



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Albania: Human trafficking

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Executive summary

Albania is a designated (safe) state under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 meaning that there is in general in that state or part of it no serious risk of persecution of persons entitled to reside in that state or part of it.

There remains a risk of re-trafficking and other harm for some victims on return, and is likely to be greater for females than males. The onus is on the person claiming asylum to credibly evidence that they face a real risk of persecution or serious harm on return to Albania.

The UK and Albania announced a Joint Communiqué on [enhancing bilateral cooperation in areas of common interest](#) on 13 December 2022. The communiqué committed to providing sufficient protections within Albania for victims of human trafficking and modern slavery.

The Upper Tribunal (UT), in the 2016 country guidance case of [TD and AD](#), held that **‘there is in general a Horvath-standard sufficiency of protection** [for a woman or a girl], but it will not be effective in every case’ [emphasis added] – thus confirming it is effective in most.

The onus is on the person claiming asylum to explain and substantiate why the ‘layers’ of protection available – that is, by the state and/or NGOs, shelters, support and re-integration services – would be unavailable to them. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.

Female victims of trafficking may be able to internally relocate. They may face discrimination because of their gender and the fact they have been trafficked. However, in general, this is not in itself sufficiently serious by its nature and repetition, or by an accumulation of various measures, that it amounts to persecution or serious harm in the place of relocation, or that relocation would be unreasonable. There is no indication that males generally do so. As such, male victims are likely to be able to relocate.

Further information on the risks of re-trafficking to men, women and children and the range of in-country protections that are being implemented in Albania to support returned victims are provided within a range of supporting materials within this note.

Decision makers still need to read the assessment in full, and use relevant country information as the evidential basis for decisions.

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Assessment

Updated: 6 February 2023

About the assessment

This section considers the evidence relevant to this note – that is information in the [country information](#), refugee/human rights laws and policies, and applicable caselaw – and provides an assessment of whether, **in general**:

- a person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution/serious harm by non-state actors because they are a victim of trafficking
- a person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- a person is reasonably able to relocate within Albania
- a claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- if a claim is refused, it is likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under [section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002](#).

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

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1. Material facts, credibility and other checks/referrals

1.1 Modern slavery

- 1.1.1 Decision makers should note that guidance for competent authority staff in any part of the UK who make decisions on whether or not an individual is a potential victim/victim of modern slavery for the purpose of the National Referral Mechanism is set out in the [Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance](#) for England and Wales (under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015) and non-statutory guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland. The guidance is also aimed at staff:

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

- 1.1.2 Decision makers also must note that if a person has a 'positive conclusive grounds' decision, a grant of permission to stay as a victim of human trafficking or slavery by the competent authorities may be considered. For further information, see [Temporary permission to stay for victims of human trafficking or slavery](#).

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1.2 Credibility

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

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1.3 Exclusion

- 1.3.1 Decision makers must consider whether there are serious reasons for considering whether one (or more) of the exclusion clauses is applicable. Each case must be considered on its individual facts and merits.
- 1.3.2 If the person is excluded from the Refugee Convention, they will also be excluded from a grant of humanitarian protection (which has a wider range of exclusions than refugee status).
- 1.3.3 For further guidance on the exclusion clauses and restricted leave see the Asylum Instructions, [Exclusion under Articles 1F and 33\(2\) of the Refugee Convention](#), [Humanitarian Protection](#) and [Restricted Leave](#).

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2. Convention reason(s)

- 2.1.1 The UT, in the country guidance (CG) case of [TD and AD \(Trafficked women\) CG \[2016\] UKUT 92 \(IAC\)](#), heard 30 April, 6 May and 3 June 2015, promulgated 9 February 2016, which considered the position of female victims of trafficking only, observed that ‘Trafficked women from Albania may well be members of a particular social group on that account alone’ [119(h)].
- 2.1.2 Women who have been trafficked are likely to belong to a particular social group (PSG) within the meaning of the Refugee Convention. This is because they have an immutable characteristic – the experience of having been trafficked – and are likely to have a distinct identity within Albanian society because of prevailing attitudes towards women and victims of trafficking (see [Prevalence](#) and [Treatment of victims of trafficking](#)).

- 2.1.3 Men who are trafficked are not likely to form a PSG. Although they have an immutable characteristic – the experience of having been trafficked – they do not have a distinct identity within Albanian society (see [Prevalence](#) and [Treatment of victims of trafficking](#)).
- 2.1.4 Although a (female) victim of trafficking may belong to a PSG, such membership itself is not sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed in each case is whether the person will face a real risk of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.
- 2.1.5 For further guidance on particular social groups, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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3. Risk

3.1 Risk of (re-)trafficking generally

- 3.1.1 Albania is a source country for the trafficking of women, men and children to other European countries, including the UK, although domestic trafficking is becoming an increasingly significant phenomenon. There is limited data on the number of Albanian victims of trafficking (both domestic and international) but this is likely to be in the thousands. Re-trafficking occurs although there is limited data on the scale or nature of this (see [Prevalence](#)).
- 3.1.2 Most victims of trafficking are women and girls, the majority of whom are trafficked for sexual exploitation. Males are mostly trafficked for labour exploitation/criminality (see [Nature of exploitation](#)).
- 3.1.3 Most victims of trafficking are trafficked by close family members or people with whom they have close social ties, including those with links to criminal networks. Victims are often lured into trafficking by promises of marriage or employment, although coercion is sometimes used (see [Prevalence](#)).

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3.2 Risk to female victims of trafficking

- 3.2.1 Whether a female victim of trafficking is at real risk of persecution or serious harm will depend on her particular circumstances. The onus is on the person to credibly evidence that they face such a risk.
- 3.2.2 In the CG case of [TD and AD](#), which looked at female victims of trafficking only, the UT held that:

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

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

persecution ... will depend upon their individual circumstances including but not limited to the following:

- 1) The social status and economic standing of her family
- 2) The level of education of the victim of trafficking or her family
- 3) The victim of trafficking's state of health, particularly her mental health
- 4) The presence of an illegitimate child
- 5) The area of origin
- 6) Age
- 7) What support network will be available' (paragraph 119 (h))

3.2.4 Since [TD and AD](#) was promulgated, the state has made good, ongoing progress in implementing reforms and measures to tackle trafficking generally. However, female victims (women and girls) who return to Albania may face discrimination and stigma, and a risk of re-trafficking, depending on their particular circumstances. Therefore, there are not very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence to depart from this part of the UT's findings in [TD and AD](#) (see [Treatment of victims of trafficking](#)).

3.2.5 Decision makers need to consider a range of factors that influence risk. Factors 1 to 6 are specific to the person. Further information on Factor 7 is set out in [the section on 'protection'](#). However, the person must demonstrate that they face a real risk of persecution or serious harm as a result. It is not sufficient to simply demonstrate that one or more of the indicators are relevant to them.

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3.3 Male victims of trafficking

3.3.1 In general, male victims of trafficking are not at real risk of serious harm or persecution. Each case must be considered on its individual facts, but the onus is on the person to show that they face such a risk.

3.3.2 There is limited information about the experience and treatment of male victims of trafficking, including the scale, nature and frequency of re-trafficking. Men and boys who are from lower economic backgrounds, have a low level of education or lack of employment opportunities, have physical or mental disabilities, have experienced domestic abuse or family breakdown, and/or live in remote areas are more likely to be vulnerable to being trafficked or re-trafficked than men and boys generally (see [Prevalence](#) and [Treatment of victims of trafficking](#)).

3.3.3 Albania is a patriarchal society with male family members expected to provide for their families. There is a general lack of awareness that men and boys may be victims of trafficking, and those who are trafficked may not accept or recognise that they have been exploited, and may therefore be reluctant to seek assistance (see [Prevalence](#)). There is, however, little evidence in the sources consulted that men and boys face the same societal stigma or discrimination as lone women (see [Treatment of victims of trafficking](#), [Protection](#), [Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#), and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#)).

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

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4. Protection

4.1 General

- 4.1.1 In the country guidance case of [TD and AD](#) the UT held that ‘**there is in general a Horvath-standard sufficiency of protection** [for a woman or a girl], but it will not be effective in every case’ [emphasis added] – thus confirming it is effective in most.
- 4.1.2 Both the US State Department and Freedom House acknowledge that Albania is making progress in addressing trafficking. The government continues to investigate, prosecute and convict traffickers. Whilst conviction numbers are low, this can be due to a range of factors, and not necessarily indicative of an inability or unwillingness on the part of the state (see [Protection](#)).
- 4.1.3 The state has in place a comprehensive legislative and policy framework to address, and support victims of, trafficking but there has been a gap in effectively implementing some of these measures (see [Law and policy](#) and [Protection](#)).
- 4.1.4 The UT in [TD and AD](#) held that ‘Whether [trafficked women are...] able to access sufficiency of protection from the authorities will depend upon their individual circumstances including but not limited to the same indicators as set out in [section 3.2.3 above]’ (see paragraph 119 (h) of determination).
- 4.1.5 Factors 1 to 6 are specific to the person. Further information on Factor 7 is set out below and the onus is on the person to explain and substantiate why the ‘layers’ of protection available – that is, by the state and/or NGOs, shelters, support and re-integration services – would be unavailable to them. It is insufficient for the person to simply assert, for example, that the police are corrupt and would not help them. Decision makers will need to probe the nature of the alleged corruption and why the police will not assist.

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4.2 Shelters and reintegration services

- 4.2.1 In the CG case of [TD and AD](#), based on evidence up to 2015, the UT held: ‘There is now in place a reception and reintegration programme for victims of trafficking. Returning victims of trafficking are able to stay in a shelter on arrival, and in “heavy cases” may be able to stay there for up to 2 years. During this initial period after return victims of trafficking are supported and protected. Unless the individual has particular vulnerabilities such as physical or mental health issues, this option cannot generally be said to be unreasonable; whether it is must be determined on a case by case basis.

‘Once asked to leave the shelter a victim of trafficking can live on her own. In doing so she will face significant challenges including, but not limited to, stigma, isolation, financial hardship and uncertainty, a sense of physical insecurity and the subjective fear of being found either by their families or former traffickers. Some women will have the capacity to negotiate these challenges without undue hardship. There will however be victims of trafficking with characteristics, such as mental illness or psychological scarring, for whom living alone in these circumstances would not be reasonable. Whether a particular appellant falls into that category will call for a careful assessment of all the circumstances.’ (paragraph 119 (e to f))

- 4.2.2 The government, with support from civil society, continues to provide support and reintegration assistance to victims. This includes the provision of short-term and long-term accommodation (including 4 shelters), some housing support and rent subsidies, food, healthcare and psychological support, financial support, employment services and vocational training (see [Protection, Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#) and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#)).
- 4.2.3 Since [TD and AD](#) was promulgated, through the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund (MSF), the UK Government has invested over £3.5 million of Official Development Assistance between December 2019 and September 2022 in a programme delivered by a consortium led by UNICEF (hereafter referred to as the ‘MSF programme’). Key outcomes include:
- long-term reintegration services provided to over 376 victims of trafficking and their dependents, with over 57% reporting successful reintegration
 - economic and vocational skills training for over 475 people identified as being at high risk of trafficking and support for 78 of these cases with employment opportunities, out of which 41 have started their own businesses (for information on all the key outcomes see [Annex A](#))
- 4.2.4 The UK Government has signed revised Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with UNICEF and OSCE to continue the delivery of this MSF programme up to March 2025 through an investment of over £2.9 million of Official Development Assistance. These MoUs (available on request) set out that the MSF programme extension will work closely with the Government of Albania (see [Annex A](#)).
- 4.2.5 The MSF programme is funding 3 primary service providers to provide comprehensive reintegration support to an additional 140 survivors between January 2023 and March 2024. UNICEF signed the contract with these providers on 18 January 2023. This contract will provide assistance to identified victims of any gender or age, including returnees from overseas who wish to access support. This includes immediate and long-term support tailored to an individual's needs, comprising accommodation, medical treatment, mental health support and counselling, legal assistance, personal security, living costs and education and vocational training (see [Annex A](#)).
- 4.2.6 The UK is also providing an £11.1 million in grant funding for financial years 2022/23 to 2024/25 (£3.7 million per year) across 10 priority countries, including Albania. The programme will be accessible to all forms of returns

(both voluntary and enforced) and will include services such as: a) pre-departure information, b) a 'meet and greet' service on arrival at the airport in Albania, c) access to temporary accommodation prior to any onward journey to a final destination, d) signposting to existing local services, e) support with redocumentation/identification, and f) job counselling and additional support with accessing the labour market (see [Annex A](#)).

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4.3 Mental health services

- 4.3.1 Mental health support and counselling is available in reintegration services (see [Healthcare and psychological support](#)), and through dedicated psychological assistance in the form of web-based mental health and psychological counselling. Referral to direct intensive therapy is available if required. Further details are set out at [Annex A](#).

4.4 Stigma

- 4.4.1 The programme will deliver tailored and targeted messages seeking to change harmful social and gender norms across communities in 4 specified regions of Albania (Tirana, Dibra, Kukesi and Shkodra). This will commence delivery in the first quarter of 2023 (see [Annex A](#)).

