity rate for the population aged 15 to 64 has steadily increased over the period 2013-2019, reaching 61.6 percent per cent in 2019. The activity rate shows the proportion of all people of working age who are either in employment or unemployed, and it is interchangeable with the term labor force participation rate. This increase occurred for both men’s and women’s participation in the labor market. Between 2013 and 2019, the proportion of both women and men in the labor market increased from 50.1 to 61.6 percent for women, and from 70.2 to 77.6 percent for men. Despite the increase of women’s

227. Report of Civil Society Organizations on the Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania, Beijing +25, 2019

228. CEDAW (2016). Concluding Observations on the 4th periodic report of Albania, 2016. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/840818?ln=en>

229. INSTAT (2020). Women and Men in Albania 2020.

activity rate, the gender gap remained persistent at an average of 18 percentage points.

According to the Labour Force Survey 2017-18, women work predominantly in economic areas such as human health and social work, education, manufacturing, and agriculture. In 2019, the primary sector employing women was agriculture, with 41.6 percent women compared to 32.3 percent men, marking a slight reduction since 2017. The second most important sectors which provide employment for women are the service sector (21.6 percent) and non-market services

(20.7 percent), followed by manufacturing (14.8 percent).

The agricultural sector is characterized by subsistence farming, very low income and high informality, which are barriers for decent work. The vast majority of women work in unpaid, informal family jobs. Women's contribution is poorly compensated in terms of money, and their unpaid work is rarely recognized and appreciated. More than 80 percent of land titles are in the name of the 'head of household' or former head of household (husband, father-in-law, brother, father, grandfather), limiting women's entitlements to productive resources and services that directly derive from holding a land title (such as registering as farming business, credit, and extension service).

Women in rural areas have limited access to agricultural and market information, and experience high levels of inequality in family decision-making.

They are rarely members of, or represented in, formal associations or committees. Furthermore, rural women have to deal with all household chores and farm duties, especially when male household members take on non-agricultural employment or (e)migrate in search of jobs.

Related to the reasons for inactivity, generally speaking, women remain out of the labor force mostly because they perform unpaid work at home (18.0 percent), or are attending school (22.3 percent). On the other hand, only one percent of men declare unpaid activities at home as the reason for their inactivity, while 28.1 percent are students or pupils.

BOX 1. Employment in Albania at a glance

Labor Participation Gender Gap: 16 percent in favor of men.

Employment Rate: 68.2 percent for men compared to 54.4 percent for women.

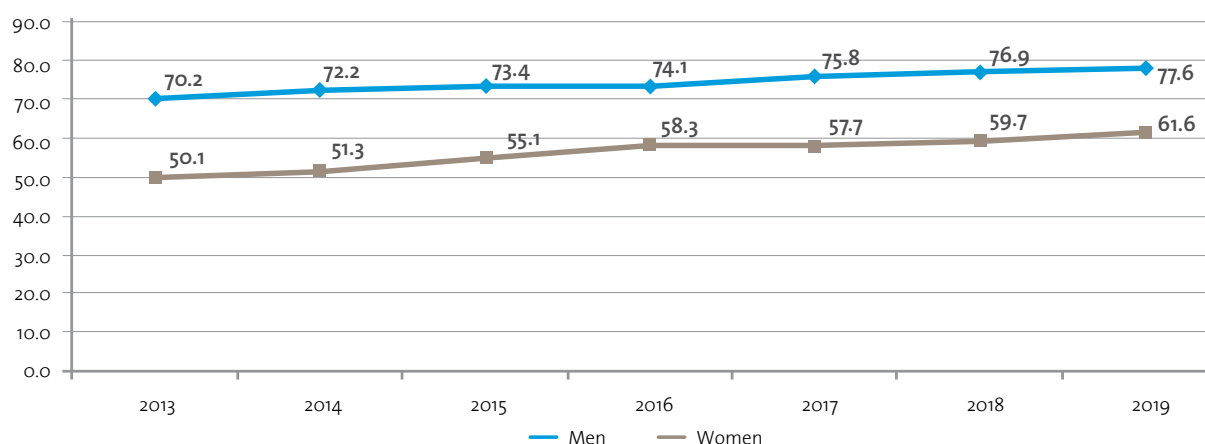
Outside Labor Market: 38.4 percent of women aged 15-64; compared to 22.4 percent of men.

Inactivity rate in the Labor Market: fulfilling domestic tasks is the main reason for 18 percent of inactive women compared to one percent of men.

Self-Employment: 51 percent of women who are self-employed work in agriculture.

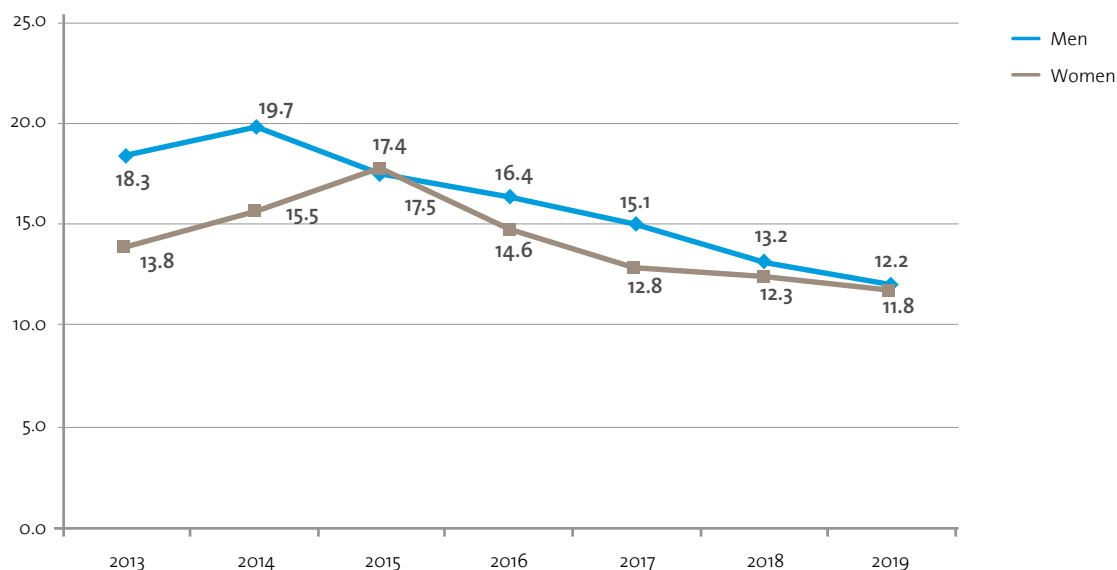
Source: INSTAT, *Women and Men 2020*

FIGURE 1: Labor force participation rate (15-64)(percent), by sex



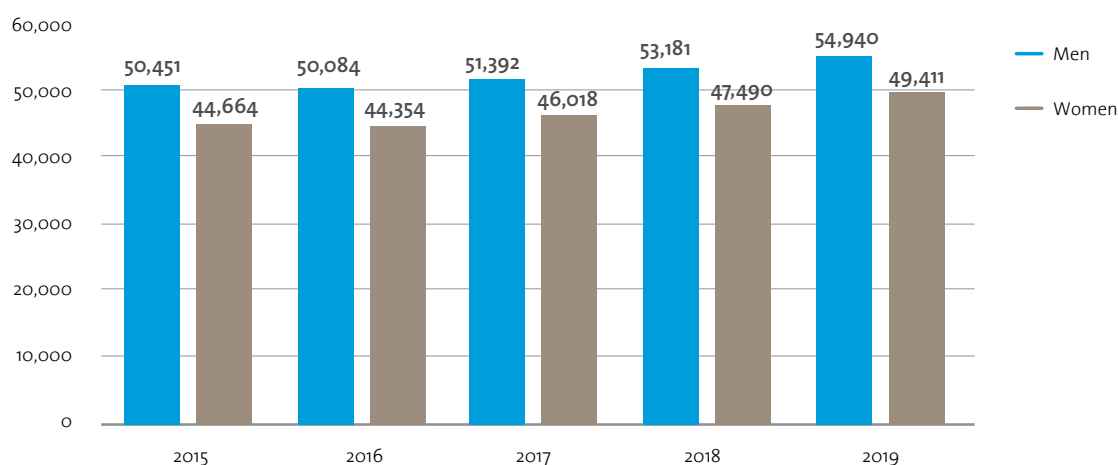
Source: INSTAT, 2019

FIGURE 2. Unemployment rate (15-64 years) (percent), by sex



Source: Labour Force Survey 2017-2018

FIGURE 3. Gross average monthly wage per employee by sex



Source: General Directorate of Taxation, social insurance contributors; INSTAT's calculation

According to labor force survey data, in 2019, the unemployment rate for men aged 15-64 was 12.2 percent versus 11.8 percent for women. Overall, the unemployment rate declined for both women and men compared to the previous year, however, it decreased for men by almost one percentage point, while for women only by 0.5 percentage points.

6.3. Gender pay gap (GPG)

In 2019, the average monthly gross wage per employee in Albania was 52,380 ALL.²³⁰ This wage is calculated based on the enterprises' payrolls declared to the General Directorate of Taxation for contributions on social security, health and tax on income from employment. It covers all sectors of economy and

230. Approx. 500 USD

TABLE 9. Gender Pay Gap per sector and share of female and male employment in 2019

Economic activity	Share of employment		GPG
	Men	Women	
Total	53.8%	46.2%	10.1%
Agriculture	70.5%	29.5%	7.1%
Production	36.2%	63.8%	24.6%
Construction	84.4%	15.6%	0.7%
Mining and quarrying, electricity, gas and water supply	80.4%	19.6%	7.1%
Trade, transportation, accommodation, business administrative services	61.8%	38.2%	2.4%
Public administration, social and other services and activities	44.7%	55.3%	13.7%

Source: INSTAT's calculation based on social insurance contributors reported by the General Directorate of Taxation

contributors (Albanian and foreign citizens), for whom the enterprise declares a gross monthly wage. Compared to 2018, the 2019 average monthly gross wage per employee increased by 3.5 percent.

The gender pay gap (GPG) was calculated as 10.7 percent in 2018, and 10.1 in 2019, which is significantly lower than the EU-28 average of 14.1 percent.²³¹ GPG varies across sectors, and there is a direct proportion between GPG and the share of male and female employment. GPG is highest in sectors where women are concentrated, reflecting the impact of horizontal segregation on women's wages. For example, GPG is more than twice the average, namely 24.6 percent in Production, where 63.8 women find employment. On the other hand, GPG is below the average in male-dominated sectors, such as Construction, Mining, and Trade and transportation. Among the main professions, GPG is highest for craftsmen, and equipment and machinery monitoring employees (24.2 percent). The lowest GPG is noted for the Armed Forces, where men's average monthly gross wage is three percent higher than women's.

It is important to note that Albania's GPG generated by INSTAT remains highly controversial: the formula applied for the calculations neither considers informality (which is significant in Albania), nor other factors, which - according to international

standard - are an essential component of wage gap calculations. Hence, Albania's strikingly low GPG figure is a result of methodology and does not reflect the actual situation of women's and men's wages in the country. Particularly in view of the need to produce internationally comparable results, the approach requires alignment with international and/or Eurostat methodologies.

6.4. Social security and health coverage

This section summarizes the findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 1.3.1 "Proportion of population covered by social protection floors/systems, by sex, distinguishing children, unemployed persons, older persons, persons with disabilities, pregnant women, newborns, work injury victims and the poor and vulnerable".

Legally, access to healthcare is equal between women and men. However, reports show that economic inequality between men and women may influence women's access to healthcare. The public healthcare system in Albania is free (or with reduced fees) for those paying social insurance contributions and other categories (pregnant women, patients with tumors, etc.). In the larger cities, there are also private hospitals and clinics. In reality, people are often obliged to make informal payments to obtain

231. https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/equal-pay/gender-pay-gap-situation-eu_en#:~:text=The%20gender%20employment%20gap%20stood,less%20per%20hour%20than%20men

care, even in public institutions. This affects women more than men, since women require services related to pregnancy and child bearing, and they are also less often formally employed/insured and more dependent on men's incomes.

In 2014, GoA started implementing the national free check-up programme for the population aged 40-60 years, which in 2016 was extended to all individuals aged 35-70 years. Integrated health care for women in health care centers covers services in the domain of prevention, promotion, treatment and rehabilitation. Primary and secondary health workers are trained on issues related to sexual and reproductive health, prevention and control of cervical cancer, reproductive rights and sexual health, care for mother and child, quality HIV services and stigma, prevention and treatment of sexual violence, etc.

According to the Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018, during the last decade, the proportion of women protected by state insurance or social security increased significantly, from 26 percent to 46 percent, while for men the increase was only modest, from 34 percent to 37 percent.²³² However, as shown in the ILO World Social Protection Report 2017-19, public social protection expenditure (excluding health) on people of working age was 0.2 percent of national GDP²³³, compared to the EU-28 average of 28.1 percent.²³⁴

In 2016, the Gender Brief Albania²³⁵ highlighted the need for a gender review of the country's pension system, and an assessment of the crucial gender inequality features of the statutory old-age pension system and other social insurance programmes, including the impact of women's engagement in informal employment and the gender wage gap, care-providing obligations, alignment with relevant EU Directives, and the need to harmonize the system of calculating 'rural' versus 'urban' pensions. Studies that investigate the linkages between significant gender inequalities in the labor market and their impact on

contribution rates, retirement age, and pensions of women and men in Albania are still lacking. Thus far, analyses of the various implications of the current pension system for women and men, the gender-specific effects of pension scheme reforms, and the impact of old-age poverty have not been undertaken. Administrative data on the number of recipients of pension and child/family allowances by sex is available and can serve as the basis for determining respective population coverage rates.

As part of the COVID-19 containment measures, in March 2020, the government approved the granting of a double payment of economic aid to existing beneficiaries and those who had applied until 10th March 2020. Among the 63,508 recipient families, there were 482 victims of domestic violence with protection order/immediate protection order. Measures taken in April 2020 granted financial assistance of 16,000 ALL²³⁶ to applicants for economic assistance, who had applied during the period July 2019 - April 2020, but had neither received economic assistance nor benefited from the Six-Percent-Fund allocated to municipalities. A total of 4,524 families benefited from this measure.²³⁷

6.5. Women and girls with disabilities

Albania has been party to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (CRPD) since 2013 and has made efforts in adopting and implementing related legislation, including Law No. 93/2014 on "Inclusion and accessibility for persons with disabilities"; Order No. 195/2016, which establishes the "Inclusive Teacher Profile"; and the National Action Plan on Disability 2016-2020 (NAPD). However, other areas of the legal framework, including anti-discrimination legislation, remain largely incompatible with the CRPD, and implementation of existing legislation is facing significant challenges.

All key human rights mechanisms point out major gaps in the Albanian response to gender equality and

232. INSTAT (2018). Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018. See: <http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2018/albania-demographic-and-health-survey-2017-2018/>

233. ILO (2019). World Social Protection Report 2017-19. See: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_604882.pdf

234. Eurostat (2020). Social protection statistics. Statistics explained. September 2020. See: <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/pdfscache/3975.pdf>

235. UN Women & UNDP (2016). Gender Brief Albania, pgs. 51-52 and 64. See: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2016/10/albania-gender-brief>

236. Approx. 150 USD

237. Data provided by MHSP in the framework of preparing the Draft Fifth Report on the implementation of CEDAW in Albania (version of September 2020).

gender-based violence (GBV).²³⁸ Women and girls with disabilities are at the intersection of discrimination on the grounds of gender and disability. Yet, both the National Strategy on Gender Equality and the Law “On the Protection from Discrimination” lack the notion of multiple discrimination with regard to women with disabilities. One of the most serious consequences is the violence women with disabilities face within and outside their families.²³⁹ In addition, they do not receive the protection and support they are entitled to due to lack of accessibility to services as well as stigma and prejudice of public and non-public service providers. This is exacerbated by insufficient provision of information to women with disabilities about reporting of violence and support services.²⁴⁰ Furthermore, the rights of women with disabilities are not in the focus of either Organizations of Persons with Disabilities or women’s rights organizations.

Therefore, it is important that in addition to amending legislation, the rights of women and girls with disabilities are also addressed and mainstreamed at the policy level, i.e. primarily in the upcoming Gender Equality Strategy and the National Action Plan on Disability. These documents need to be in accordance with the CRPD Committee’s Concluding Observations for Albania, which recommended to (i) ensure that its laws and policies adhere to the Convention; (ii) provide for the full protection of the rights of women and girls with disabilities; (iii) incorporate a disability perspective into all gender-equality policies and programmes, including employment-related policies and measures; and (iv) adopt an effective strategy for their implementation.²⁴¹

6.6. Child labor

Officially published administrative data supporting *SDG Indicator 8.7.1 “Proportion and number of children aged 5-17 years engaged in child labor, by sex and age”* is unavailable.

7. Urban Housing

Existing SDG indicators do not specify gender-related aspects/impacts. As a result of the tremendous political, societal and economic changes in Albania after communism, one phenomenon characterizing urban development is the illegally acquisition of state and private property. After the year 1990, a considerable number of people forcibly kept and protected the illegally acquired property. Under these conditions, legalization was a pragmatic answer in view of the difficult consequences that resulted from the occupation of land by a significant share of the population. Since 2006, the Law on Legalization of informal settlement intended to legalize all informal settlements. The legalization process provided ownership of state and private land to individuals who had illegally constructed buildings with the aim to include them into the process of urbanization. Legislative initiatives were undertaken and institutions were created in relation to this process. However, legal and judicial norms did not take into consideration the individual ownership rights of women and men within a household, and they completely fail to safeguard women’s right to benefiting from legalization. The establishment of legal ownership of new settlements has resulted in properties with exclusive ownership in favor of men, due to the fundamental flaw in the civil register of representing exclusively men as the head of household.