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4.5 Re-trafficking

- 4.5.1 As part of its efforts to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable individuals, the MSF programme will improve access to community-based social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking in the 4 specified regions (Tirana, Dibra, Kukesi and Shkodra). UNICEF has signed contracts with Terre des Hommes to train officials at the municipal level and to coordinate with social services and employment offices to identify and reach individuals at risk and provide them with increased access to social protection, training and information about employment. This partnership is also providing technical and financial assistance to Multi-Functional Community Centres (MFCCs) in Kukesi and Shkodra, and will establish a new MFCC in Bulqiza (Dibra region) in March 2023. These MFCCs work to assist vulnerable families and individuals at risk of trafficking and refer them to additional required social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking (see [Annex A](#)).
- 4.5.2 For an assessment of the availability of protection generally, see the Country Policy and Information Note, [Albania: Actors of protection](#).
- 4.5.3 In general, the state has taken reasonable steps to prevent the persecution/serious harm of female victims of trafficking by operating an effective legal system for the detection, prosecution and punishment of acts constituting persecution/serious harm, which the person is able to access.
- 4.5.4 There are not very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence to depart from the UT's findings in [TD and AD](#) – women are (still) able to obtain effective protection. However, an assessment of the person's individual circumstances is still required and when considering the factors cited at paragraph 119(h) of [TD and AD](#), a holistic approach should be taken.

- 4.5.5 The onus is on the person to credibly evidence that they face a real risk of persecution or serious harm as a result. It is not sufficient to simply demonstrate that one or more of the indicators are relevant to them

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4.6 Male victims of trafficking

- 4.6.1 In general, the state is willing and able to provide effective protection to male victims of trafficking. The onus is on the person to demonstrate otherwise.
- 4.6.2 The CG case of [TD and AD](#) did not specifically consider the availability of protection for men or children. However, many of the measures put in place by the government considered in that case – the laws making trafficking illegal, publishing standard operating procedures, the establishment of a national referral mechanism, the creation of an anti-trafficking co-ordinator, and reintegration support – are applicable to men and children (although men are not currently accommodated in shelters but may have access to rented accommodation or rent subsidies) (see [Protection, Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#), and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#)).
- 4.6.3 Men and boys appear to have a low awareness of having been exploited/trafficked and may be reluctant to seek protection. However, a reluctance to seek protection does not mean it is not available.

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5. Internal relocation

- 5.1.1 In general, female victims of trafficking may be able to internally relocate, but women and girls identifiable as victims of trafficking may face discrimination from societal actors, including family rejection and discriminatory labels, because of their gender and the fact they have been trafficked (see [Discrimination and stigma](#)).
- 5.1.2 However, in general, this is not in itself sufficiently serious by its nature and repetition, or by an accumulation of various measures, that it amounts to persecution or serious harm in the place of relocation, or that relocation would be unreasonable.
- 5.1.3 There is no indication that males generally face discrimination. As such, male victims are likely to be able to relocate. Each case will depend on its particular facts, taking into account the person's ability to support themselves to a subsistence level in the place of relocation and the intent and reach of their former traffickers.
- 5.1.4 Albania is a small country, a little larger than Wales, with a population estimated to be between 2.8 million and just over 3 million. The population of the capital, Tirana, differs across a number of sources, ranging from just under 500,000 to over 900,000. People are generally able to move around freely (see [Freedom of movement and reintegration](#)).
- 5.1.5 In the CG case of [TD and AD](#), which considered the situation of female victims of trafficking only, the UT held:
- 'Much of Albanian society is governed by a strict code of honour which not

only means that trafficked women would have very considerable difficulty in reintegrating into their home areas on return but also will affect their ability to relocate internally. Those who have children outside marriage are particularly vulnerable. In extreme cases the close relatives of the trafficked woman may refuse to have the trafficked woman's child return with her and could force her to abandon the child.' (paragraph 119(b))

- 5.1.6 The available evidence indicates that the situation has improved for women and girls since [TD and AD](#). Although stigma can be a concern for female victims of trafficking, there is support available from the government and civil society making it possible for women to live alone in Tirana, though it can be harder to do so in rural areas (see [Freedom of movement and reintegration](#)).
- 5.1.7 Single men and boys do not appear to experience the same social stigma as lone females (see [Treatment of victims of trafficking, Protection, Shelters and short-medium term assistance](#), and [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters](#)).
- 5.1.8 For further guidance on internal relocation, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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6. Certification

- 6.1.1 Where a claim is refused, it **must** be considered for certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Albania is listed as a designated state.
- 6.1.2 Where a protection or human rights claim is refused from a female, it is unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002. Claims from males are likely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded'. However, all cases must be considered on their individual facts and merits.
- 6.1.3 For further guidance on certification, see [Certification of Protection and Human Rights claims under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 \(clearly unfounded claims\)](#).

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Country information

About the country information

This contains publicly available or disclosable country of origin information (COI) which has been gathered, collated and analysed in line with the [research methodology](#). It provides the evidence base for the assessment.

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

Decision makers must use relevant country information as the evidential basis for decisions.

Section updated: 1 February 2023

7. Prevalence

7.1 Nature of exploitation

7.1.1 A 'Survey on knowledge, attitudes and practices of youth regarding human trafficking in four regions of Albania' by Deanna Davy and Blerina Metanj for UNICEF Albania published in September 2022, prepared in the framework of 'Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania' Programme (UNICEF Albania September 2022 report), collected data from 14 January to 1 March 2022 through face-to-face interviews with 1,387 Albanian youth aged 15 to 29 in 4 regions of the country: Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër, plus 200 Roma youth in Kukes, Shkoder and Tirana¹. The summary of findings for 4 regions noted that 'Albania is significantly affected by human trafficking... The country is recognised as a major source for human trafficking, with Albanians mostly trafficked to Italy, Greece, the United Kingdom, Sweden, Germany and Switzerland, often through organized criminal networks. Meanwhile, domestic trafficking has been a significant phenomenon for approximately two decades, with most domestic victims being children and youth.'²

7.1.2 The Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) 'Third evaluation round' on Albania, published 15 December 2020, based on questionnaires sent to the Albanian government and supplementary information submitted by the government, information from civil society and an evaluation visit to Albania in September 2019 for discussions with government and non-government actors (CoE GRETA report 2020), observed that Albania was:

'...primarily a source country for victims of trafficking in human beings (THB), but also to some extent a country of destination... The majority of the victims were women and girls trafficked for the purpose of sexual exploitation, but there were also victims of trafficking for the purpose of forced begging, forced criminality and forced marriage. The vast majority of the victims were Albanian citizens exploited abroad, mainly in Western Europe (Belgium, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Norway, the Netherlands, United Kingdom) and neighbouring countries (Kosovo...], Greece, North Macedonia)...

¹ Davy and Metanj, '[Summary ... for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#)' (p6), September 2022

² Davy and Metanj, '[Summary ... for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#)' (p4), September 2022

‘Children are mainly exploited in begging by their parents or close relatives, or trafficked for the purpose of committing criminal activities, including work on cannabis farms in Albania. Children from the Roma and Egyptian... communities are particularly vulnerable to trafficking and exploitation. There has been an increase in the number of Albanian children subjected to forced labour in Kosovo... and the UK. Some Albanian children who travelled with their parents to the Netherlands, France and Germany were reportedly left there unaccompanied and vulnerable to exploitation...’³

- 7.1.3 A report by lead researcher for UNICEF Albania, Deanna Davy, on the relationship between victims of trafficking (VOT) and their traffickers, published in May 2022 (UNICEF Albania May 2022 report), based on ‘semi-structured interviews with 30 trafficking survivors (27 female, 3 male) and 14 key informants, as well as focus group discussions (FGDs) with 31 representatives of government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs)’, and a review of existing literature, noted:

‘Albanians are trafficked to Italy and Greece, but also other destinations including the United Kingdom (UK), Sweden, Germany and Switzerland. Albanian men, women, girls and boys are trafficked for labour or sexual exploitation, or both, in these, and other, destination countries... In the past decade, domestic trafficking has become a more significant phenomenon in Albania than cross-border trafficking.’⁴

- 7.1.4 The US State Department’s Trafficking in Persons report 2022, covering the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022, noted that:

‘... human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Albania, and traffickers exploit victims from Albania abroad. Traffickers exploit Albanian women and children in sex trafficking and forced labor within the country, especially during tourist season... Traffickers commonly force children to beg or perform other types of compelled labor, such as selling small items, and also force children into criminality, including burglary and narcotics distribution. Traffickers exploit Albanian children, mainly from the Romani and Balkan-Egyptian communities, for seasonal work and forced begging. Isolated reports stated that traffickers exploit children through forced labor in cannabis fields in Albania, and some traffickers are likely involved in drug trafficking. Traffickers exploit Albanian victims in sex trafficking in countries across Europe, particularly Belgium, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom (UK). Albanian migrants who seek employment in Western Europe are vulnerable to exploitation in forced labor and forced criminality, particularly in the UK.’⁵

- 7.1.5 The European Commission’s Albania Report 2022, dated 12 October 2022, covering the period from June 2021 to June 2022, noted that:

‘Albania continues to be a country of origin, transit and destination of trafficking in human beings, but the numbers of victims of trafficking [sic] of Albanian origin has significantly decreased in 2020-2021 period. Albanian

³ CoE, ‘[GRETA’s Report and Government’s Comments](#)’ (page 8), 15 December 2020

⁴ Davy D, UNICEF, ‘[Trafficked by someone I know...](#)’ (page 17), May 2022

⁵ USSD, ‘[TIP report 2022](#)’ (Protection), 22 July 2022

women and children are subject to trafficking for sexual exploitation, forced labour and criminal exploitation to neighbouring countries and EU Member States. There are indications of increased trafficking of women and children for sexual exploitation and begging in Albania. Children placed in institutions and children from the Roma and Egyptian communities are particularly vulnerable to trafficking.’⁶

- 7.1.6 In October 2022, Home Office officials conducted a fact-finding mission (FFM) to Albania to gather information from a range of sources about human trafficking of men and women, and the situation for single women/mothers (Home Office FFM 2022)⁷. The Home Office FFM team were told by a number of sources that men and boys were generally exploited in forced labour, criminal activities relating to drugs or theft, and begging, whilst women and girls faced sexual exploitation⁸.

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7.2 Drivers of trafficking/profile of victims

- 7.2.1 A report published in July 2018 of a study conducted in partnership between the University of Bedfordshire and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), based on a ‘Shared Learning Event’ (SLE) of government and civil society stakeholders in Tirana between 24 and 26 October 2017 (UofB/IOM report 2018), stated:

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

‘Gender imbalances within the society were outlined as a key factor for understanding trafficking within Albania. Domestic, intimate partner and sexual violence were highlighted... There is a potential risk factor of being a woman at the individual level which is a consequence of these gender imbalances. This can also arise from household/family and community level imbalances which are reinforced or at least unresolved at the structural level.’⁹

- 7.2.2 The UofB/IOM report 2018 also noted:

‘The ethnic Roma and Egyptian populations in Albania are identified as experiencing disproportionately high levels of poverty, insecure accommodation, low levels of school attendance and, concomitantly, high levels of illiteracy... This is attributed to a history of stigma and discrimination against these communities, which has resulted in their experiencing greater economic pressures and heightened vulnerability to different types of exploitation, including trafficking...’¹⁰

⁶ European Commission, ‘[Albania Report 2022](#)’ (page 42), 12 October 2022

⁷ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’, December 2022

⁸ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (p 23, 26, 33, 65, 68, 81, 100, 109), December 2022

⁹ UofB/IOM, ‘[“Vulnerability” to human trafficking...](#)’, (page 7), July 2018

¹⁰ UofB/IOM, ‘[“Vulnerability” to human trafficking...](#)’, (page 19), July 2018

7.2.3 The UofB/IOM report 2018 added:

'The unequal nature of gender roles and relationships have discriminated against women and made them vulnerable to violence and exploitation... Families exercise considerable authority over young women in terms of betrothal and marriage, making it difficult for women to exercise choice, and resulting in women being trapped into prostitution... At the same time, women often lack access to the education and employment that would enable them to avoid exploitation... These are risk factors at the individual level. Research with victims also supports a more direct relationship, namely that young women are frequently recruited for trafficking by members of their own families and will often know their traffickers.'¹¹

7.2.4 Asylos, a global network of volunteers providing free-of-charge COI research for lawyers helping asylum seekers with their claim, and ARC Foundation, the charitable branch of Asylum Research Centre (ARC), set up in 2010 to raise standards in the refugee status determination (RSD) process, published a report in 2019 relating to trafficked boys and young men (Asylos/ARC report 2019). The report cited a January 2019 interview with Professor Haxhiymeri of the University of Tirana, who opined:

'... the same risk factors that have been identified for victims of trafficking regardless of gender apply to boys and young men. "There is no research in Albania about the profiles of trafficked boys and young men whereas we have done research on the profiles of trafficked girls and young women in this country. But the risk factors [of poverty, low education, suffering from physical or mental disabilities, domestic violence and/or sexual abuse within the family or a pre-existing blood feud, being LGBT and for children, being Roma or Egyptian or homeless] are also true for trafficked boys and young men in my opinion".'¹²

7.2.5 In July 2020, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) reported on the 'Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania' project, which was launched on 12 December 2019:

'[David Gvineria, Child Protection Specialist at UNICEF in Albania] explained the reasons why the project has targeted northern parts of the country and Tirana. "Northern regions of Albania... also suffer from very high levels of unemployment and "brain drain", and these two factors often are the core "driving" factors for people to take a risky step and fall prey of the traffickers. Tirana on other hand is a transitory area both for traffickers and those who are at risk of trafficking, so we had to take this into account too."... "But to say that the south or central part of the country is not affected by Trafficking would be wrong...'¹³

7.2.6 The UNICEF Albania September 2022 report noted that 'Most Albanian victims come from a background of poverty and unemployment and have a lack of education. For trafficked children and youth, the risk factors mostly emanate from the household and family, and include family breakdown and

¹¹ UofB/IOM, ["Vulnerability" to human trafficking...](#), (page 19), July 2018

¹² Asylos/ARC, ["Albania: Trafficked boys and young men"](#), (page 16), May 2019

¹³ UNICEF, ["Interview of Child Protection Specialists at UNICEF ..."](#), 30 July 2020

abandonment. The consequence of these factors is compounded by the absence of protective safety nets.’¹⁴

- 7.2.7 Officials consulted during the Home Office FFM 2022, including from Caritas, (an ecclesial-humanitarian organization that works to improve the living conditions of the poor in Albania), Terres des Hommes (a Swiss child relief agency with a mission in Albania), and Key Adviser (a private employment agency licensed by the Ministry of Economy and Finance who are part of a project led by UNICEF Albania and financed by the British Embassy Tirana), ‘Transforming the National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania’, working in 6 Regions all over Albania to contribute in the skills development and employability for victims of trafficking (VOT) and potential victims of trafficking (PVOT)¹⁵, indicated that the risk factors for human trafficking, for men, women and children, included the difficult economic situation, being in receipt of economic aid, the person’s family situation, for example, divorce, single-headed households or absent parents, early marriage and domestic violence (DV)¹⁶. Officials working for mobile units (which help identify and refer actual or potential victims of trafficking) in Kukes stated that people living in remote and poor areas of the country were most at risk of being trafficked, adding that ‘There are no businesses and no industry and nothing to live on in these areas.’¹⁷
- 7.2.8 According to sources consulted during the Home Office FFM 2022, most actual or potential victims of trafficking were women¹⁸.
- 7.2.9 However, 6 sources told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that most men did not accept or recognise that they were victims of trafficking, or that they were not recognised as such by society¹⁹. The UNICEF Albania September 2022 report found that only 5% of 1,387 survey respondents (aged 15 to 29) recognised that men aged over 18 were at risk of trafficking²⁰.