The COVID-19-induced crisis followed the earthquake of November 2019, which caused 51 victims and an economic damage of ALL 300,000,000 (2.85 million USD). When the COVID-19-induced crisis started, the Albanian government was on the verge of initiating the reconstruction plan for all people affected by the earthquake. However, many families remain living in temporary premises, which made the lockdown more difficult for them compared to the general population. While 15.8 percent of surveyed individuals reported to have had damages at their premises, only 2.9 percent

238. See CRPD Concluding Observations on Albania, 2019; CEDAW Concluding Observations on Albania, 2016, UPR Recommendations on Albania, 2019 and GREVIO First Baseline Assessment Report on Albania regarding its implementation of the Istanbul Convention.

239. According to the CEDAW Committee, violence against women is one of the most serious forms of discrimination against women, see CEDAW General Comments no. 19 and 35 in: CEDAW(2016). Concluding Observations on the 4th periodic report of Albania, 2016. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/840818?ln=en>

240. Evaluation Report: Violence against women and girls from disadvantaged communities- An overview of the phenomenon of violence against women and girls from Roma, LGBT and disability communities in Elbasan, Vlora and Shkodra municipalities, developed by Albanian Disability Rights Foundation, Roma.

241. CRPD (2019). Concluding Observations on the initial report of Albania. See: <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6OkG1d%2FPPRICAqhKb7yhspdlq2SNoFynLS%2BUiWUaqofjmfHJ5MLWvzpC5ePiublk65eOKd%2FNGE6rlwV%2B8UH-zqHAWz2phpnAZHHFMFuZbruUZniNmuu8vWWysfRMtguz>

of the same respondent sample declared they became unemployed after the earthquake.²⁴² The prevalence of women experiencing damages in their premises due to the earthquake is higher, while men report a stronger negative impact on their employment due to the earthquake.

With the disproportionate impact of the November 2019 earthquakes on women and men, the post-COVID-19 recovery process should be seen as an opportunity to strengthen resilience against future shocks by reducing inequality and vulnerability of women. Possible measures to mitigate the vulnerability of women in cases of emergency and disasters include:

- Gender analysis and impact assessment of plans for housing and infrastructure reconstruction to ensure different needs and priorities are being equitably met, and that women and men benefit equally from design through construction to delivery.
- Transparency in the distribution of recovery funds, especially when distributed as cash, and equitable provision of resources to both men and women.
- Compensation of women for their additional burden of unpaid labour after the earthquake/emergency.
- Dedicated funds for the rapid re-establishment of women's small and home-based enterprises.
- Prioritization of the recovery of schools, social and children's services, and safe houses so that women can retain their employment.
- Equitable and transparent land, housing and property priorities and restitution for men and women irrespective of marital status.
- Measures to support and ensure meaningful participation of women, including marginalized and excluded women, in decision-making processes related to housing, land, property, micro-business support, and agriculture.
- Linking replacement costs of household goods and furnishings to women, as these are immediately related to women's work and home-based income generation.

8. Access to Justice

In line with Corporate Guidance and SDG 16: "Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels", this section specifically focuses on the key human rights and accountability issue of women's access to justice.

Findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 16.1.1 "Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age"; SDG Indicator 16.2.2 "Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation"; and SDG Indicator 16.2.3 "Proportion of young women and men aged 18–29 years who experienced sexual violence by age 18" are discussed in the sub-sections on (i) Gender-based violence/Violence against Women/Domestic Violence, and (ii) Trafficking.

Access to justice is an area where women face significant difficulties. According to a 2017 UNDP survey, almost half of the respondents (48.7 percent) has had legal problems in the last five years, out of which 43.7 percent were women. Among respondents from the Tirana region, more than three fourths (77.9 percent) said the justice system does not protect their rights, and this notion is more pronounced among women (68.8 percent) than men (31.2 percent). Gendered differences are also apparent on the issue of seeking support for resolving legal issues: while 39.5 percent of men respondents said they had asked assistance from another person or institution to resolve their problem, only 30 percent of women respondents had done so. In particular, victims of domestic violence—largely lacking economic means—are discouraged from seeking justice. They also lack information on their rights under the law and on the functioning of the system of protection orders. Similarly, justice officials also lack information and do not apply the law on domestic violence consistently. Furthermore, the attitudes of justice officials can be dismissive and humiliating for victims of domestic violence.²⁴³ Low awareness-raising, lack of legal clinics country-wide, multiple forms of discrimination, and unfavorable economic standing contribute to Roma and Egyptian, LGBTI+, disabled and elderly women, children victims of crime or in conflict with the law, and victims of gender-based violence having limited access to justice, including difficulties in

242. "Rapid Gender Assessment Survey" – a nationwide household survey conducted by UN Women Albania in partnership with IDRA Research & Consulting between 17th and 26th April 2020.

243. <https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/survey-on-access-to-justice-in-albania.html>

obtaining specialized free legal aid services. Recently, the legal framework on free legal aid improved and is now more complete and operational. (See Section 08-2 “Access to free legal aid” for information on latest amendments, bylaws, and restructuring).

8.1. Enforcement of Court Decisions

The execution of court decisions is an essential component of the right to a fair trial and access to justice. The persistent non-execution of court decisions in Albania - including orders concerning the payment of alimony - is highlighted by CEDAW as a widespread problem and one of the most concerning issues related to access to justice.²⁴⁴ Administrative data from 2016 to 2020 indicate that the percentage of non-executed court decisions related to alimony varies from 25 to 40 percent with an increasing trend, in line with the increase of such court decisions. However, only a limited number of criminal charges have been filed against the debtor parent, i.e. the father.²⁴⁵ Bailiff cases with court decisions on children especially affect women, since in most cases, children are left to the mother for upbringing and education.

The non-execution of court decisions granting protection orders (POs) to victims of gender-based violence is also one of the key observations of the recent GREVIO report, which calls on the Albanian authorities to pay due diligence to all court decisions granting POs in the framework of protecting victims of domestic violence, who are overwhelmingly women. The inefficiency of the protection order mechanism, and the non-execution and lack of response of responsible bodies including the bailiff service, are among the key concerning issues highlighted by the GREVIO expert group.²⁴⁶ The number of documented violations of Protection Orders actually increased from 119 cases in 2016, to 129 cases in 2017, and 148 cases of violation in 2018.²⁴⁷

The issue has also been raised in several reports of the office of the Ombudsperson, which has expressed its concern about bailiffs’ partial knowledge on the civil and procedural legislation in force, which affects citizens’ procedural rights.²⁴⁸ The Ombudsperson noted that the main reasons underlying the non-execution of court decisions protecting women’s rights were (i) the debtor’s insolvency due to unemployment, lack of property, or the court omitting to specify in its final court decision how the obligation will be executed (in decisions on alimony enforcement); (ii) bailiffs delaying their bailiff actions without prior request from creditor women; (iii) lack of bailiffs’ knowledge on the legal framework on domestic violence (regarding decision on POs/EPOs); and (iv) debtors changing their place of dwelling or leaving the country (in decisions on child arrangements).²⁴⁹ In this context, required measures for improvement include:

- Intensifying legal measures including those foreseen in the law on domestic violence and in civil and criminal procedure legislation on the enforcement of court decisions, together with regular monitoring of these decisions, to ensure that cases of violation are duly identified and offenders duly prosecuted.
- Increasing bailiffs’ professionalism, capacity, and knowledge on the Albanian legislation on gender equality and violence against women.
- Enforcing the principle of civil responsibility of public officials who fail in their duty to take the necessary protective measures.

8.2. Access to free legal aid

The legal framework on access to justice has improved. Law No. 111/2017 “On Free Legal Aid Guaranteed by the State” - in force since 1st June 2018 - further expands the category of vulnerable women eligible to benefit from free legal aid. All victims of domestic violence, trafficking, and sexual abuse are entitled to benefit

244. CEDAW(2016). Concluding Observations on the 4th periodic report of Albania, 2016. See: <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/840818?ln=en>

245. For the period 01.07.2016 - 31.12.2016 there were 6100 cases out of which in 1593 cases the debtor had no ability to pay and 70 criminal charges have been applied for non-provision of means of subsistence; in 2017 there were 6132 cases of which in 1758 cases the debtor had no ability to pay, and 80 criminal charges were applied for non-provision of means of subsistence; in 2018 there were 6547 cases, out of which in 2488 cases the debtor had no ability to pay, and 65 criminal charges were applied for non-provision of means of subsistence; in 2019 there were 7221 cases from which in 2754 cases the debtor had no ability to pay and 55 criminal charges were applied for non-provision of means of subsistence; for the period 01.01.2020 - 30.04.2020 there were 7309 cases out of which in 2824 cases the debtor had no ability to pay, and 18 criminal charges have been applied for non-payment of means of subsistence.

246. See GREVIO Baseline Evaluation Report Albania 2017, paragraph 183-6, accessible at <https://rm.coe.int/grevio-first-baseline-report-on-albania/16807688a7>

247. Monitoring report of the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2016-2020, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, 2017, 2018.

248. Ombudsperson’s Annual Report, 2018, p.36, accessible at <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/Raport%20Vjetor%202018.pdf>

249. The Ombudsperson’s Alternative Report to the CEDAW Committee, 2020 (forthcoming).

from free legal aid regardless of their personal income. However, the approval of secondary legislation has been delayed, and related institutional mechanisms were established in the absence of reasonable deadlines, which hinders the actual provision of legal aid services affecting people in difficult economic situation, children, and marginalized and disadvantaged groups.