See also [Identification of victims and the National Referral Mechanism](#).

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7.3 Numbers and ages of victims

- 7.3.1 Sources differed on the figures of actual or potential victims of trafficking.
- 7.3.2 Most female victims were trafficked within Albania²¹, according to Brikena Puka, Executive Director of Vatra Psycho-Social Center – an organisation which aims at ‘preventing trafficking in human beings, domestic and gender-based violence and social-economic empowerment of victims of these phenomena through information, education, advocacy, and social residential and community services’²² – consulted during the Home Office FFM 2022.

¹⁴ Davy, D, ‘[Summary of findings for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#)’ (page 4), September 2022

¹⁵ Key Adviser, ‘[About us | Key Adviser](#)’, no date

¹⁶ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (pages 51, 91, 100), December 2022

¹⁷ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 54), December 2022

¹⁸ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (pages 55, 57, 74, 100), December 2022

¹⁹ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (pages 20, 28, 81, 94, 100, 104), December 2022

²⁰ Davy, D, ‘[Summary of findings for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#)’ (page 12), September 2022

²¹ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 65), December 2022

²² Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 69), December 2022

7.3.3 The UNICEF Albania May 2022 report stated:

'...the true volume of domestic and international trafficking of Albanian nationals remains unknown... Among non-EU trafficking victims identified in the EU, Albanians are the second largest group (after Nigerians), with the 2018 Report of the European Commission reporting more than 1,300 Albanian victims of the phenomenon in Europe [of whom 54% were victims of sexual exploitation, 10% forced labour, 26% involved in criminal activities, 2% in domestic servitude, 1% forced begging, 1% other, and 6% unknown²³]....' ²⁴

7.3.4 A research study published in May 2021 by Klea Ramaj, PhD candidate in Criminology at the University of Cambridge, based on semi-structured interviews in May 2019 with 15 professionals (7 social workers, 5 psychologists, 2 lawyers, and one medical doctor) from 4 organisations (Different and Equal in Tirana, Vatra Psycho-Social Center in Vlora, Another Vision (Tjeter Vizion) in Elbasan, and the National Reception Center for Trafficking Victims (NRCTV) in Tirana) who had provided direct assistance to VOTs, found that:

'Statistical data on returned Albanian trafficking victims are not available. Evidence from the interviews revealed that most assisted returned victims were females who had been trafficked for sexual purposes (either through forced prostitution or sham marriages) and children who had been trafficked for forced begging. Destination countries where victims returned from included neighboring countries (e.g., Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia) and Western European countries (e.g., Germany, France, the UK, the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland).'²⁵

7.3.5 According to Ministry of Interior statistics, provided by officials from UNICEF Albania to the Home Office FFM 2022 team, there were:

- 5 adult VOT (3 female and 2 male) and 154 adult PVOT (96 female and 58 male) in 2021 compared with 5 adult VOT (all female) and 81 adult PVOT (57 female and 24 male) in 2020
- 2 child VOT and 110 child PVOT in 2021 compared to 1 child VOT and 57 child PVOT in 2020²⁶

7.3.6 The European Commission's Albania Report 2022 noted that 'In 2021, 159 victims or potential victims were identified and assisted, compared with 86 in 2020. Identification of potential victims remains insufficient within the Albanian territory, also among vulnerable migrants entering Albania.'²⁷

7.3.7 A 2021 report by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, cited during the Home Office FFM 2022, by the Center for Legal and Civic Initiatives (CLCI), a civil society organisation that provides legal aid to victims of gender-based violence, including trafficking victims, noted that 'For the year 2021 it is reported the referral and support on rehabilitation and reintegration

²³ European Commission, '[Data collection on trafficking...](#)' (page 165), 20 October 2020

²⁴ Davy D, UNICEF, '[Trafficked by someone I know...](#)' (page 17), May 2022

²⁵ Ramaj K, '[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)' (page 6), 7 May 2021

²⁶ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (pages 13 to 15), December 2022

²⁷ European Commission, '[Albania Report 2022](#)' (page 42), 12 October 2022

for more than 254 women and girls, and their children...'²⁸ An official from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'From [the start of] 2021 to June 2022 the shelters provided support to 396 actual or potential victims of trafficking. These 396 are not necessarily all placed in shelters but they are also helped in the community with reintegration, with education, vocational training, free legal aid, housing and so on.'²⁹

- 7.3.8 Different and Equal (D&E), which described itself as '...a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing high quality reintegration services for victims of trafficking, exploitation and abuse, and to improving the legal, institutional and social context to prevent and counter these violations of human rights'³⁰. In their 2020 Annual Report³¹ and 2021 Annual Report³², D&E recorded the number and gender of victims or potential victims of trafficking (VOT/PVOT) it assisted in those years, which included cases carried over from previous reporting periods (graph produced by CPIT):

	Female		Male		Total
	2020	2021	2020	2021	
Number of cases carried	42	53	16	22	133
Number of new cases	26	22	7	8	63
Total	58	75	23	30	196

- 7.3.9 In addition, during the 2020 and 2021 reporting periods, 64 children accompanied their mothers. Of the 196 VOT/PVOT assisted by D&E, 97 were aged 18 or under^{33 34}.

- 7.3.10 D&E also recorded the age range of those they assisted in 2020³⁵ and 2021³⁶, which included cases carried over from the previous reporting period:

Age	11 to 15		16 to 18		19 to 21		Over 21		Total
Year	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	2020	2021	
# of cases carried	13	6	10	29	14	4	21	36	133
# of new cases	12	8	8	11	4	2	9	9	63
Total	25	14	18	40	18	6	30	45	196

²⁸ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 42), December 2022

²⁹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 75), December 2022

³⁰ D&E, '[About us](#)', no date

³¹ D&E, '[2020 Annual report](#)' (page 1), 10 September 2021

³² D&E, '[2021 Annual Report](#)' (page 6), 28 July 2022

³³ D&E, '[2020 Annual report](#)' (page 1), 10 September 2021

³⁴ D&E, '[2021 Annual Report](#)' (page 6), 28 July 2022

³⁵ D&E, '[2020 Annual report](#)' (page 1), 10 September 2021

³⁶ D&E, '[2021 Annual Report](#)' (page 6), 28 July 2022

- 7.3.11 Brikena Puka, Executive Director of Vatra Psycho-Social Center, provided statistics to the Home Office FFM 2022 team, which noted that ‘In 2021, 159 new cases have been identified, supported by the national anti-trafficking coalition shelters. 66 of them have been supported by Vatra.’ Puka added ‘This is not an exact number of cases that have been exploited. This is only the tip of the iceberg’, indicating that these were just cases identified in Albania³⁷.
- 7.3.12 From 2020 to September 2022, 201 VOT/PVOT were assisted by Vatra, plus 114 of their accompanying children. Of these, 138 (plus 78 accompanying children) were newly assisted during that period and 63 (plus 36 accompanying children) continued to receive assistance from the previous reporting period³⁸.

	2020		2021	2022 (to Sept)	Total
	Carried	New	New	New	
VOT/PVOT	63	33	66	39	201
Children	36	17	54	7	114
Total	99	50	120	46	315

- 7.3.13 According to data provided by Vatra to the Home Office FFM 2022 team, 79% of the cases of VOT/PVOT were girls and women and 21% men and boys (most of them aged under 15 years old)³⁹.
- 7.3.14 In June 2019, the Government of Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA which noted, ‘In cases of female sex minors, the most vulnerable age group is the 14 to 18 year old who are exploited for prostitution purposes. The age group under 14 is mainly used for begging.’⁴⁰
- 7.3.15 A Home Office statistical bulletin, which provided a summary and breakdown of the number of potential victims of modern slavery referred into the UK’s National Referral Mechanism (NRM) or via the Duty to Notify (DtN) process from 1 July to 30 September 2022, noted that ‘The most common nationality referred was Albanian, which accounted for 28% (1,294) of all potential victims (compared to 27% in quarter 2 2022). The number of Albanian nationals, which reached its highest figure since the NRM began, has surpassed UK nationals for the third consecutive quarter... most (75%; 969) were adult potential victims.’⁴¹

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7.4 Risk of re-trafficking

- 7.4.1 The 2019 study by Ramaj noted that ‘... most professionals stated that escaping miserable economic conditions was the primary reason for re-trafficking: “Accommodation and employment are crucial. If victims don’t have enough financial resources, if they don’t have a place where to sleep,

³⁷ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 65), December 2022

³⁸ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 73), December 2022

³⁹ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 74), December 2022

⁴⁰ CoE, GRETA, ‘[Government’s Reply to GRETA’s Questionnaire](#)’, (page 34), 20 June 2019

⁴¹ UK Home Office, ‘[Modern Slavery: National Referral Mechanism...](#)’ (section 2.4), 3 November 2022

in a short time they will re-fall prey to traffickers” (SW7).⁴²

7.4.2 An official from UNICEF Albania told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that there was no official data on re-trafficking, adding that ‘... all programmes work towards the prevention of re-trafficking. It happens and it is perceived that potential victims of trafficking can easily fall backing into trafficking.’⁴³

7.4.3 The UNICEF Albania May 2022 report noted that:

‘The study identified that victims’ feelings of trust and affection for their traffickers can make them vulnerable to re-trafficking by the same perpetrators. Key informants who participated in interviews or FGDs for this study highlighted the fact that some victims are reluctant, after being rescued, to provide any information on the perpetrators or cooperate with the police. There is a tendency for some, especially those who have been trafficked by a family member, intimate partner or close friend, to place the blame on themselves, rather than on the trafficker. In such cases, some victims may attempt to flee the police station or family home to reunite with their trafficker...

‘Victims who are trafficked as children by family members appear to be at a heightened risk of re-trafficking by the same perpetrators... Some of the interviewed survivors who were trafficked as children reported regularly running away from home, only to return to the situation of exploitation soon afterwards because they felt obliged to support their family. This feeling of obligation was usually combined with a feeling that they had nowhere else to go, and there was no support available to them or their family.

‘Victims who have had children with their intimate partner who is also their trafficker are also at heightened risk of re-trafficking by the same person. They feel obliged to remain in contact with their trafficker because of the children. Thus, even after the victim manages to flee the situation of exploitation, they find themselves returning the trafficker’s phone calls, or agreeing to meet so that the trafficker can see their child. This makes the victim extremely vulnerable to being coerced or forced into ongoing labour or sex trafficking.’⁴⁴

7.4.4 Officials from D&E, Tjeter Vizion (which provides social services and a shelter for vulnerable children, youth and women in the city of Elbasan⁴⁵), NISMA ARSIS, an NGO ‘... specializing in the social support of children, youth and families that are in difficulty or danger or vulnerable situation and in the advocacy of their rights’⁴⁶, and the General Directorate of State Police Anti-trafficking Office told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that re-trafficking occurred, especially when individuals did not continue with support programmes (which are usually accessed by women), if services and support were inadequate, inappropriate or lacked capacity, or if the victim’s expectation of support was too high or unrealistic⁴⁷. An official from Caritas

⁴² Ramaj K, ‘[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)’ (page 13), 7 May 2021

⁴³ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 12), December 2022

⁴⁴ Davy D, UNICEF, ‘[Trafficked by someone I know...](#)’ (pages 56 and 57), May 2022

⁴⁵ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 24), December 2022

⁴⁶ Nisma Arsis, [About us - ARSIS \(nisma-arsis.org\)](#), no date

⁴⁷ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (pages 20, 27, 31, 35), December 2022

Albania stated that ‘... when the economic situation and integration process is not going well, then it is very easy to re-enter trafficking.’⁴⁸ An official from D&E stated that those with mental health issues were at greater risk of being re-trafficked⁴⁹.

- 7.4.5 Brikena Puka of Vatra told the Home Office FFM 2022 that, to prevent re-trafficking, they continued to follow-up and offer support even after women had left their service. The same source noted that about 2% of beneficiaries [it was not clear what this percentage amounted to in absolute numbers] who left the programme said they did not want any further contact, but that Vatra did not know if this was because they had been re-trafficked or because they were ‘just living their own life.’ However, they suspected at least one former VOT, who had left their programme after 6 months, had been re-trafficked to Spain⁵⁰.
- 7.4.6 Brikena Puka of Vatra also told the Home Office FFM 2022 that ‘Without support from the system and family, VOT are preyed upon by traffickers who promise accommodation, food and support, but then they are forced into the sex trade and, to keep them, the traffickers begin to threaten their children or they tell the VOT that their children will be harmed if they do not work in prostitution for the traffickers. So they are forced to become prostitutes.’⁵¹
- 7.4.7 Erion Prendi of SHKEJ, an NGO which ‘takes action towards societies and vulnerable groups promoting rights, facilitating social integration, and taking part in developing their future’⁵², told the Home Office FFM 2022 that the group were only aware of VOT (women and girls) being re-trafficked within Albania once they had returned after being trafficked abroad. The source stated that ‘Once they have returned they have been trafficked in Albania especially to the seaside in the summer, and in the winter into big cities [mainly for prostitution].’⁵³ Referring to re-trafficking, an official from D&E similarly stated that exploitation of VOT mostly occurred in Albania⁵⁴.
- 7.4.8 The Home Office FFM 2022 team were told by the official from Tjeter Vizion that of the 117 cases they had assisted in the past 2 years, they had identified 6 cases of re-trafficking (4 men and 2 women)⁵⁵. An official from the Ministry of Interior said that, based on statistics since 2013, there had not been more than 3 or 4 cases of re-trafficking, adding that reintegration services were crucial to prevent its reoccurrence⁵⁶. The official from Key Adviser indicated that, of the cases it had supported (450 in 2020 and 2021), none had been re-trafficked. However, the official added that ‘... there is frequent migration, individuals going and coming back. So this is evidence of re-trafficking even if they don’t recognise it as such...’⁵⁷

⁴⁸ Home Office, [‘Report of a FFM, October 2022’](#) (page 51), December 2022

⁴⁹ Home Office, [‘Report of a FFM, October 2022’](#) (page 20), December 2022

⁵⁰ Home Office, [‘Report of a FFM, October 2022’](#) (page 66), December 2022

⁵¹ Home Office, [‘Report of a FFM, October 2022’](#) (page 65), December 2022

⁵² SHKEJ, [About Us | SHKEJ](#), no date

⁵³ Home Office, [‘Report of a FFM, October 2022’](#) (page 81), December 2022

⁵⁴ Home Office, [‘Report of a FFM, October 2022’](#) (page 20), December 2022

⁵⁵ Home Office, [‘Report of a FFM, October 2022’](#) (page 27), December 2022

⁵⁶ Home Office, [‘Report of a FFM, October 2022’](#) (page 57), December 2022

⁵⁷ Home Office, [‘Report of a FFM, October 2022’](#) (page 101), December 2022

- 7.4.9 The Home Office FFM 2022 team were told by the official from the General Directorate of State Police that, although it happened, re-trafficking was 'rare', adding that most victims were women and that it occurred '... due to different reasons including societal attitudes towards women and girls. If links in the chain don't work properly women and girls are forced to go back into trafficking.'⁵⁸ According to the official from Caritas Albania, 'Sometimes re-trafficking is the choice of women and girls. For example, when the re-integration process is not going well or the girl might find it difficult to follow the re-integration plan.' The same source added that 'Women are voluntarily seeking out trafficking. They no longer need to have coercion or force as women have no choice. For us they are VOT... they re-enter (trafficking) because of the economic situation or because of the difficulties of being accepted into society.'⁵⁹

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7.5 Traffickers' profiles and recruitment methods

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

'... Initially [the VOTs]... create intimate relationships with traffickers and then by means of deception and coercion are used for prostitution. Another way is recruiting through social networks such as Facebook, Instagram or Snapchat, etc., by offering engagement/marriage, or promising jobs and a better life. One of the job offers is ballerinas in bars, inside or outside the country, mainly in the border countries with our country, such as Kosovo and Macedonia. Also, another way of recruiting is through phone or other people's recognition where traffickers go to girls' families, using as a justification for marriage and being introduced as a groom or family member. Traffickers are generally Albanian citizens, who by using family, social, and intimate relationships with the victims promise them a better life through exploitation for prostitution. Traffickers use fraudulent techniques as a beginning and if they do not give results, psychological and physical violence is used. In some cases victims have denounced physical and psychological violence...'⁶⁰

- 7.5.2 The UNICEF Albania May 2022 report, citing other sources, considering victims of trafficking generally (female and male) noted:

'From an analysis of 99 human trafficking cases presented by Vatra Psycho-Social Centre between 2015 and September 2017, 68 percent of traffickers were either close family members or had close social ties. Of these, 31 percent were reported to be cases in which "boyfriends" had exploited victims, 25 percent were friends and other people known to the victim, and twelve percent were related to the family. In 19 percent of cases victims were exploited by people that they had met on Facebook. Only thirteen percent of cases involved a human trafficker who was not known to the victim. Despite the evidence that in the majority of cases, traffickers are

⁵⁸ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 35), December 2022

⁵⁹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (pages 52 to 53), December 2022

⁶⁰ CoE, GRETA, '[Government's Reply to GRETA's Questionnaire](#)', (page 34), 20 June 2019

someone who is known to the victim... a 2021 study by UNICEF Albania found that 43 percent of surveyed Albanian youth were unaware that traffickers can be family members...'⁶¹

- 7.5.3 The UNICEF Albania May 2022 report also set out its findings based on interviews, undertaken between 17 May and 30 July 2021, with a relatively small sample of 30 (27 female and 3 male) 'survivors' of trafficking, all of whom were over 18 and had been trafficked by someone with whom they had a close connection. The study found:

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

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

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

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

'Regarding the geographic proximity of the traffickers to their victims, many interviewed female survivors trafficked by an intimate partner reported that they had met their trafficker in their local area, suggesting that trafficking in Albania is often localised. Traffickers prey on vulnerable women and girls in

⁶¹ Davy D, UNICEF, '[Trafficked by someone I know...](#)' (pages 31 to 32), May 2022

their neighbourhood, due to their geographic proximity and ease at which they can recruit and groom their potential victims. Similarly, victims trafficked by friends also reported meeting their traffickers in their immediate vicinity, often through networks of friends or family. Most of the interviewed survivors who had been trafficked by friend(s) had grown up in the same neighbourhood as their trafficker and considered them as close friends.’⁶²

7.5.4 The UNICEF Albania May 2022 report also found that:

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

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

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

‘Regarding other criminal activities perpetrated by the traffickers, six survivors (20%) reported that their traffickers were also engaged in drug trafficking, and three (10%) that their traffickers were engaged in theft or robbery. Four survivors (13%) reported that, in addition to human trafficking offences, their traffickers also engaged in drug trafficking and theft or robbery. Some interviewed survivors, especially those who were trafficked by intimate partners, reported that their trafficker had a record of previous arrests for other crimes committed abroad. One interviewed survivor reported that she later became aware (after her escape) that her trafficker (intimate partner) had been previously imprisoned for attempted rape of a fourteen-year-old child. Another interviewed survivor reported that she later became aware that her trafficker (intimate partner) was using a false name because of his criminal history and attempts to evade the authorities.’⁶³

7.5.5 The USSD TIP Report 2022 stated ‘Traffickers use false promises such as marriage or employment offers to exploit victims in sex trafficking... Traffickers adapt operations to the impacts of the [COVID 19] pandemic and shift recruitment and advertisement tactics to online means, particularly social media...’⁶⁴

⁶² Davy D, UNICEF, ‘[Trafficked by someone I know...](#)’ (pages 31 to 32), May 2022

⁶³ Davy D, UNICEF, ‘[Trafficked by someone I know...](#)’ (pages 33 to 34), May 2022

⁶⁴ USSD, ‘[TIP report 2022](#)’ (Trafficking profile), 22 July 2022

- 7.5.6 Sources consulted during the Home Office FFM 2022, including officials from UNICEF Albania, NISMA ARSIS, Caritas, Vatra, and Kristina Voko of BIRN Albania (Balkan Investigative Reporting Network), stated that VOT or PVOT had close links to their traffickers, some of whom were family members⁶⁵. Other traffickers developed a 'false' romantic relationship with a woman or girl, promising them a better life, but then sexually exploited them⁶⁶.
- 7.5.7 The General Directorate of State Police informed the Home Office FFM 2022 team, in regard to trafficking of women and girls, that:
- 'The modus operandi is similar to other Western Balkan countries, so the recruiters take advantage of the difficult financial situation that women and girls are in. They target vulnerable women and girls going through family hardships, for example, parents divorced and financial hardships. These women and girls mostly come from rural areas where there is little development, as opposed to in urban areas. So first the recruiters [traffickers] tend to develop romantic relationships with women and girls. Then they persuade them to move abroad and then they start trafficking them through extortion and other forms of exploitation. Lately we have observed new forms of recruitment through social media, Instagram, Facebook. They develop romantic relationships online and it moves into real life.'⁶⁷
- 7.5.8 The official from the State Agency for Child Rights and Protection stated that many children were exploited online⁶⁸. Erion Prendi, Executive Director of SHKEJ noted that, since 2020, the use of online methods to exploit children had increased⁶⁹.

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8. Treatment of victims of trafficking

8.1 Discrimination and stigma

- 8.1.1 The UofB/IOM report 2018, based on stakeholder discussions held in October 2017 in Tirana, stated that 'Social stigma and discrimination as a direct result of human trafficking was discussed. Discriminatory labels in official or media accounts were outlined as common. Stigma and discrimination was also reported to be a key issue for the children of those who had experienced trafficking. Rejection by family members was considered a common response to people who had experienced trafficking first hand.'⁷⁰
- 8.1.2 The UofB/IOM report 2018 further stated:
- 'The issue of social stigma and discrimination were outlined as being key issues faced by those who had experienced human trafficking. Adults who had experienced sexual exploitation are often referred to as "prostitutes" and

⁶⁵ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (pages 12, 29, 51, 66, 103), December 2022

⁶⁶ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (pages 20, 33, 66), December 2022

⁶⁷ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 33), December 2022

⁶⁸ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 87), December 2022

⁶⁹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 83), December 2022

⁷⁰ UofB/IOM, '["Vulnerability" to human trafficking...](#)', (page 8), July 2018

other discriminatory labels. Support workers were also considered to carry the stigma of the population they worked with. Support workers advised people who have experienced trafficking not to share personal information with others so they, and their children, could avoid being stigmatised. Rejection by family members was reported as being a common response to people who had experienced exploitation and/or human trafficking, as was the loss of employment and livelihood upon exposure of this experience. Children who live in shelters were reportedly being asked to keep their addresses confidential but teachers would sometimes identify these children as living in centres. This stigma permeates other aspects of society such as accommodation and health services.⁷¹

8.1.3 The 2019 study by Ramaj noted that:

‘Twelve out of 15 practitioners claimed that most families rejected trafficking victims following their return to Albania. Such rejection was mainly prevalent among the families of victims trafficked for sexual purposes:

“In ten years of experience working directly with sex trafficking victims, I can say that exclusion from the family is the standard. Parents often say things like: ‘To me she is dead, I do not care whether she lives or not’ (PSY2).’⁷²

8.1.4 The same report noted that ‘Interviews with practitioners revealed that the protection of family honour in the eyes of the community was one of the main reasons for parents’ rejection of their daughter: “Parents often claim that reconciliation with their daughter is met by rejection from relatives and neighbors. So, most parents choose to reject their daughter instead” (SW3).’⁷³

8.1.5 A report by Deanna Davy, published by UNICEF Albania in July 2022 (UNICEF Albania July 2022 report), looked at the economic reintegration of trafficking survivors, based on semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted during the period 14 October 2021 to 7 February 2022, with 14 (13 women, one man) trafficking survivors who had received reintegration support from one of the NGO-run shelters for between 3 months and 4 years, and with key informants, including social workers, social service administrators and shelter staff⁷⁴, as well as data from other open sources. The source noted that:

‘The study identified that society-level stigma towards trafficking survivors, especially those who experienced trafficking for sexual exploitation, is a significant issue in Albania. Both survivors and key informants who participated in interviews for the study underscored that trafficking survivors frequently encounter stigma when enrolling in and undertaking study, vocational training or employment, or starting up a new business. A number of stories were shared by survivors and key informants during the interviews and FGDs regarding discrimination. Survivors and key informants reported that survivors often face stigma when attempting to access state services,

⁷¹ UofB/IOM, [“Vulnerability” to human trafficking...](#), (page 29), July 2018

⁷² Ramaj K, [‘The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...’](#) (page 11), 7 May 2021

⁷³ Ramaj K, [‘The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...’](#) (page 11), 7 May 2021

⁷⁴ Davy D, UNICEF, [‘Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in...’](#) (pages 23 to 25) July 2022

such as employment and financial support. They may be belittled, made to feel inferior, branded liars and denied any assistance.⁷⁵