Even when legal aid is provided, the process of obtaining fee waivers and payments for court fees and experts' fees²⁵⁰ - including compensation for victims of violence, divorce, alimony, division of property, and inheritance - remains difficult.²⁵¹ This is the result of noticeable cultural resistance among some judges and other duty-bearers to waive fees for court-appointed experts and other expenses, benefiting low-income groups. Several Free Legal Aid centers²⁵², established by the Ministry of Justice with the support of UNDP and international donors, proved a good practice for reaching out to the most marginalized women and men. However, the number of gender-based violence cases benefiting from legal aid remains low. There are established five Primary Legal Aid Service Centers (PLASCs) and three additional are expected to open until the end of 2020. For 2019-2020, the PLASC of Elbasan handled 47 cases, three of which were cases of violence. While for the period January-September 2020, PLASC of Tirana handled 422 cases, Durrës 211 cases, Fier 126 cases, and Lezha 215 cases. There are 12 non-profit organizations authorized by the Minister of Justice to provide primary legal aid, with a geographical spread in Tirana, Elbasan, Durrës, Shkodra and Berat, which have handled a total of 283 cases. Providers of primary legal aid are also Law Clinics that operate at Higher Education Institutions (agreements have been concluded with nine of them). During the period 01.02.2019 - 31.01.2020, the Law Clinic in the Ministry of Justice treated 1250 cases, including 21 cases of violence.²⁵³ In 2019, the lawyers approved by the National Chamber of Advocates and included in the list provided secondary legal aid for 21 cases (two cases of violence); during the period January - September 2020, 51 women and 38 men received secondary legal aid; there were 15 rejections of the request for secondary legal aid; and one decision was dismissed.²⁵⁴

The number of cases for protection order which are handled in the absence of a legal representative of the victim is considerably high. A monitoring exercise of the court orders of Tirana District Court, conducted by a civil society organization for the first six months of 2020, points out that in 162 cases related to protection orders, only 17 percent of victims were represented by a lawyer.²⁵⁵ Therefore, there is an urgent need for both primary and secondary free legal aid services to be made available for the most disadvantaged women and men across the country, particularly those in remote rural areas. In this context, it is paramount that the Government of Albania accelerates efforts to:

- Ensure immediate and effective implementation of the law on Legal Aid and secondary legislation, including of provisions that regulate exemption from payment of court fees and costs. In this context, legal aid authorities should be able to negotiate lower fees for court-appointed experts or to nominate experts serving in government agencies;
- Ensure adequate funding for the establishment of an effective legal aid system, including the pilot FLA centers, which should be expanded to all parts of the country;
- Increase public awareness of the new law and the legal aid clinics to ensure that those in need of these services – particularly women and girls in remote rural areas and from disadvantaged groups - are informed about its existence and the opportunities it provides.

9. Environmental and climate change

Existing SDG Indicators do not specify gender-related aspects or impacts. However, environmental issues and climate change have a differentiated impact on women and men. Data/information on these issues is highly limited in Albania, which reveals a clear omission/gap in current discourse and policy. This section is a snapshot of where Albania stands in terms of gender & environment/ climate change. The sub-categories are those which Albania is required to periodically report on.

No information exists on the extent to which gender equality goals have been mainstreamed into the national

250. Expert fees can be so high as to cause clients to abandon legally valid claims.

251. For example, UNDP's implementing NGO partners report numerous cases of women giving up on divorce proceedings simply because of the inability to pay for court fees and expert services.

252. Among them, centers are established in Tirana, Elbasan, Fier and Durrës.

253. Administrative data from the Ministry of Justice in the framework of preparing the Draft Fifth Report on the implementation of CEDAW in Albania (version of September 2020).

254. Draft Vth National Report on the Implementation of CEDAW Convention, version of 16th of October 2020.

255. Monitoring Report of Court Orders of the Tirana District Court for January-June 2020, Human Rights in Democracy Centre (HRDC), unpublished.

legal and policy framework on environment and climate change. Law No.10 431, dated 9.6.2011 “On Environmental Protection”²⁵⁶ does not include gender related provisions.

9.1. Air Quality/Industrial Pollution

Sex and social-related differences bring to evidence different impacts of air pollution on women and men. The geographic distribution of pollution, the exposure to air pollution and type of pollution highlight many gender inequalities that are related to the division of labor, demographic change, urban development, and health and cognitive performance.²⁵⁷ Recent data on the gender-specific impact of indoor air pollution in Albania is unavailable.

The Albanian Helsinki Committee in their monitoring report of cases addressed by citizens, who have claimed violation of their legitimate interests as a result of environmental pollution from the activities of private entities, offers data for the direct link between low birth weight and environmental pollution due to pollution of the Gjanica River in Albania.²⁵⁸ 14 percent of interviewed households in this area have recorded low birth weight, with an average weight of 1.9 kg ± 0.4 kg.

9.2. Waste Management/Water Quality (supply and waste water treatment)

There are gender differences in different steps of the waste management cycle, defined by women’s primary household responsibility, different perceptions on views what is waste and what is not, on consumption behavior between men and women, etc. Waste and wastewater treatment processes impact production, industrial pollution, household behavior etc., and as a consequence, men and women are differently affected. Women are more affected by the lack of wastewater treatment and by an inoperative sewerage system; when sanitation is not separated, women’s contamination risk is greater than men’s.

Agricultural production and arable land in Albania are the first affected by waste treatment processes such

as incineration. As the Albanian Helsinki Committee shows, there is a decrease of agricultural production in the Verri village of Fiër in Albania, due to the incinerator’s vicinity to the arable land.²⁵⁹ This concern was addressed especially by the women of this area, who felt the consequences that the construction of the incinerator would bring in their daily lives. The same report of civil society organizations for the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania shows that consultative meetings organized on integrated management of recycled waste have been entirely formal meetings without substantial participation of either local women or local community-based NGOs.²⁶⁰

9.3. Climate Change/Civil Protection

Many studies from developing countries show that natural disasters affect mostly economies dependent on agricultural production. Although the GDP share of agriculture in Albania is not very high (18.2 percent in 2018), agriculture represents the sector of the economy in which 40 percent of the workforce is active, and it is a sector in which women have traditionally performed a substantial amount of unpaid work.

A Gender Assessment on the impact of floods - conducted by UN Women in 2015 - showed that women faced increased domestic violence and disadvantaged treatment compared to men in the distribution of aid by municipalities.²⁶¹ Previous floods and the recent earthquake show that Albania is ill-prepared to adequately respond to natural disasters and to support the most vulnerable citizens, including rural women who lost their subsistence agriculture production, single mothers who went homeless, and women who face domestic violence.

9.4. Chemicals

Women and men are impacted differently by chemicals and through different routes. They have different risk exposure to different chemicals depending very much on the division of labor. For instance, men in Albania are much more exposed to toxic mining chemicals,

256. <http://www.akm.gov.al/assets/ligji-nr-10431%2C-datë-9.6.2011--për-mbrojtjen-e-mjedisit.pdf>

257. The Institute of Labour Economics has shown for instance that urban outdoor air pollution impacts differently men and women in their cognitive performance, where men perform worse than women (IZA 2017); Different researchers has shown that regulation immune system of women differs from men; The International Labour Organization (2018) points out how the world of work is fundamentally interlinked to the natural environment.

258. Albanian Helsinki Committee monitoring results, page 41 of the “Report of civil society organisations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania - Beijing+25”, published in July 2019. See: <https://rrjetikunderdhunesgjimore-monitorime.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Albanian-CSOs-report-on-the-implementation-of-BpFA.pdf>

259. *ibid.*, page 39

260. *ibid.*, pages 37-38

261. UN Women (2015). Gender Inequality and Floods Impacts in Albania.

TABLE 10. Value of GRB elements for the period 2015-2021

Year	No. of budget programs	No. of budget programs that include GRB elements	No. of Objectives	No. of Products	Budget Funds for GRB (Million USD)	Share of total Budget Expenditures
2015-2017	84	9	11	14	38.4	1%
2016-2018	84	20	27	23	63.4	1.73%
2017-2019	84	24	32	33	90	2.3%
2018-2020	84	28	41	41	120	2.4%
2019-2021	74	33	52	52	285	6.3%

Source: National Review on the implementation of Beijing+25 in Albania, pg. 48

whereas women are more exposed to chemicals used in textile and shoe production, and to toxic substances used in the household.²⁶² Women and men have different experiences of dealing with sources of exposure, and different priorities, responsibilities and needs related to the reduction of toxic chemicals. As in other environmental and cross-cutting issues, women face specific constraints and challenges in their efforts to improve their safety and living conditions, which are largely determined by inequality between women and men in decision-making, participation, and education.