- 8.1.6 Officials from D&E and Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFM that some VOT were reluctant to apply for economic aid from the state as they faced stigma and discrimination because they had to provide evidence of their VOT status⁷⁶.
- 8.1.7 Sources consulted during the Home Office FFM 2022, including officials from UNICEF Albania, D&E, NISMA ARSIS, CLIC, GPO, Caritas, Ministry of Interior and Key Adviser stated that some VOT, particularly women and girls who had been sexually exploited, faced stigma, discrimination and rejection from both family members and society⁷⁷.
- 8.1.8 An official from D&E interviewed by the Home Office FFM 2022 stated that 'Families face shame as they do not see the woman as being exploited, they see her as exercising prostitution and putting shame on the family. In families where the daughter went abroad or to Tirana, or victims of sexual violence in general, they experience discrimination.'⁷⁸ Ines Leskaj, Executive Director of the women's rights group, Albanian Women Empowerment Network (AWEN), explained to the Home Office FFM team that there was a 'culture of shame' against female VOT, due to the 'widespread patriarchal society... especially in rural areas and small towns.'⁷⁹ The official from Tjeter Vizion also noted that 'Most families, and even Albanian society in general, tend to think a VOT is equal to a prostitute and they can't accept them as victims or accept that they didn't choose to be victims. The situation is aggravated for mothers with children. It is much more difficult to reintegrate these mothers and their children because they are faced with family abandonment as well as societal rejection.'⁸⁰ The official from NISMA ARSIS told the FFM team that, in most cases, women had to 'change location due to discrimination and stigma.'⁸¹
- 8.1.9 The official from Key Adviser told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'Stigma affects both men and women, boys and girls...' However, it was the official's opinion that men and boys feel more stigmatised than women as trafficking was generally associated with sexual exploitation. Consequently, men would never admit they were VOT⁸². When asked whether men faced the same level of stigma as women, the official from NISMA ARMIS stated that they had not noticed a big difference, but added that support services generally had increased in the past 10 years. The same source noted that it was more difficult to identify male VOT⁸³.
- 8.1.10 Ana Stakaj, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) and Imelda Poole (President) of Mary Ward Loreto, an NGO which aims to combat human trafficking through

⁷⁵ Davy D, UNICEF, '[Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#)' (page 50) July 2022

⁷⁶ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (pages 18, 26 to 27), December 2022

⁷⁷ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (p12, 18, 19, 32, 43, 48, 53, 58, 99) December 2022

⁷⁸ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 19), December 2022

⁷⁹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 37), December 2022

⁸⁰ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 26), December 2022

⁸¹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 32), December 2022

⁸² Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 100), December 2022

⁸³ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 32), December 2022

rescue, reintegration, rehabilitation, and prevention⁸⁴, told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that:

'If women and girls get caught up in trafficking there is shame in the family and they are told not to return. It is a system of honour. So they shouldn't come back to their village as what others think is very important to the family, as it is their reputation. So it is how others will treat them from now on.

'With adultery or those trafficked they would even be stigmatised by friends and family and would lose status, be abandoned or rejected or some would even be killed. There is a difference between fathers and mothers, mothers usually like to accept, but pressure from fathers and male relatives means that they often cut contact with daughters. So the reason why girls don't want to come back from the UK is that the family would know.'⁸⁵

- 8.1.11 The British Embassy noted in a letter to CPIT, dated January 2023, that research under the MSF programme recognised that harmful social and gender norms and stigmatisation of survivors are drivers of human trafficking and re-trafficking. As a result, starting in the first quarter of 2023, the programme will develop a new communication strategy that will deliver tailored and targeted messages seeking to change harmful social and gender norms across communities in the 4 specified regions of Albania (Tirana, Dibra, Kukesi and Shkodra)⁸⁶.

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9. Law and policy

9.1 Legislation

- 9.1.1 Albania is party to the Council of Europe (CoE) Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (ECAT), which is:

'... a comprehensive treaty mainly focused on the protection of victims of trafficking and the safeguard of their rights. It also aims at preventing trafficking as well as prosecuting traffickers.

'The Convention applies to all forms of trafficking; whether national or transnational, whether or not related to organised crime and whoever the victim, women, men or children and whatever the form of exploitation, sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, etc.

'The Convention provides for the setting up of an independent monitoring mechanism ("GRETA") guaranteeing Parties' compliance with its provisions.'⁸⁷ ⁸⁸

- 9.1.2 Referring to domestic legislation, the USSD TiP Report 2022 noted that 'Articles 110(a) and 128(b) of the criminal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of eight to 15 years'

⁸⁴ Mary Ward Loreto, '[About Us - Mary Ward Loreto](#)', no date

⁸⁵ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 97), December 2022

⁸⁶ Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

⁸⁷ CoE, '[Albania - Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#)', no date

⁸⁸ CoE, '[Details of Treaty No. 197](#)', 1 February 2008

imprisonment for a trafficking offense involving an adult victim, and 10 to 20 years' imprisonment for an offense involving a child victim. These penalties were sufficiently stringent and, with respect to sex trafficking, commensurate with those prescribed for other serious crimes, such as rape.⁸⁹

- 9.1.3 Article 110(b) of the Criminal Code (CC), which addressed those who benefit from, or use, services provided by trafficked persons, was added by law in 2013 and states, 'The benefit from or use of services provided by trafficked persons, or services which are subject to exploitation by trafficking, being aware that the person is trafficked, shall be punishable by imprisonment of from two to five years. When this offence is committed against a minor, it shall be punishable by imprisonment of from three to seven years.'⁹⁰

- 9.1.4 Article 128(b) of the CC, which addresses trafficking of minors, states:

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

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

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

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

'When the criminal offence is committed through the utilization of a state function or public service, the punishment of imprisonment is increased by one fourth of the punishment given.'⁹¹

- 9.1.5 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA and referred to Article 52(a) of the CC, which enshrines the principle of non-punishment of victims of trafficking for offences they are forced to commit while being trafficked:

'Albanian legislation provides for the exclusion of victims of trafficking from punishment, rather than prosecution. Specifically, Article 52/a paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code provides that: "Persons affected by criminal offenses related to the trafficking of a person may benefit from the release of the punishment, the commission of criminal offenses during the period of trafficking and the measure who was forced to commit those acts or unlawful inactions". [T]here is practically no criminal prosecution against victims of trafficking for the acts they are forced to commit for trafficking purposes. The

⁸⁹ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Prosecution), 22 July 2022

⁹⁰ Legislation Online, '[Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania](#)', 27 January 1995

⁹¹ Legislation Online, '[Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania](#)', 27 January 1995

body's process argues that the victim should not be prosecuted for violations committed because of the trafficking since the will of the victim is damaged and subjective is missing in the commission of the criminal offense.'⁹²

- 9.1.6 In February 2019, the Albanian government submitted a report in accordance with a UN Human Rights Council resolution, which stated:

'Legal and institutional framework in the field of trafficking is improved, and includes amendments to the Criminal Procedure Code (Law 35/2017) and an improved position and access to the criminal process for the victim. Law "On Social Care Services" places a requirement on all institutions responsible for treatment of a trafficked persons to take all specific measures and actions for their assistance and support, in order to find a lasting solution. Law "On State Police" provides for additional safeguards for the protection and comprehensive support for victims of trafficking, especially women and children.'⁹³

- 9.1.7 When asked if a VOT would face criminal charges if picked up in a situation of exploitation, the General Prosecutors Office told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'The criminal code stipulates that if they commit an offence they have to be punished for that, for example prostitution is punished, even if they are a victim of trafficking they may have received criminal proceeds and so they can be prosecuted. However this is decided by the prosecutor in regard to what is and what is not the fault of the victim. This is done on a case by case basis. There is no golden rule, it is up to the prosecutor to see if the victim has committed a crime.'⁹⁴

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9.2 Policy measures and programmes

- 9.2.1 The USSD TIP report 2022 noted 'The government adopted the 2021-2023 National Action Plan (NAP) and allocated resources to the NAP... [including] 412.6 million leks ([US]\$3.9 million [£3.1 million⁹⁵]) for its implementation. [The Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator] ONAC produced a report assessing the implementation of the NAP but did not publish periodic newsletters on anti-trafficking activities in 2021.'⁹⁶

- 9.2.2 The British Embassy letter to CPIT referred to the NAP (2021-2023), which stated that it is:

'... "an instrument aimed at coordinating state and non-state actors, including international organizations, engaged in the fight against human being trafficking", and that "the mission of the NAP is to promote an effective, adequate and coordinated response to prevent and combat trafficking in persons based on international cooperation, effective inter-institutional

⁹² CoE, GRETA, '[Government's Reply to GRETA's Questionnaire](#)', (page 21), 20 June 2019

⁹³ Government of Albania, '[National report submitted...](#)', para.51, 22 February 2019

⁹⁴ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 47), December 2022

⁹⁵ Xe.com, '[Currency converter](#)', as at 9 December 2022

⁹⁶ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Albania Tier 2), 22 July 2022

cooperation within the country, the participation of victims/potential victims of trafficking and the involvement of civil society and community.”⁹⁷

- 9.2.3 The same report also stated ‘The government maintained a multidisciplinary national referral mechanism (NRM) with standard operating procedures (SOPs) for identifying and referring victims to services...’⁹⁸ (see also [Identification of victims and the National Referral Mechanism](#)).
- 9.2.4 The US Department of Labor (USDOL) noted in its report on the worst forms of child labour covering events in 2021 (USDOL Report 2021) that the NAP (2021 to 2023), ‘Calls for the identification and referral of child victims and those at risk of human trafficking to social protection services in accordance with standard operating procedures... Increases the use of CPUs [Child Protection Units], police, and border control personnel to identify victims, including children involved in street work. Raises public awareness of all forms of human trafficking, including for forced labor...’⁹⁹
- 9.2.5 Officials from the CLCI interviewed by the Home Office FFM 2022 cited information from a 2021 report prepared by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, noting that ‘With the aim preventing of abuse and risk of trafficking, [the] Ministry of Health and Social Protection provide[ed] financial support for three specialised antitrafficking services in three big districts of [the] country [in] Tirana, Elbasan and Vlora in the amount of 29,0879,324 ALL [around GBP 2.1 million¹⁰⁰].’¹⁰¹
- 9.2.6 The USSD TIP report 2022 noted ‘The Advisory Board of Victims of Trafficking consisted of three survivors who provided recommendations on anti-trafficking efforts and participated in awareness campaigns, but the board remained inactive due to the pandemic. The government, in cooperation with civil society, conducted awareness campaigns for schoolchildren, students, government officials, and the public.’¹⁰²

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10. Protection

10.1 Overview

- 10.1.1 The UofB/IOM report 2018 identified concerns in October 2017 by stakeholders about the availability of protection. The report noted that ‘There is an implementation gap between a strong legislative and policy framework in Albania with practice in reality. Stakeholders at the SLE [stakeholder learning event] highlighted high level political commitment to responding to human trafficking in Albania, evidenced by the adoption of a number of policy and legislative measure but there was a feeling that these are not being fully implemented in practice.’¹⁰³

⁹⁷ Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

⁹⁸ USSD, ‘[TIP report 2022](#)’ (Protection), 22 July 2022

⁹⁹ USDOL, ‘[2021 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#)’ (Section V), 29 September 2021

¹⁰⁰ Xe.com, ‘[Currency converter](#)’, as at 29 November 2022

¹⁰¹ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 42), December 2022

¹⁰² USSD, ‘[TIP report 2022](#)’ (Prevention), 22 July 2022

¹⁰³ UofB/IOM, ‘[“Vulnerability” to human trafficking...](#)’, (page 8), July 2018

- 10.1.2 Similarly, the Asyllos/ARC report 2019 referred to potential difficulties in implementing law and policies (source cited at end of quote):
- ‘When asked for their views on the reason for the implementation gap between a strong legislative and policy framework in Albania with practice in reality, sources interviewed by ARC Foundation and Asyllos mentioned: issues with identification; a lack of training and expertise; corruption; weak institutions; a lack of witness protection and legal aid; and distrust of the protection system which prevents victims from coming forward.’¹⁰⁴
- 10.1.3 The report noted that, according to Steve Harvey, Independent International Law Enforcement Specialist, writing in March 2019, “This state of affairs is common to every country in the world including the UK. It is the consequence of many related factors but lack of or sufficient implementation of procedures aimed at identification, training, awareness and appropriate judicial response are the usual fundamental weak links.”¹⁰⁵
- 10.1.4 However, in the same report, Steve Harvey also considered that ‘No state response is adequate to prevent and combat THB [trafficking in human beings] but in Albania there is a dedicated law, a dedicated task force, a National Rapporteur, an NRM, law enforcement and judiciary training initiatives, dedicated prosecutors and courts, and victim shelters. Better than some EU Member States in my opinion.’¹⁰⁶
- 10.1.5 With regard to child trafficking, the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) report, ‘A typology of child trafficking cases in Albania’, July 2020, based on a review of 45 (31 girls and 14 boys) potential child trafficking cases identified between 2016 and 2019 (OSCE report 2020), noted:
- ‘Much of Albania’s law and policy provides a strong basis for effective response to child trafficking within a broader child protection framework. However, the evidence examined in this study suggests that the full potential of this child protection framework is not being realised due to unsatisfactory implementation by the key actors responsible for child protection. This is problematic as the evidence examined indicates that there is significant trafficking of children within and beyond the borders of Albania.’¹⁰⁷
- 10.1.6 Freedom House noted progress in the government’s efforts to counter trafficking, in its report covering 2021, noting that ‘While Albania continues to struggle with human trafficking, authorities are becoming more proactive in addressing the issue. In recent years, the government has cooperated with civil society leaders, creating the Advisory Board of Victims of Trafficking and increasing victim assistance in criminal proceedings with a new Development Center for Criminal Justice for Minors.’¹⁰⁸
- 10.1.7 The USSD TIP report 2022, covering events in 2021, noted that:
- ‘The Government of Albania does not fully meet the minimum standards for

¹⁰⁴ Asyllos/ARC, ‘[Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#)’, (page 76), May 2019

¹⁰⁵ Asyllos/ARC, ‘[Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#)’, (page 76), May 2019

¹⁰⁶ Asyllos/ARC, ‘[Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#)’, (page 130), May 2019

¹⁰⁷ OSCE, ‘[A typology of child trafficking cases in Albania](#)’ (page 37), July 2020

¹⁰⁸ Freedom House, ‘[Freedom in the World 2022](#)’ (G4), February 2022

the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared with the previous reporting period, considering the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its anti-trafficking capacity; therefore Albania remained on Tier 2. These efforts included investigating more cases and prosecuting and convicting significantly more traffickers.¹⁰⁹

- 10.1.8 The USSD described tier 2 countries as those ‘... whose governments do not fully meet the [\[Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000\]](#) TVPA’s minimum standards but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.’¹¹⁰

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10.2 Criminal justice system – general

- 10.2.1 For general information about the criminal justice system, see the [Country Policy and Information Note, Albania: Actors of protection](#).

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10.3 Anti-trafficking efforts

- 10.3.1 The GRETA report 2020 noted:

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

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

Representatives from the Shelters Coalition and civil society partners are invited to participate in the State Committee’s meetings.

‘Regional Anti-Trafficking Committees operate in the country’s 12 regions. During the reporting period, they were active in addressing THB issues, through local action plans...’¹¹¹

- 10.3.2 The USDoL Report 2021 noted that the Ministry of Interior ‘Coordinates operations of the Border Police as well as each of the Illicit Human Trafficking sections in the country’s 12 Regional Police Directorates through the General Directorate of State Police...’ and ‘Establishes the government’s policy on combating human trafficking through the State Committee Against Trafficking in Persons, chaired by the Interior Minister...’¹¹²

- 10.3.3 Furthermore, as noted by the USDoL, the Office of the Prosecutor General ‘Investigates and prosecutes child trafficking cases through the Serious

¹⁰⁹ USSD, ‘[TIP report 2022](#)’ (Albania Tier 2), 22 July 2022

¹¹⁰ USSD, [TIP report 2022](#) (A Guide to the Tiers), 19 July 2022

¹¹¹ CoE, ‘[GRETA’s Report and Government’s Comments](#)’ (page 9), 15 December 2020

¹¹² USDoL, ‘[2021 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#)’ (Section III), 29 September 2021

Crimes Prosecution Office...'¹¹³

10.3.4 The USSD TIP 2022 noted:

'The national coordinator led the Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator (ONAC) and overall anti-trafficking efforts. The State Committee against Trafficking in Persons, composed of relevant ministry representatives, monitored and implemented various anti-trafficking efforts, though it did not meet in 2021. The government also maintained the National Anti-trafficking Task Force, composed of ministry officials, civil society representatives, and other participants who monitored the [national referral mechanism] NRM; the NRM met once.'¹¹⁴

10.3.5 The USSD TIP 2022 also reported that:

'[The Albanian State Police] ASP's Criminal Police Department Directorate of Investigations of Narcotics and Trafficking maintained an Anti-Trafficking Unit, which investigated trafficking in persons in addition to drug and contraband trafficking. The government continued judicial reforms that changed prosecutorial jurisdiction for trafficking cases; [Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime] SPAK and the Special Court of Appeals on Corruption and Organized Crime have jurisdiction over trafficking cases related to organized crime, while [the General Prosecution Office] GPO and district courts prosecuted trafficking cases without an organized crime nexus.'¹¹⁵

10.3.6 The UNICEF 2022 Human Trafficking Evaluation report noted that:

'Under the aegis of the [UNICEF] Programme [on Transforming the National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania], one focus was on strengthening the justice system's ability to investigate human trafficking cases and prosecute and convict human traffickers. It is too early to measure the effectiveness of this initiative because it was interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and the package of support planned to the justice sector was postponed by one-and-a-half years. In addition, there have been recent justice system reforms that affect which courts have jurisdiction over human trafficking cases. One respondent explained that "Before the justice reform, there was an attorney of serious crimes with dedicated prosecutors [who prosecuted human trafficking cases], but with the justice reforms, cases of human trafficking are handled at the local level."¹¹⁶

10.3.7 The letter to CPIT from the British Embassy, dated January 2023, stated that, as part of its efforts to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable individuals, the MSF programme aimed to improve access to community-based social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking in the 4 specified regions (Tirana, Dibra, Kukesi and Shkodra). UNICEF has signed contracts with Terre des Hommes to train officials at the municipal level and to coordinate with social services and employment offices to identify and reach individuals at risk and provide them with increased access to social protection, training and information about

¹¹³ USDOL, '[2021 Findings on the Worst Forms of Child Labor](#)' (Section III), 29 September 2021

¹¹⁴ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Prevention), 22 July 2022

¹¹⁵ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Prosecution), 22 July 2022

¹¹⁶ Haarr, R.N, '[Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#)' (page 39), November 2022

employment. This partnership is also providing technical and financial assistance to Multi-Functional Community Centres (MFCCs) in Kukesi and Shkodra, and will establish a new MFCC in Bulqiza (Dibra region) in March 2023. These MFCCs work to assist vulnerable families and individuals at risk of trafficking and refer them to additional required social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking¹¹⁷.

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10.4 Identification of victims and the National Referral Mechanism

10.4.1 The GRETA report 2020 observed:

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

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

‘GRETA welcomes the efforts made in improving the proactive approach to identification through the setting up of mobile units in three regions of the country (Tirana, Vlorë and Elbasan), which visit places where there are risks of trafficking, such as night clubs and begging hotspots. The mobile units are supposed to include NGO representatives and police officers, but the latter reportedly do not participate systematically in the work of the mobile units. At

¹¹⁷ Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

the beginning of 2020, three more new mobile units were set up in the regions of Shkodra, Kukës and Dibër. Mobile units operate in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures for the protection of victims and potential victims of trafficking, as well as the specific Standards of Mobile Units. For the proper functioning of these units, co-operation agreements have been signed between the local Police Directorates and the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters.¹¹⁸

10.4.2 The European Commission's Albania Report 2022 noted that 'The national referral mechanism for (potential) victims of trafficking remained functional. Assistance was provided in all cases.'¹¹⁹

10.4.3 The USSD TIP report 2022 noted that 'Twelve regional anti-trafficking committees comprising local officials and NGOs worked on local victim assistance and referrals mechanisms.'¹²⁰ The same report also referred to the government's NRM with standard operating procedures (SOPs) for identifying and referring victims to services, noting that:

'First responders referred potential victims to law enforcement and state social services, which conducted joint interviews to officially recognize victims. The law provided equal services for both potential and officially recognized victims. MIUs [mobile victim identification units or mobile units] in eight regions, consisting of social workers from NGOs and police officers, identified most of the victims every year, but the units' sustainability was uncertain due to the lack of permanent staff, formalization, and resources; MIUs identified 126 potential victims (45 in 2020). Experts reported police did not participate consistently in the MIUs despite signing a memorandum of understanding that formalized their participation. Experts also stated law enforcement rarely initiated cases when civil society identified a potential victim, but ASP noted that definitional differences with civil society regarding what constituted trafficking caused obstacles in identification. Observers continued to report border police lacked resources, interpreters, and knowledge to screen consistently or implement SOPs for undocumented migrants and asylum seekers. As in previous years, ASP did not screen individuals in commercial sex for indicators of trafficking during raids and investigations of commercial sex establishments, and the Labor Inspectorate lacked the training to identify victims of forced labor. Law enforcement justified cases of potential domestic servitude and forced labor in forced marriages involving Romani and Balkan-Egyptian communities as traditional cultural practices and customs.'¹²¹

10.4.4 The USSD TIP report 2022 also acknowledged that 'Due to a lack of formal identification procedures and as it had reported in previous years, the government may have detained or deported some potential victims, including women in commercial sex, irregular migrants, and asylum seekers.'¹²²

10.4.5 In their 2020 Annual Report, D&E noted that between January and

¹¹⁸ CoE, '[GRETA's Report and Government's Comments](#)' (page 37), 15 December 2020

¹¹⁹ European Commission, '[Albania Report 2022](#)' (page 42), 12 October 2022

¹²⁰ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Prevention), 22 July 2022

¹²¹ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Protection), 22 July 2022

¹²² USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Protection), 22 July 2022

November 2020, through its mobile units, it had conducted several focus groups and awareness raising activities in communities, including with police commissariats and social service employees '... in relation to the identification, recourse and protection of victims of trafficking and potential victims of trafficking.'¹²³

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

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

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

'I also don't think that many of the Albanian boys that I've worked with understood prior to arrival in the UK and prior to our socio educative work around this issue what the concept of trafficking is anyway. I think they might have recognised their experience as exploitative when they experienced abuse, but not thought of it as a crime in their country, but a system of how people get by or how people make money in their society. There is a very low level of awareness of trafficking, of healthy relationships and safety. An additional factor is the boys I've supported generally having a deep mistrust of the police whether they have directly encountered them or not and the state's ability to protect them more widely.'¹²⁴

- 10.4.7 An official from UNICEF Albania told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that they were not aware if specific training was provided to police officers to identify male VOT, adding that 'Not a lot of cases are identified or referred by the police. They are mostly identified by other means', for example, by mobile units who were trained to identify and refer cases into the NRM¹²⁵. An official from D&E told the FFM team that, although police received training, they identified fewer male VOT/PVOT than child protection workers and mobile units. The same source told the Home Office FFM team that 'We

¹²³ D&E, '[2020 Annual Report](#)' (page 20), 10 September 2021

¹²⁴ Asylos/ARC, '[Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#)', (page 108), May 2019

¹²⁵ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 13), December 2022

have one established Mobile Unit in Tirana and one in Shkodra and a considerable number of males were identified by these mobile units.¹²⁶ The official from Tjeter Vizion also stated that it was mobile unit staff who identified VOT/PVOT¹²⁷. Brikena Puka of Vatra noted that 'Vatra has 5 mobile units in 5 districts, most of the cases [112 or 80% of cases from 2020 to September 2022¹²⁸] are identified by these mobile units and every case identified by mobile units has to be referred immediately to the anti-trafficking unit of the police and also to national responsible authority to the Ministry of Interior.'¹²⁹

10.4.8 The official from the OSCE told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that, while the police received a lot of training on identifying VOT, quality was an issue and there was a lack of awareness of the NRM. The same source noted that 'Women are only proactively identified by the police after they been arrested for prostitution. Most cases that the police have were referred by mobile units.'¹³⁰ The official from Caritas Albania stated that although training was given to identify and locate VOT it was not enough, more investment was needed and 'Identification of VOT/PVOT is very low.' The same source stated that 'The Albanian government is only identifying VOT, not PVOT.'¹³¹ Erion Prendi of SHKEJ did not believe that the police were well trained in identifying VOT¹³².

10.4.9 Officials from the General Directorate of State Police Anti-trafficking Office stated that not all police officers were trained to identify VOT but added that '... anti-trafficking officers and border and immigration police... are trained by state police, EU and UK.' The same source noted that they had not identified any male VOT in 2022 or in previous years¹³³. An official from the Ministry of Interior stated that 'We have organised training and meetings with border police to identify VOT, and also to inform them of the indicators that could show that certain individuals could be at risk, and we have trained them on how to conduct interviews.'¹³⁴

10.4.10 Officials from Kukës municipality told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that: 'As regards identification of PVOT and VOT we work closely with schools, social administrators and the community. When they suspect someone is a VOT they refer either to the police, then to us and the process begins. We also provide continuous training to schools, teachers, social workers on indicators of human trafficking (HT) and if they suspect a case they refer to us or police. There is another way, through schools and communities. 'Another way to identify PVOT is through the technical anti-trafficking round table. This round table consists of several institutions in Kukës, such as nurses, doctors, labour office officials. If they notice something wrong or

¹²⁶ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 19), December 2022

¹²⁷ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 28), December 2022

¹²⁸ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 73), December 2022

¹²⁹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 66), December 2022

¹³⁰ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 23), December 2022

¹³¹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 52), December 2022

¹³² Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 82), December 2022

¹³³ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 35), December 2022

¹³⁴ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 57), December 2022

think someone is a PVOT, this is raised during round table meetings.

‘Also the border or state police may identify PVOT or VOT and they refer immediately to us.

‘A recent positive change was the addition of social administrators as they have been trained in how to identify VOT as they know their communities well and can tell when human trafficking (HT) is happening.’¹³⁵

10.4.11 Referring to Albanians who had travelled abroad via unofficial routes, officials from Kukës municipality stated that ‘... if an illegal migrant is returned to Albania, or if the person identifies themselves [to the authorities], then they are probably a VOT.’¹³⁶ Erion Prendi of SHKEJ stated that it was difficult to identify VOT who had returned from abroad because they did not themselves recognise that they had been trafficked¹³⁷. The official from Terres des Hommes similarly noted that some returning Albanian migrants did not always identify as VOT¹³⁸.

10.4.12 The 2019 study by Ramaj found that ‘Following return, whether this being voluntary or involuntary, victims’ first challenge related to issues regarding self-image and self-identity. A consistent finding that emerged from the interviews was victims’ reluctance to acknowledge their exploitation.’¹³⁹

10.4.13 In terms of identifying male VOT/PVOT, sources told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that most men did not accept or recognise that they were VOT and that they were not recognised as VOT by society¹⁴⁰. Mary Ward Loreto representatives stated that men returning from abroad did not self-identify as VOT due to shame¹⁴¹.