10. Partnerships

There is limited evidence that Government ministries, departments and local administration work closely together around gender equality and women's empowerment. Exceptions are efforts on domestic violence, and - to a lesser degree - around the issue of gender-responsive budgeting. Overall, gender mainstreaming suffers from weaknesses in coordination and inter-ministerial, inter-departmental cooperation, and over the recent period, previously promising efforts have been weakened. Translation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality and

its Action Plan to the local level has not happened. Progress has been made at inter-departmental/institutional work, such as the local Coordinated Referral Mechanism for Domestic Violence, and the Child Protection Units, however, implementation is uneven across LGUs, and significant implementation gaps remain. (For a detailed discussion of this issue see the section "Lessons from domestic violence under COVID-19 lock-down conditions"). Selected LGUs have embarked on initial efforts of addressing gender equality in local governance by developing Local Gender Action Plans in support of implementing the European Charter of Equality of women and men in local life.²⁶³ However, this is a purely voluntary effort, supported by donors²⁶⁴, and not under any national or government initiative.

GoA has a positive and open working relationship with the UNCT, the European Union Delegation, bilateral donors, The World Bank, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the CoE. Overall, the relationship between Government and women's civil society organizations is characterized by relatively limited consultation on the one hand, and strong reliance for service delivery/outreach to citizen in need on the other. Positive examples of productive collaboration exist at LGU level, and particularly on GBV. In recent

262. The majority of the workforce engaged in industrial production such as mining or textile industry in Albania, work under very precarious and hazardous work conditions. Lack of trade unionism and public control of private entities operating in these industries makes very difficult the impact assessment of industrial pollution in health related cases in the workplace, and outside the workplace. Many cases of severe poisoning of women working in the textile industry have been randomly reported in the media.

263. https://www.ccre.org/img/uploads/piecesjointe/filename/charte_egalite_al.pdf

264. UN Women has supported seven LGUs - Gjirokastrë, Tiranë, Korçë, Elbasan, Durrës, Shkodër, Përmet to sign the Charter and draft the LGAPs from whose only Gjirokastrë and Përmet have not prepared and approved this plan. USAID/PLGP has supported 6 LGUs - Bulqizë, Dibër, Librazhd, Cërrik, Pogradec dhe Kamzë to sign the Charter and only the last one has not advanced yet to the preparation of LGAP.

years, the Government has been more open to consultations with women rights NGOs, particularly with regards to legal amendments and preparation of reports on the implementation of international human rights and policy obligations, including the Beijing+25 National Report. As an example, the 2018 amendments of the Law on Domestic Violence included several provisions recommended by members of the Monitoring Network on Violence against Women - a network of CSOs, established with the support of UN Women and the EU. Furthermore, the Parliamentary Sub-commission on Gender Equality and Preventing Violence Against Women holds regular consultations with CSOs and international organizations on GBV, but also on other gender equality issues.

11. Financing for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment/ Tracking public allocations/GRB

This section summarizes the findings of the desk research on SDG Indicator 5.c.1 "Whether or not there are systems to track and make public allocations for Gender equality and the empowerment of women".

As per SDG 5.c.1, the three components of a gender responsive public finance system are: (i) intent of a government to address gender equality by identifying whether policies, programmes and resources are in place; (ii) existence of mechanisms to track resource allocations towards these policy goals; and (iii) existence of mechanisms to make resource allocations publicly available to increase accountability to women. The UN Women Global SDG Database lists Albania as "approaching requirement" under this indicator.

As the result of 2016 amendments of the Law on Organic Budget (2008), gender equality has become one of the principles of the Albanian budgetary system, and national plans on spending for gender equality results have increased. In the medium-term budgeting programme (MTBP) 2020-2022, gender inequality issues in sectors such as health, social protection, education, justice, business, and agriculture are addressed through 38 Budget Programmes, or in other words, in 50 percent of all

budget programmes in Albania. Gender-responsive budget elements constitute 7.2 percent of the total annual budget (38,264,748 ALL) compared to just one percent in 2015, when UN Women started to support GRB in Albania.

However, no tracking system is in place, and limited information is available on actual implementation and execution of these gender-responsive budget elements. An indication is provided by a forthcoming monitoring report of the People's Advocate²⁶⁵ on public expenditure of key line ministries and five main municipalities. The National Strategy for Gender Equality 2016-2020 provides data on the planned budget expected to come from the government and donors: 72.2 percent of the budget for four years was supposed to be covered by the State budget (central and local level), with the remaining gap of 27.8 percent gap to be covered by donors. However, as shown for the specific area of DV/GBV (Objective 3 of the Strategy), in practice, this is not the case. The People's Advocate monitoring report found that expenditures for DV/GBV by MHSP, MoJ, and municipalities are (i) negligible vis-à-vis their overall budgets; and (ii) in discordance with the Strategy's commitments. Expenditures on DV/GBV measures constitute just 0.1 percent of total funds allocated, and in reality, these were covered by the Social Protection and Inclusion Fund of MHSP. Thus, (at least) in the area of DV/GBV, resources are not allocated as initially planned. Government relies considerably on financial support by donors, in particular as regards the provision of services: DV services are primarily delivered by CSOs, which receive funding by donors.

Since no key performance indicators were ever provided within the MTBP, it has remained impossible to conduct analysis of the impact of gender-responsive budget elements on the life of women and men in Albania. This gap was one of the specific recommendations of the CEDAW Committee, which - for the upcoming reporting cycle (due in 2020) - required information on the implementation and impact of the first mid-term gender budgeting programme in Albania. Provision of this information should become possible through a new methodology of budget preparation, which links planned expenditures with performance indicators at strategic as well as specific levels.

265. "Report on Monitoring of Gender Budgeting for addressing gender based violence and domestic violence in Albania in 2018". While still a draft, the findings are also mentioned in the People's Advocate 2019 Annual Report (pg. 8), published online in Albanian. See: <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/Raporti%20Vjetor%202019%20-%20Avokati%20i%20Popullit.pdf>

The Ministry of Finance and Economy (MFE) is currently in the final stage of developing Albania's Financial Management Information System (AFMIS). AFMIS will provide strong linkages between strategic planning and medium-term budgeting. It is foreseen to improve overall medium-term planning and budgeting processes, including through the selection of relevant key performance indicators (KPIs) at the goal and objective levels, and the costing of core outputs. Gender-sensitive KPIs are mandatory in AFMIS, as explained in the New Budget Preparation Instruction of the Minister of Finance and Economy (March 2018), Annex 5 "Gender Responsive Budgeting". The "Gender KPIs" will allow the GoA to monitor progress achieved on gender equality, and to design specific interventions to close the identified gender equality gaps. While previously, only line ministries were in the position to access MTBP software, AFMIS will be used by all central budget institutions, thereby enabling consistent and comprehensive monitoring of budget programme performance according to financial and non-financial indicators, as well as reporting via a multi-dimensional analytical system. AFMIS will also serve as a tracking tool for GRB. In the software designing phase, the Ministry of Finance and Economy included a special method that tracks expenditures at program/objective/output level for all line ministries. In this way, line ministries will be in the position to identify - from the submission phase onwards - the existence of gender-responsive budget programs and the level of respective gender elements.

The approval of the law "On Local Government Finances" in 2017 paved the way for GRB's effective inclusion in all phases of the financial management cycle of local government units (medium term and annual budget programming, monitoring & reporting, evaluation and auditing). These developments provide greater responsibilities, but also challenges for local public entities to effectively manage gender-based policies and allocate the adequate budget resources for achieving them. Since AFMIS will initially operate at central government level only, tracking of GRB and assessing budgetary gender accountability across the 61 municipalities in Albania will remain a challenge.

Under the document review of the UN Women CGEB, no figures were provided on the current percentage of either official development assistance (ODA) for Albania or of private funds allocated towards gender equality and the empowerment of women. ODA data on funds from the OECD DAC members²⁶⁶ is tagged by the OECD's Gender Marker, however, data is collected at the "commitment" level and does not reflect actual disbursement or receipt.²⁶⁷ In the future, data on the actual amounts/shares of donor and private sector funds allocated towards gender equality and the empowerment of women is foreseen to become available through the External Assistance Management Information System (EAMIS) database, which is operated by MFE and part of Albania's emerging Integrated Planning System.

266. Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, European Union, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Korea, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States of America.

267. https://stats.oecd.org/Index.aspx?DataSetCode=DV_DCD_GENDER

C-WOMEN, GENDER EQUALITY, AND THE COVID-19 PERIOD

This section provides a snapshot of the impact of the COVID-19 induced crisis on women and provides a preliminary outlook to the recovery period. The first official case of COVID-19 in Albania was registered on 9th March 2020. On March 12th, the Government of Albania introduced the first restrictive measures to stop the spread of COVID-19.

After two weeks, on 24th March, a state of emergency was declared for 30 days, and later extended to remain in force until 23rd June. As of 22nd November 2020, Albania has reported 32,761 confirmed cases, 16,220 active cases, 15,842 healed, and 699 deaths.²⁶⁸ Sex-disaggregated data is available for confirmed cases and deaths.²⁶⁹ The reported COVID-19 mortality rate is significantly higher for men (3.2 percent) than for women (1.45 percent).²⁷⁰

As in many previous crises, women and girls have been disproportionately negatively affected by measures related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Even before the COVID-19-induced crisis, deficits in gender-responsive governance were clearly felt in women's lives and posed significant challenges for Albanian women in both economic and social spheres. With most women in Albania concentrated in the service sector, clothing and footwear industries, micro- and small enterprise, and informal employment, regardless of the status in employment, employed women are more exposed to unexpected challenges associated with decrease in working hours and potential loss in income compared to men. In short, the crisis further threatens already

limited but hard-won progress made towards gender equality and women's empowerment. Worse, the crisis actually reverses gains made towards gender equality. As concluded in a recent Communication by the European Commission, "[t]he current crisis must thus not deflect attention from key structural weaknesses"²⁷¹ which include, among others, high unemployment among youth, significantly impacting on girls; low labor market participation for women in general; and insufficient social protection. Given the disproportionate adverse impacts that the crisis has on women and girls, it is imperative that gender equality concerns are embedded in national policy responses, recovery programmes, the design of local development plans, and in implementation.

So far, GoA prepared a National Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan (SPRP)²⁷², issued in February 2020 (pre-COVID-19), and initially drafted a National Response Plan (post-COVID-19), which has not been finalized. The normative acts that were approved during the recent period primarily focus on health-related measures and restrictions, and are in general gender-blind or gender-neutral. Until the 21st September 2020, GoA had approved 23 measures/normative acts specifically related to social and economic security issues²⁷³, out of which nine address violence against women. Among the remaining 14 measures, only two contain gender-responsive elements. The Consolidated UN Albania Covid-19 Socio-Economic Recovery and Response Plan (SERP)²⁷⁴ is envisaged to complement government plans.

268. Institute of Public Health official data. See: <https://www.ishp.gov.al/category/coronavirus/>

269. According to international monitoring, confirmed cases are 52 percent women and 48 percent men (<https://globalhealth5050.org/the-sex-gender-and-covid-19-project/the-data-tracker/?explore=country&country=Albania#search>). While the OpenData Albania website provided sex-disaggregated data until recently, this information has been removed (<http://open.data.al/covid-19/>).

270. See: <https://globalhealth5050.org/the-sex-gender-and-covid-19-project/the-data-tracker/?explore=country&country=Albania#search>

271. European Commission (2020). Support to the Western Balkans in tackling COVID-19 and the post-pandemic recovery Commission contribution ahead of the EU-Western Balkans leaders meeting on 6 May 2020.

272. https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Covid_AL-spreads.pdf

273. <https://data.undp.org/gendertracker/>

274. UN Albania (2020). Consolidated UN Albania Covid-19 Socio-Economic Recovery and Response Plan. See: <https://albania.un.org/en/86279-un-albania-covid-19-socio-economic-recovery-and-response-plan>

Brief Summary of Main Findings of UN Women's Albania Rapid Gender Assessment of COVID-19

To measure the socio-economic impact of the COVID-19-induced crisis on women and men, UN Women Albania in partnership with *IDRA Research & Consulting* conducted a Rapid Gender Assessment Survey, a nationwide household survey between 17th and 26th April 2020.²⁷⁵ Overall, 1300 persons were interviewed using telephone assisted interviews, as other modes of data collection were rendered impossible due to the lockdown measures associated with COVID-19. The sample design ensured reliable results for all respondents, women and men, and the main age groups of the respondents with a margin of error of ± 2.72 at a 95 percent confidence interval. The distribution of the sample mimics national demographics and allows for weights correction according to official national data.

Traditional media channels are the main source of information on COVID-19. Traditional media, such as television, radio, or printed media are reported as the main source of information on COVID-19. Women are slightly more likely to use the internet and social media as a primary source of information on COVID-19 in the country (32 percent women compared to 28 percent men). 80 percent of the respondents were satisfied with information they received on COVID-19, and 14 percent reported the information to be confusing or contradictory.

The COVID-19 pandemic is disproportionately affecting women's mental and emotional health, especially among active working age women. The psychological and mental health of women is being affected at higher rates compared to men. 69 percent of women reported experiencing psychological and mental health issues, versus 57 percent of men. Women in the active working age group 35-44 years are experiencing even higher psychological distress at a prevalence of 72 percent compared to 58 percent among men in the same age group. Women who reported to have "felt/heard an increase of domestic violence" also reported a higher impact of the pandemic on their psychological and mental health compared to men in both urban and rural areas.

More frequently than men, women experience limited access to basic health services. Accessing basic services such as health during the pandemic was compromised to a certain extent due to rapid increases in demand on health services and medical supply. Almost every fifth respondent mentioned major or some difficulties in seeking health services for any purpose. Five percent of women experienced some difficulties in accessing gynecological and obstetric care services. Both women and men faced difficulties in finding the necessary medical supply for personal protection against COVID-19 infection: (i) women reported more frequently challenges to buying medical supplies, (51 percent compared to 43 percent men); (ii) young women 18-24 reported a higher prevalence of facing major/some difficulty in accessing health services and medical supplies.

Self-employed women workers are most affected by the COVID-19-induced measures. Results highlight a disproportionate impact of lockdown measures on working time for employed women: regardless of the status in employment, women are more exposed to unexpected challenges associated with decrease in working hours and potential loss in income. The share of women who had to reduce working time exceeded that of men by 4.7 percentage points for employed workers, and by 2.8 percentage points for self-employed. Self-employed women in the 45-54 age group represent the majority (66.7 percent) of women experiencing a decrease in working time. Among self-employed women, it is those living in households with children (46 percent) that are cutting their working time, mainly to take care of children or housework.

The closure of non-essential businesses had an immediate impact in some industries, and almost 15 percent of respondents lost their jobs. Men faced a greater risk of unemployment (17 percent) compared to women (12 percent), partly due to a large proportion of men being employed in sectors that were locked down during the pandemic.

Other than reducing working time, employees were given paid or unpaid annual leave. 3.8 percent of women employees and 2.9 percent of men employees were given paid or partially paid annual leave. An equal proportion of 3.8 percent employed men and women reported unpaid leave during the lock-down.

275. "Rapid Gender Assessment on socio-economic impact of COVID-19 on women and men in Albania, June 2020". The Assessment was implemented through the SIDA funded UN joint program on EVAW, the Joint Program on Social Protection funded by the Global SDG Fund, as well as the UN Women Regional "Women Count" program on gender statistics and SDGs. See: <https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/multimedia/2020/07/covid-19-is-taking-a-higher-toll-on-women-shows-un-women-albania-rapid-assessment> Findings nourished UN Women's regional report "The impact of COVID-19 on women's and men's lives and livelihoods in Europe and Central Asia: Preliminary results from a Rapid Gender Assessment". See: <https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/07/the-impact-of-covid19-on-womens-and-mens-lives-and-livelihoods>

The COVID-19 pandemic has affected workplace flexibility and has disproportionately increased the burden of unpaid domestic and care work for women.

The report shows that 40 percent of employees in Albania switched to a new working arrangement. As a result of the outbreak, every second employed woman (51 percent) has been working remotely (from home), compared to almost every fourth man (27 percent).

Women have been taking on more household chores and care work, and every second woman reported an increase in performing at least two activities related to unpaid domestic work. 76 percent of women reported an increase in providing unpaid domestic work, and 72 percent of them reported that they experienced an increase in providing unpaid care work.

COVID-19-induced measures have hit income generating sources hard for both women and men, with women suffering a decline of income from their families in-country or abroad, and men suffering a reduction in social support. On average, every second person reported a decrease in earnings from employment. The biggest decrease was registered in income generated from farming, family business and remittances: (i) two-thirds experienced a loss of income from farming; (ii) 74 percent of women, who relied on remittances as source of income, reported a decrease of remittances. Among the respondents, 35 percent of women and men believe they will receive their salary, if COVID-19 lockdown continues; 22.4 percent expect to receive a partial salary; and 21.5 percent do not expect any salary at all.

Lessons from domestic violence under COVID-19 lock-down conditions

Home is not always a safe place for women and their children, especially during isolation, as they do not have the opportunity to get away from their abusers. Mobility restraints imposed by governments posed additional risks to women in general, and to victims of domestic violence in particular.²⁷⁶

During the COVID-19 lock-down period, calls for help for domestic violence tripled at the National Hotline for Women and Girls (116 117). The Hotline received about 2000 calls during the period 19th March – 18th May 2020, marking a tripling of calls compared to the same period in 2019. During the same period, 534 cases of violence and trafficking were supported by member organizations of the Albanian Women's Empowerment Network (AWEN), through hundreds of psychological and legal counseling sessions at a distance or through the provision of concrete legal assistance.²⁷⁷ The highest increase in requests for assistance and support was observed in the districts of Dibra (+125%) Elbasan (+100%), Shkodra (+76%), Pogradec (+58%), and Durrës (+50%).²⁷⁸ Requests for assistance related mainly to the steps that can be taken, if violence is repeated or increased during isolation, certification of the Immediate Protection Order and issuance of the Protection Order, extension of the Protection Order, denunciations of cases of violence, psychological support and counseling on how to keep the situation under control, counseling on aggravated mental health due to isolation, and fear of violent episodes, etc. During the month of May 2020, on certain days, the Court of the Durrës Judicial District had to issue up to six Protection Orders per day.