See also [Barriers to protection](#).

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10.5 Trafficking-specific criminal investigations

10.5.1 The GRETA report 2020 also noted:

‘GRETA welcomes the existence of a specialised unit for investigating cases of human trafficking within the Criminal Police Department, as well as the setting up of the Special Prosecution Office against Corruption and Organised Crime. However, GRETA is concerned that prosecutors at First Instance Prosecutor’s Offices lack training and specialisation to deal with trafficking cases, the majority of which will fall within their jurisdiction, with consequent weakening of the criminal justice response to human trafficking. GRETA considers that the Albanian authorities should ensure that there are specialised prosecutors trained to deal with human trafficking cases, as well as encouraging the training a specialisation of judges.’¹⁴²

¹³⁵ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 61), December 2022

¹³⁶ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 61), December 2022

¹³⁷ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 81), December 2022

¹³⁸ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 92), December 2022

¹³⁹ Ramaj K, ‘[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)’ (page 8), 7 May 2021

¹⁴⁰ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (pages 20, 28, 81, 94, 100, 104), December 2022

¹⁴¹ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 94), December 2022

¹⁴² CoE, ‘[GRETA’s Report and Government’s Comments](#)’ (page 4), 15 December 2020

10.5.2 The USSD TIP report 2022 also noted

'The government continued judicial reforms that changed prosecutorial jurisdiction for trafficking cases; SPAK and the Special Court of Appeals on Corruption and Organized Crime have jurisdiction over trafficking cases related to organized crime, while GPO and district courts prosecuted trafficking cases without an organized crime nexus. However, GRETA, prosecutors, and other observers reported district prosecutors did not have the specialized experience and capacity to prosecute trafficking cases successfully. GRETA and observers reported authorities confused overlapping elements of "exploitation of prostitution" and trafficking and at times applied the lesser charge because it required less specialization and time or due to the false belief that trafficking crimes required a transnational element. Limited resources, capacity, and reports of constant turnover within law enforcement created additional obstacles to maintaining capacity to investigate trafficking, including a lack of resources to investigate trafficking through virtual means. The government, mainly in cooperation with NGOs and international organizations, trained police officers, judges, prosecutors, labor inspectors, and victim coordinators on various anti-trafficking issues. The government reported permanently dismissing a police officer for "prostitution and maintaining a brothel," and in 2020, the government suspended five police officials, including the Director of the Border and Emigration Directorate of Tirana and three chiefs of units, after media reported a story alleging their complicity in an organized trafficking operation. The government conducted an investigation into the officers involved, which is reportedly still under investigation by the Tirana Prosecution Office. The government extradited a suspected trafficker from North Macedonia and appointed a liaison prosecutor to the EU. GPO sent nine rogatory letters and received four rogatory letters from foreign authorities.'¹⁴³

10.5.3 The USSD TIP report 2022 noted that 'The Albanian State Police (ASP) investigated 61 cases with 27 suspects (15 suspects for adult trafficking and 12 suspects for child trafficking), compared with 31 cases with 32 suspects in 2020. The ASP investigated no suspects for "knowingly soliciting or patronizing a sex trafficking victim to perform a commercial sex act," compared with four in 2020.'¹⁴⁴

10.5.4 The UNICEF 2022 Human Trafficking Evaluation report acknowledged that: 'Measuring the effectiveness of the Programme's [on Transforming the National Response to Human Trafficking in and from Albania] ability to strengthen the justice system's response to human trafficking requires time. In particular, time is required for the police to investigate a human trafficking case and build a case for prosecution, while public prosecutors need time to file charges and prosecute the traffickers, and court proceedings can take a significant amount of time. If human trafficking cases are not fast-tracked by the court system they can take several years to prosecute. Therefore, it is not until human trafficking cases are pushed through the justice system pipeline that we will be able to understand whether the system has been

¹⁴³ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Prosecution), 22 July 2022

¹⁴⁴ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Prosecution), 22 July 2022

strengthened and improved, and where gaps, challenges and barriers remain that need to be addressed.¹⁴⁵

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10.6 Prosecutions and convictions

10.6.1 The GRETA report 2020 noted:

‘... in 2015, there were 38 criminal proceedings registered by the Prosecutor’s Office for trafficking in adults and 11 for child trafficking; in 2016, 18 for trafficking in adults and eight for child trafficking, as well as two cases of THB [trafficking of human beings] by criminal organisations; in 2017, 20 for trafficking in adults and six for child trafficking, as well as one case of THB by criminal organisations; in 2018, 12 for trafficking in adults and five for child trafficking; and in 2019, 19 for trafficking in adults and six for child trafficking.’¹⁴⁶

10.6.2 The GRETA report 2020 further noted:

‘As regards convictions, in 2015, 10 men and one woman were convicted of THB by the Serious Crimes Court of First Instance; two of the sentences ranged from two to five years, three for five to 10 years, and six from 10 to 25 years. In 2016, 20 men and two women were convicted of THB; five of the sentences ranged from two to five years, five from five to 10 years, and 12 from 10 to 25 years. In 2017, seven men were convicted of THB; two of the sentences ranged from five to 10 years, and five from 10 to 25 years. In 2018, four men were convicted of THB; two of the sentences ranged from five to 10 years, and two from 10 to 25 years. The Appeal Court of Serious Crimes reviewed and confirmed decisions in THB cases concerning 13 men and one woman in 2015, 14 men in 2016, 5 men in 2017, and five men in 2018. The Supreme Court confirmed decisions concerning five men in 2016 and six men in 2017.’¹⁴⁷

10.6.3 According to the European Commission’s Albania Report 2022, ‘The Prosecution’s Office registered 10 new criminal proceedings for trafficking in human beings in 2021, compared to 28 in 2020. The number of final convictions remained very low with two cases with three final convictions, same as in 2020.’¹⁴⁸

10.6.4 The USSD TIP report 2022 noted

‘The General Prosecution Office (GPO) prosecuted 60 cases with 19 defendants (six defendants for adult trafficking and 13 defendants for child trafficking), an increase compared with two cases with 12 defendants in 2020. Separately, the Special Structure against Corruption and Organized Crime (SPAK) prosecuted two new cases and continued two cases from previous years. Courts convicted 11 traffickers, a significant increase compared with no convictions in 2020; all traffickers were convicted for child trafficking. Judges sentenced five traffickers with imprisonment between eight years and 25 years and two traffickers with imprisonment between two

¹⁴⁵ Haarr, R.N, ‘[Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#)’ (page 39), November 2022

¹⁴⁶ CoE, ‘[GRETA’s Report and Government’s Comments](#)’ (page 21), 15 December 2020

¹⁴⁷ CoE, ‘[GRETA’s Report and Government’s Comments](#)’ (page 22), 15 December 2020

¹⁴⁸ European Commission, ‘[Albania Report 2022](#)’ (page 42), 12 October 2022

years and eight years; four traffickers received probation. Lenient sentences, such as probation, undercut efforts to hold traffickers accountable, weakened deterrence, created potential security and safety concerns for victims, and were not equal to the seriousness of the crime. Observers reported continued delays in court proceedings due to the pandemic.’¹⁴⁹

10.6.5 The USSD TIP report 2022 also noted:

‘The government reported five victims cooperated in investigations and prosecutions and received legal assistance. SPAK possessed equipment that allowed testimony via video conferences, though it did not record how often it was used (one case in 2020). Victims who testified against traffickers had access to the witness protection program, though no victims participated in the program. The government reported interviews and testimonies took place in the presence of a psychologist, and prosecutors separated victims and defendants during trials to prevent re-traumatization. The government maintained the Development Center for Criminal Justice for Minors with four part-time prosecutors and a judicial police officer responsible for child protection in criminal proceedings. The government maintained 22 victim assistance coordinators who provided legal assistance and guided victims in accessing services; the government appointed victim assistance coordinators to all victims assisting in prosecutions. Victims could obtain restitution through criminal proceedings or compensation through civil suits. However, judges generally rejected restitution in criminal proceedings, and civil suits required victims to submit new testimonies, causing re-traumatization. Additionally, civil courts dismissed or closed civil suits if criminal courts dropped the case or acquitted the defendant. Courts granted compensation to only two victims in cases from 2010 and 2018 but did not disburse compensation to the victims – the case from 2018 remained under appeal.’¹⁵⁰

10.6.6 The CLIC told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that:

‘There are gaps that exist in the execution of court decisions and implementation of the laws, in general. But focussing on VOT, we have had a lot of problems with the execution of court decisions in regard to compensation claims. Until now I don’t know if we have had any decision enforced on compensation. It has been awarded but not given. We have 4 or 5 decisions but these are only on paper but not executed. But they tried to make some legal changes to enforce the execution of court orders. Since 2016, when the last change on the anti-mafia law occurred relating to compensation of victims, we have never had any decision executed or compensation given to victims, so they have the court orders on paper, but no money.’¹⁵¹

10.6.7 The OSCE official suggested to the Home Office FFM 2022 team that ‘The low rates of prosecution of traffickers leads to persistent exploitation.’¹⁵²

See also [Re-trafficking](#).

¹⁴⁹ USSD, ‘[TIP report 2022](#)’ (Prosecution), 22 July 2022

¹⁵⁰ USSD, ‘[TIP report 2022](#)’ (Protection), 22 July 2022

¹⁵¹ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 43), December 2022

¹⁵² Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 22), December 2022

10.7 Barriers to protection

10.7.1 The Asylos/ARC report 2019 stated that ‘Several sources identify corruption as a barrier to successful implementation of trafficking legislation and as a barrier to access to justice in general in Albania.’ According to Professor Haxhiymeri “Judges accepts bribes to make decisions against the law because they think it is a chance for them to profit from the situation. They also for personal interests like family relations or people they know, make decisions against the law.”¹⁵³

10.7.2 The same report cited other sources on the issue of corruption:

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

‘Source: Anonymous source 3, interview record, 2019

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁵³ Asylos/ARC, ‘[Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#)’, (page 83), May 2019

'Source: James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children's Society, interview record, February 2019.'¹⁵⁴

- 10.7.3 The 2019 study, published in May 2021 by Ramaj, noted in regard to VOT returning to Albania and their interaction with border police that:

'Victims are returned to Albania by the destination countries' relevant authorities. Due to matters related to human trafficking investigations, victim identification needs to be further confirmed by the Albanian border police:

"The first state representatives the victim faces upon arriving in Albania are the anti-trafficking policemen – either at the airport or at the coastal border. They are aware of the occurrence of trafficking and their job is to receive the victim's police statement" (LAW2).

'Nevertheless, most victims gave false testimonies during the interrogation by the Albanian border policemen: "Many victims provide false confessions and claim that they have not been trafficked or exploited. They also refuse to name the individuals who have accompanied them outside the country" (LAW2). There might be several reasons behind the victims' reluctance to truthfully confess to Albanian police. While practitioners mentioned the psychological resistances to the traumatic past, threats from the trafficker, or fear of retaliation, another factor that might have pushed victims into falsely confessing might be related to a lack of trust toward Albanian authorities, due to the latter's potential stigmatizing comments or involvement in corruptive affairs.'¹⁵⁵

- 10.7.4 The same source noted that:

'False testimonies are however considered a violation of Albanian criminal laws. Article 305/b of the Albanian Criminal Code (2017) states that giving false information to police officers during an interrogation is a criminal act punishable by imprisonment up to six months. Article 307 further provides that refusing to answer questions concerning knowledge of a criminal offense or its perpetrators constitutes a criminal contravention and is punishable by up to one year of imprisonment. Even though the EC (2004) suggests that trafficking victims have the right to protection despite their willingness to testify and that their penalization should be avoided at any cost, evidence from the current study shows that Albanian victims were prosecuted for their reluctance to cooperate with authorities: "We have had many cases where victims have been unfortunately convicted for having given false testimonies or for refusing to provide information about the traffickers" (LAW2) [the source, however, does not indicate what 'many' amounts to in regard to numbers of cases].'¹⁵⁶

- 10.7.5 The UNICEF Albania September 2022 report found that 'In general, youth in the four regions [Diber, Kukes, Shkoder and Tirana] know well that they can report a suspected case of human trafficking at the police station (85%) and to police telephone line 129 (75%), with lower levels of knowledge for other reporting channels [such as a teacher or other school professional, child

¹⁵⁴ Asylor/ARC, '[Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#)', (page 83), May 2019

¹⁵⁵ Ramaj K, '[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)' (page 8), 7 May 2021

¹⁵⁶ Ramaj K, '[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)' (pages 8 to 9), 7 May 2021

protection worker, NGOs, health professional]. Only two per cent of surveyed youth in the four regions do not know of any reporting channels.¹⁵⁷ However, the same survey found that 72% of participants were concerned about lack of law enforcement¹⁵⁸.