According to AWEN, the number of denunciations/ reports to the police does not represent the real situation of domestic violence, as many victims of violence did not seek help for various reasons, such as: lack of access to information due to isolation; the victim and the perpetrator live in the same apartment and the victim's movements are monitored by the perpetrator; restricted movement of citizens in general; fear of administrative and criminal sanctions in case of movement; lack of alternative shelter, etc.

From 10 April 2020 onwards, AWEN provided shelter services in line with the "Emergency Protocol COVID-19 for shelters" (Order no. 254 of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection) in eight districts.

During this period, AWEN members published the contact numbers of specialists (psychologist, lawyer, social worker) who provided relevant services by phone from 08.00-17.00 or even 24 hours / 7 days. Support

276. UN Women Europe and Central Asia Regional Office (2020). "Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on specialist services for victims and survivors of violence in the Western Balkans and Turkey: A proposal for addressing the needs". See: https://www2.unwomen.org/-/media/field%20office%20eca/attachments/publications/2020/06/albania%20covid-vaw_report9.pdf?la=en&vs=4948

277. CSSP (2020). Guidelines for improving support to women and girl victims of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic – Platform 1 for Empowering Civil Society) <https://cssplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CSSP-Guidelines-Albania-WEB-2.pdf>

278. <https://awenetwork.org/covid-19-threefold-increase-in-calls-for-help-at-the-national-hotline-for-domestic-violence-cases-up-to-6-protection-orders-issued-within-one-day-in-durresdistrict/?lang=en>

consisted of psychological and legal counseling, a court-assisted service for issuing protection orders, psychological support to police stations for victims of violence, and referral to relevant administrative units. Food packages were distributed to women victims of domestic violence who are facing economic difficulties.

During the COVID-19 emergency, the UN Joint Programme “Ending Violence Against Women in Albania” (EVAWIA) worked closely with both central and local governmental authorities responsible for the coordination and provision of specialized support services to Gender Based Violence/ Domestic Violence victims. As mentioned in section 05-6 of this report, the Coordinated Referral Mechanisms which handles domestic violence cases, received support through two standardized protocols for managing urgent and non-urgent DV cases: one for usual situations and the other one specific for the COVID-19 situation. 11 representatives of the judiciary system benefited from the online training on the new Protocol on Domestic Violence case management during the COVID-19 situation at local level. Under the motto “You are not alone”, safety tips for DV survivors tailored to the COVID-19 situation, and relevant information for sexual violence victims were developed and shared with 61 Local DV Coordinators. 37 public and non-public service providers for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking, including representatives of 19 residential centers that provide long-term or short-term housing services, benefited from an online training session on the requirements of the Protocol “On the operation of public and non-public residential centers, providing shelter services to victims of domestic violence and human trafficking during the Covid-19 pandemic”.

Around 60.000 people were reached through social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. 70 domestic violence cases were provided with emergency packages. Over 1.000 packages of food and hygiene products were distributed to 663 families from vulnerable communities in the Municipalities of Pogradec and Cërrik, from which 152 were women heads of households; 346 elderly

women without any support and living alone; 131 families with people with disability; and 34 families in extreme poverty. An internal regulation on managing urgent sexual violence cases in the COVID-19 situation was prepared by LILIUM Center. In partnership with MoHSP, a video spot was produced to raise awareness on violence against women during the COVID-19 induced crisis, aiming to call on those who witness or experience domestic abuse to report to the National Hotline (116 117) or to the Police (129). The video was released on 27th April 2020. It generated extensive public discussions on social platforms and was broadcasted by the Albanian Public TV. The video has been viewed more than 400,000 times on social media. It is narrated in Albanian and English subtitles, with sign-language provided to ensure greater outreach to people with hearing disabilities.²⁷⁹ Twelve CSOs that provide direct services to women survivors of DV in Durrës and Elbasan were supported with 1100 items of protective equipment.²⁸⁰

Still, civil society monitoring of the local response to DV during lock-down - conducted by AWEN members in 11 municipalities²⁸¹- reveals not only a disturbing rate of violence against women and children, but also a gloomy situation of the general capacity of duty bearers to provide services in immediate response to violence and to ensure women’s access to services and help. The lessons from this crisis²⁸² are more than relevant for non-crisis times:

- Violence against women/domestic violence is a serious human rights issue especially in crisis situations.
- Prevention and support services provided by women’s NGOs and other state services are in fact essential services and need to be officially declared as such, to enable them to function at full capacity.
- Women’s NGOs that provide vital support services, such as: National Line 116 117, assistance to women, women’s shelters, counseling services for women, legal services, management and referral of cases in need, etc. need to receive financial support for their work.
- Crisis and response plans, including decisions on

279. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AuU_xqrob9w

280. Additional information can be found at: https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/womens_empowerment/ending-violence-against-women-response-to-covid-19-in-albania.html

281. GADC & AWEN Network (2020). Monitorimi i punës së mekanizmatve të koordinuar të referimit gjatë periudhës pandemike COVID-19. See: https://www.gadc.org.al/media/files/upload/Raporti%20Final%20i%20Perbashket_UnW_COVID-19.pdf

282. Summarized from: CSSP (2020). Guidelines for improving support to women and girl victims of violence during the COVID-19 pandemic – Platform 1 for Empowering Civil Society) <https://cssplatform.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CSSP-Guidelines-Albania-WEB-2.pdf>

any restrictive measures, need to be developed in direct collaboration with specialized women's NGOs.

- Implementation of emergency protocols for shelters for victims of violence require the close consultation and collaboration with specialized women's NGOs.
- All state institutions (health, education, social work, police) are in need of clear guidelines and standard operating procedures, so that they can provide adequate and gender-sensitive support to victims of violence.
- Adherence to protocols by health care professionals, social workers, police officers and other institutions involved needs to be much stricter, to protect victims and maintain confidentiality and location of shelters.
- Citizens are in need of far more information about the services available to women and girls victims of violence.
- Women and their children who need to be accommodated in a shelter, or require other services, must be tested with priority for COVID-19.
- Support services for women (women's shelters, women's counseling services) need to be provided with sufficient and free protective equipment (such as masks, gloves, etc.).
- In cooperation with administrative units / municipalities, a sufficient number of beds needs to be available for victims of domestic violence and their children, and hotels and free apartments should be made available to accommodate individuals in need who cannot be admitted to women's shelters.
- Women's access to sexual and reproductive health, including birth control services and abortion, needs to be ensured.
- Delivery of medicines and food to the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of women must occur in a coordinated manner.
- Courts need to address violence against women and domestic violence with priority, and cases should be treated as "urgent cases" by the courts.
- All contacts – either by phone or physically present – who report cases of violence at police stations must be recorded, and files need to be kept.
- In cases of reported domestic violence, crisis protocols prepared particularly for the COVID-19 emergency, in addition to the existing standards protocols and SoPs, must be used.
- Sentences for domestic violence and sexual violence, as well as violence against children, should be increased for the entire duration of the restrictive measures.
- Immediate protection orders and Protection orders should be issued immediately and without any delay, to ensure the protection of women and girls victims of violence.
- Children of victims of violence should always be included in the Protection orders.
- Short-term protection orders should be replaced by long-term Protection orders.
- The obligatory risk assessment process should be done on a case-by-case basis and in the presence of a specifically skilled and authorized professional, as foreseen by law.

D-SDG GENDER-RELATED INDICATORS IN ALBANIA

INSTAT - as the core institution for the SDG localization process - was supported by the Prime Minister's office and the UN to conduct an assessment of the capacity of the statistical system to produce gender-related SDGs indicators. The aim was to identify (i) the capacity of INSTAT to produce gender-related SDG indicators; (ii) the capacity of other state institutions to produce gender-related SDG indicators; and (iii) the areas where donor support is needed.

The assessment revealed that 50 percent of indicators under SDG 5 ("Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls") can be obtained from data generated through surveys, which are mainly funded by donors.²⁸³

Overall, the analysis of currently existing data revealed that only 32 percent - or roughly one third - of indicators needed to monitor the 17 SDGs from a gender perspective are currently available. Gaps remain in key

areas such as violence against women and girls; poverty and social inclusion; the gender pay gap regarding the source used for computation; skills in information and communication technologies; and health.

Methodology of SDG gender-related Indicator mapping

Mapping of indicators was done on the basis of specific criteria which are crucial for drawing a clear picture of the situation. These criteria include (i) availability encompassing the previous five years; (ii) disaggregation into percentages for women and men where disaggregation is relevant; (iii) status of publication (published/non-published); (iv) current situation; and (v) periodicity. Further criteria delve deeper by revealing information on the level of disaggregation, the primary data source (e.g. household survey, census, administrative data, etc.),

TABLE 11. Availability of gender-related indicators across the 17 SDGs

SDG Goal	Indicator availability		
	Yes	No	Total
SDG 1	1	6	7
SDG 2	-	4	4
SDG 3	7	9	16
SDG 4	3	6	9
SDG 5	8	6	14
SDG 6	-	1	1
SDG 7	-	1	1
SDG 8	4	5	9
SDG 9	-	1	1
SDG 10	-	2	2
SDG 11	-	4	4
SDG 13	-	2	2
SDG 16	3	8	11
SDG 17	-	2	2
Total	26	57	83

283. <https://data.unwomen.org/country/albania>

the institution responsible for data collection, and recommended actions for refined data-production, computation, and dissemination.

The first conclusion is that in general, production of indicators is depending not only on the capacity of the National Institute of Statistics, but on the statistical system in general. Other institutions, which serve as the primary data source in a few cases, include the Institute of Public Health, the Police Directorate, the General Directorate of Taxes, the Department of Public Administration, and the National Election Commission. These institutions use data-collection methods that are neither standardized nor lead and guided by INSTAT. This finding indicates that more efforts need to be geared towards these institutions to ensure that the data produced by them is increasingly aligned with requirements and can feed into SDG monitoring.

The second conclusion is that, in general, unavailable indicators rely on a primary data source which is separated from INSTAT. Hence, efforts are needed to establish cooperation between INSTAT and the respective institutions in charge for the primary data source, especially on the issue of data sharing.

A further impeding aspect lies in the fact that the national statistical system lacks the coordinator role, which also impacts on issues of ownership of administrative data collection, reporting, and designating. Existing technology to improve and standardize data collection, analysis and accessibility is limited. Under the current conditions, SDG gender-related indicators require a lot of effort to compensate for the gaps, for example, by identifying non-traditional data sources in order to fill in data which is missing at the level of source institutions.

Addressing current gender data gaps is a prerequisite for understanding the situation of women and girls in relation to men and boys in Albania, and for achieving the gender-related SDGs commitments. The fact that government's recent re-organization of the structure of ministries included a reduction of statistical offices has negatively impacted the capacity and process of SDG indicator localization.

Data limitations

Data limitations related to the SDG gender-related indicators are linked to challenges in the entire statistical system. The system is characterized by a significant gap between the data and information collected by institutions on the one hand, and the indicators required for monitoring international commitments to gender equality on the other. Furthermore, data is not standardized. Frequently, data collection is inconsistent and not sufficiently rigorous, making it difficult to monitor one and the same indicator over time. In addition, new policy agendas need to be reflected by the introduction of matching indicators, and this particularly pertains to the SDGs.

Gender-related Indicators across the 17 SDGs (2020)

SDG	Indicator definition (national description)	Data source	2015		2016		2017		2018		2019	
			Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men
SDG1	<i>Proportion of population living at-risk-of-poverty by sex</i> At-risk-of-poverty threshold is defined as 60% of the median equivalised disposable income for all households (relative poverty line)	EU-SILC, (Living Condition Survey), INSTAT	...	...	...	...	23.90%	23.5%	23.8%	23%	...	...
SDG3	<i>Maternal mortality rate.</i> Maternal mortality ratio (MMR) is defined as the number of maternal deaths during a given time period per 100,000 live births during the same time period	INSTAT & Ministry of Health and Social Protection	9.2	n/a	3.2	n/a	9.7	n/a	3.4	n/a	7	n/a
SDG3	<i>Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel</i> Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel is the percentage of deliveries attended by health personnel (generally doctors, nurses or midwives) trained in providing lifesaving obstetric care	INSTAT & Ministry of Health and Social Protection	...	n/a	...	n/a	99.94%	n/a	99.97%	n/a	99.96%	n/a
SDG3	<i>Under-five mortality by sex</i> Number of deaths per 1000 live births by sex	INSTAT, General Directorate of Civil Status	7.88	10.06	10.2	10.3	9.14	9.25	8.99	11.05	9.95	12.02
SDG3	<i>Number of women and men aged 15-49 living with HIV/AIDS</i>	INSTAT, Institute of Public Health	...	...	...	...	...	...	18	56	17	57
SDG3	<i>Percentage of women age 15-49 currently using a contraceptive method by including sexually active, unmarried women</i>	INSTAT, Demographic Health Survey 2017-2018	...	n/a	...	n/a	...	n/a	61.0%	n/a	...	n/a
SDG3	<i>Adolescent birth rate - births per 1000 girls in the age group 15-19</i>	Civil registry, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, INSTAT	20.1	n/a	17.5	n/a	16.2	n/a	14.5	n/a	14.2	n/a
SDG3	<i>Percentage of women and men age 15-49 smoking tobacco</i>	Demographic Health Survey, Institute of Public Health	...	...	...	...	...	...	5.0%	35.0%	...	...
SDG4	<i>Percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 having attained at most lower secondary education and not being involved in any education or training (neither formal nor nonformal) in the four weeks preceding the survey</i>	INSTAT, Labour Force Survey	19.6%	22.9%	17.3%	21.6%	17.2%	21.6%	16.4%	18.3%	15.1%	17.5%

SDG4	<i>The participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex as defined as the percentage of children in the given age range who participate in one or more organized learning programme, including programmes which offer a combination of education and care</i>	INSTAT	89.8%	90.1%	97.1%	95.4%	94.3%	97.7%	80.4%	83.5%	86.70%	91.50%
SDG4	<i>Percentage of the adult population between 25 and 64 years of age that participated in formal and non-formal education and training in the four weeks prior to the interview</i>	INSTAT, Labour Force Survey	1.1%	1.0%	0.8%	1.4%	0.7%	1.0%	0.8%	1.1%	0.7%	1.0%
SDG5	<i>Proportion of women and girls aged 15 years and older who have experienced violence by a current or former intimate partner, in the previous 12 months</i>	INSTAT, Survey on Violence against Women and Girls	...	n/a	...	n/a	...	n/a	33.7%	n/a	...	n/a
SDG5	<i>Proportion of women aged 20-24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18</i>	Demographic Health Survey, Institute of Public Health	...	n/a	...	n/a	...	n/a	6.1%	n/a	...	n/a
SDG5	<i>Proportion of women aged 15-49 who make their own decision regarding contraception (including mainly wife, and wife and husband jointly)</i>	Demographic Health Survey, Institute of Public Health	...	...	...	...	...	...	84.0%	...	...	...
SDG5	<i>The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments</i> The proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments is measured as the number of seats held by women members in single or lower chambers of national parliaments, expressed as a percentage of all occupied seats, as of 1st February of the reporting year	Administrative data, Parliament of Albania	22.9%	77.1%	23.6%	76.4%	29.3%	70.7%	29.3%	70.7%	29.5%	70.5%
SDG5	<i>The proportion of seats held by women in local governments</i> The proportion of seats held by women in local governments is measured as the number of seats held by women members of council of the 61 municipalities of Albania, as on 1st January of the reporting year	Central Election Commission	34.8%	65.2%	36.1%	63.9%	36.9%	63.1%	n/a	n/a	43.6%	56.40%
SDG5	<i>Average number of hours spent on unpaid domestic work by sex</i>	INSTAT, Time Use Survey 2010-2011	5:43	2:06	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...

SDG5	<i>Proportion of women in managerial positions</i> This indicator refers to the number of females as a proportion of the total number of persons employed in senior and middle management	INSTAT & General Directorate of Taxes	32.1%	67.9%	32.8%	67.2%	33.8%	66.2%	34.2%	65.8%	34.7%	65.3%
SDG5	<i>The proportion of individuals (16-74 years old) who own a mobile telephone, by sex is defined as the 'proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex</i>	INSTAT, Survey on Information and Communication Technologies usage in Household and by Individuals	...	...	...	...	...	...	89.2%	94.1%	89.2%	94.1%
SDG8	<i>Proportion of informal employment in total non-agricultural employment, by sex</i>	LFS, INSTAT	24.1%	40.4%	24.3%	37.1%	22.1%	35.8%	21.5%	34.7%	21.9%	35.6%
SDG8	<i>Gender gap in wages</i> Gender Pay Gap is the percentage of men's earnings and represents the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of female and male employees	INSTAT -General Directory of Taxes	...	...	...	...	10.5%		10.7%		10.1%	
SDG8	<i>Unemployment rate by sex</i> The ratio of unemployed persons to labour force 15+ years	LFS, INSTAT	17.10%	17.10%	14.40%	15.90%	12.6%	14.6%	11.9%	12.7%	11.4%	11.6%
SDG8	<i>The percentage of depositors refers to the number of customers who have a deposit account in financial institutions by sex</i>	Bank of Albania - INSTAT	...	...	...	...	41.2%	58.8%	41.9%	58.1%	42.7%	57.3%
SDG16	<i>The total number of victims of intentional homicide as a proportion of the total population, expressed per 100,000 people</i>	General Directorate of Police DPP - INSTAT	1.1	3.3	1.2	4.3	0.9	3.1	1	3.6	0.9	3.6
SDG16	<i>Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population</i> The ratio between the total number of victims of trafficking in persons detected or living in a country and the population resident in the country, expressed per 100,000 populations	Ministry of Internal Affairs - INSTAT	6.1	1.5	5.9	0.7	5.6	1.7	4.2	2.4	5.6	1.6
SDG16	<i>Proportion of women and men working in the Public Administration, Community Social and other services and activities as share of total employment</i>	LFS, INSTAT	21.40%	13.70%	20%	13.10%	22.4%	13.7%	21.4%	14.0%	20.7%	12.8%

Explanatory notes: ... - data not available n/a - not applicable



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