10.7.6 An official from D&E told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'Few men ask for help on their own. Only a few go to ask the police for help... men feel they have to be strong and not ask for support...'¹⁵⁹ The official from the OSCE noted that '... few adult males seek protection from the police... There are a handful of cases of men exploited in labour being referred to the police by shelters, rather than self-referring.'¹⁶⁰

10.7.7 Brikena Puka of Vatra told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that: 'If the VOT denounces their trafficker then action will be taken [by the responsible authority], we help together with lawyers and police. If they do not want to denounce we cannot force them. Sometimes the VOT do not trust the justice system. We have cases where traffickers have been denounced and the process has been so long, 2 or 3 years, so they have a lack of trust and patience in the process. The other VOT share what has happened to them (in the justice system), and, based on the experience of others, they choose not to make the denunciation.'¹⁶¹

10.7.8 In regard to children, the official from NISMA ARSIS told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'There is no criminal responsibility under the age of 14, so criminal networks are recruiting children under the age of 14 to distribute drugs and so forth... What is lacking is child protection, the police has limited capacities to ensure proper referral of the cases to the child protection unit, and we are mandated to provide referral after 24 hours of the identification [of a child VOT] to the child protection unit.'¹⁶²

See also [Children](#).

10.7.9 The UNICEF 2022 Human Trafficking Evaluation report found that: '... the police need training and technical assistance on how to identify, rescue and protect trafficking victims. Both police and prosecutors need training and technical assistance on laws related to human trafficking and the elements of the crime, as well as victim-centred investigations and how to actually investigate human trafficking cases (e.g., evidence collection, chain of custody and interviewing techniques), and how to build cases against human traffickers. Prosecutors also require training and technical assistance to understand how to apply human trafficking laws, what charges to file and how to prosecute such cases in the courts (e.g., evidence use and presentation, victim and witness testimony, and writing legal briefs), and victim-centred prosecution. In addition, both prosecutors and judges need training and technical assistance in the use of child-friendly courts and court

¹⁵⁷ Davy, D, '[Summary of findings for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#)' (p 14), September 2022

¹⁵⁸ Davy, D, '[Summary of findings for Tirana, Dibër, Kukës and Shkodër...](#)' (p 17), September 2022

¹⁵⁹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 20), December 2022

¹⁶⁰ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 23), December 2022

¹⁶¹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 65), December 2022

¹⁶² Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 30), December 2022

processes in human trafficking cases, as well as witness protection. The judiciary needs training and technical assistance to understand how to apply laws related to human trafficking, elements of the crime, and how to hear human trafficking cases and weigh the evidence, as well as the importance of judicial independence to the rule of law. Finally, police, prosecutors and the judiciary alike also need anti-corruption and ethics training.’¹⁶³

- 10.7.10 The 2019 study by Ramaj stated that ‘... five interviewees pointed out that discrimination against victims was also pronounced among law-enforcement agents, who instead of offering victims protection, exacerbated the prejudicial treatment: “Even in my presence, policemen have said denigrating things about sex trafficking victims, such as: ‘Look at what she’s wearing, doesn’t she look like a prostitute? She obviously chose to engage in that profession herself” (LAW1).’¹⁶⁴

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10.8 Legal aid

- 10.8.1 The UofB/IOM report 2018 stated that there was a lack of access to free legal aid and access to justice mechanisms for victims of trafficking¹⁶⁵.

- 10.8.2 However, Albania’s response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire explained:

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

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

‘Amendments of the Criminal Procedure Code, Article 58/gj, have recently provided the right of the victim, to be exempted from the payment of any expenses for obtaining court acts, and fees for filing a lawsuit, related to the status of the victim of a criminal offense. The victims’ access to justice is an important right, which is relevant to the European Union legislation, and should be treated as a right that is implemented directly by the institutions and not as a right that is obtained by the victim's request. In order to benefit from this right, the victim should submit parallel with lawsuit also the request to be exempted from payment of the court fees.’¹⁶⁶

- 10.8.3 Albania’s response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire further stated:

‘With the entering in the program, all the cases that have collaborated with justice institutions, and have denounced traffickers, perpetrators, are intermediated and assisted by centre’s lawyers during all the process, from the denouncement, investigation and in the court till the end of the court

¹⁶³ Haarr, R.N, ‘[Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#)’ (page 40), November 2022

¹⁶⁴ Ramaj K, ‘[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)’ (page 12), 7 May 2021

¹⁶⁵ UofB/IOM, ‘[“Vulnerability” to human trafficking...](#)’, (page 8), July 2018

¹⁶⁶ CoE, GRETA, ‘[Government’s Reply to GRETA’s Questionnaire](#)’, (page 6), 20 June 2019

procedures. centre's staff also (lawyers), assist victims during their civil cases, such as compensation claim, legal custody for children, divorce, property issues, etc. Lawyers and Psychologist accompany victims for resolving their issues in all institutions: Police, Prosecution, Court, Execution office, etc.

'All categories of victims of trafficking are treated in our criminal legislation as harmed by the offense and the nature of the offenses committed to their detriment, this category is characterized by their weakness. To overcome the weakness of their position and to prevent the misuse of this position, victims of trafficking are questioned in the presence of a psychologist and when they are juveniles they may be questioned in the presence of a parent or legal guardian.'¹⁶⁷

10.8.4 D&E noted in its 2021 Annual Report that it had:

'... provided legal assistance to all beneficiaries in the program through D&E's lawyer. During the reporting period, all beneficiaries of the reintegration program were informed about their rights and were supported with legal assistance according to their needs. Legal evaluations have been carried out for each new case entered into the program. 30 cases have been supported by the D&E lawyer in their criminal, civil or administrative cases. Thus, out of 33 cases, 13 were criminal, 19 civil and 1 administrative.'¹⁶⁸

10.8.5 The CLCI told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that it '... provides free legal aid for victims of gender based violence (GBV), victims of trafficking (VOT), victims of domestic violence and different forms of gender and multiple discrimination.' CLCI added that it provided '... free legal aid for VOT focussing on compensation claims.'¹⁶⁹

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10.9 **Witness protection**

10.9.1 See [Witnesses' Protection \(euralius.eu\)](#) for the law on witness protection.

10.9.2 Albania's response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire stated, 'At Vatra center, beneficiaries are protected throughout the phases of their legal processes. Possible risk victims are placed in the shelter of Vatra, which is sheltered for 24 hours. They are always accompanied by the center attorney and transported by the center vehicle. All the time that a higher risk or risk is assessed, Vatra has been supported by the State Police.'¹⁷⁰

10.9.3 The GRETA report 2020 noted:

'The protection of victims and witnesses of human trafficking is guaranteed by provisions in the Code of Criminal Procedure, including the right to be heard through audio-visual means, as well as the availability of a witness protection programme. GRETA considers that the Albanian authorities should take additional steps to ensure that victims and witnesses of trafficking, as well as their family members, are provided with effective and

¹⁶⁷ CoE, GRETA, '[Government's Reply to GRETA's Questionnaire](#)', (page 5), 20 June 2019

¹⁶⁸ D&E, '[2021 Annual Report](#)' (page 14), 28 July 2022

¹⁶⁹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 40), December 2022

¹⁷⁰ CoE, GRETA, '[Government's Reply to GRETA's Questionnaire](#)', (page 23), 20 June 2019

appropriate protection from potential retaliation or intimidation.’¹⁷¹

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10.10 Children

10.10.1 In a report dated July 2021, UNICEF cited the child protection frameworks in place (text in bold is UNICEF’s emphasis):

‘MHSP [Ministry of Health and Social Protection] is the designated body responsible for child protection in Albania. The [National Council on Children’s Rights and Protection] acts as an advisory body whose main task is to coordinate government policy for guaranteeing rights and protection of the child, particularly in justice, social service, education, health and culture...

‘SACRP [State Agency for Child Rights and Protection] holds responsibility for coordination and organisation of the integrated child protection system and for implementation of national child protection policies, interventions and measures for prevention of, and protection of the child from, abuse, neglect, maltreatment and violence. This makes the Agency the de facto body with ultimate responsibility for child protection in Albania, subject to ministerial authority and approval, **though it has no management function or role in relation to provision of protection services on the ground.**

‘Article 46 of Law 18/2017 identifies the municipality as the ultimate duty-bearer at the local level, and stipulates its statutory responsibility, for implementation of national child protection policies and protection measures, and establishment of effective child protection structures including allocation of funds. The source of such funds is not specified, nor the balance between central government and municipality responsibility to properly fund and resource child protection services...

‘Articles 46–52 set the framework for child protection services and outline the structures and staff required at the municipal level to support and protect vulnerable individuals, their families and communities and protect Albanian children from abuse, neglect, exploitation and violence through provision of child-centred, community-based quality services. **However, the situation regarding financing has not changed and lack of resources continues to impede development of a comprehensive, quality, child protection system.**’¹⁷²

10.10.2 The UNICEF report 2021 noted that the framework needed strengthening and also lacked resources:

‘CPR [European Council Country Progress Report] 2019 acknowledges that the resources awarded to the child protection institutions, financial and human, do not correspond to their increased legal responsibilities. There were only 236 child protection workers in total (52% of the required number) in 2019 out of which only 45 (19%) worked full-time in this function. The new law requires all child protection workers to have a background in social work but currently only 78 out of 236 (33%) have such experience. The child protection structure continues to suffer from a lack of consistent

¹⁷¹ CoE, GRETA, [Evaluation Report Albania, Third ...](#), Executive Summary, 15 December 2020

¹⁷² UNICEF, [‘Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania’](#) (page 48), June 2021

investment in capacities including allied sectors of education and health. The principle of a multi-disciplinary approach is clearly stipulated in the normative framework and is a principle widely acknowledged for its importance. But coordination remains one area in Albania that is not fully functioning and challenged by behavioural, technical and structural aspects. For the most part it takes the form of sharing information, rather than effective and collective decision making and division of labour. Meanwhile, case management is hampered by a lack of social care services to attend for the needs of the child and the family. All of the above issues seriously challenge the availability, accessibility, coverage and effectiveness of child protection services in Albania.¹⁷³

10.10.3 An official from the State Agency for Child Rights and Protection (SACRP) told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that there was a Child Protection Unit in each of the 61 municipalities. The official stated that 'At the moment we have 241 child protection workers. Most of them are social workers and psychologists. The law provides that there should be one child protection worker for every 3,000 children in an administrative unit... Any administrative unit of the municipality having more than 3,000 children shall have at least one child protection worker.'¹⁷⁴

10.10.4 The ARC/Asylos report 2019 stated:

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

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

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

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

'Source: Dr Schwandner-Sievers, Bournemouth University, interview record,

¹⁷³ UNICEF, '[Situation Analysis of Children and Adolescents in Albania](#)' (page 48), June 2021

¹⁷⁴ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 85), December 2022

February 2019.¹⁷⁵

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

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

“... I mean if they cannot find a shelter if they cannot find a system to support, to continue with their education reintegration - I find it difficult to say they can have a protection system to help them.”¹⁷⁶

10.10.6 The Asyl/ARC report 2019 included the view of James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, who stated, “... some people’s families [families of trafficking victims] have gone to the police but in none of those situations have the police been able to meaningfully prevent trafficking.”¹⁷⁷ James Simmonds-Read continued:

‘I have worked with a number of male children that have gone to the police, often when the family has been involved and no one has been able to protect them. They tried moving from location to location and the networks have still found them. Sometimes the police are even giving guidance to hand drugs back rather than them do anything themselves or suggest to prosecute them. The police see themselves as having less power than the criminal networks.’¹⁷⁸

10.10.7 The OSCE report 2020 noted

‘The children’s rights approach is the overriding principles in the Albanian recently developed child protection legislation which highlights that the best interest of the child is the primary consideration in all actions affecting children... The limited information available makes it challenging to draw conclusions on the effectiveness of the child protection measures. However, such a lack of information strongly suggests a lack of co-ordination among institutions to enable a protective environment for children at risk and victims of trafficking.’¹⁷⁹

10.10.8 The OSCE report 2020 further noted:

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

¹⁷⁵ Asyl/ARC, [‘Albania: Trafficked boys and young men’](#), (page 76), May 2019

¹⁷⁶ Asyl/ARC, [‘Albania: Trafficked boys and young men’](#), (page 143), May 2019

¹⁷⁷ Asyl/ARC, [‘Albania: Trafficked boys and young men’](#), (page 141), May 2019

¹⁷⁸ Asyl/ARC, [‘Albania: Trafficked boys and young men’](#), (page 76), May 2019

¹⁷⁹ OSCE, [‘A typology of child trafficking cases in Albania’](#) (page 32), July 2020

family. Remarkably, 8 out of the 11 cases are girls sexually exploited, hence still in the hands of their traffickers.

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

'... the majority of cases, 31 out of 45, have not been treated with a protection order, raising concern about the efficacy of the protection measures applied to ensure basic care, safe accommodation and most importantly protection from the traffickers and abusers.'¹⁸⁰

10.10.9 The SACRP told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'From January to August 2022, 25 child VOT or PVOT have been taken into protection.' While overall in 2021 there were 2,389 children in protection¹⁸¹.

10.10.10 Following the meeting with the Home Office FFM 2022 team, the SACRP provided additional information on child protection services for VOT:

'The package of services offered to victims of trafficking includes the following:

- Meeting the basic economic and social needs of children and families at risk or victims of economic exploitation, including Children in Street Situation.
- Family visits and psychological, social, and economic assessments
- Housing
- Psychological counselling
- Support with food packages
- Clothing
- Hygienic-sanitary package
- Medicines
- Mediation for employment
- Psycho-social service
- Mediation and assistance in conducting medical visits
- Registration in nurseries, kindergartens, schools
- Assistance for re-entering the school system
- Registration in civil status
- Free legal service

¹⁸⁰ OSCE, '[A typology of child trafficking cases in Albania](#)' (pages 32 to 34), July 2020

¹⁸¹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 86), December 2022

- Professional training
- Development of life skills during reintegration¹⁸²

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Section updated: 6 February 2023

11. Shelters and short-medium term assistance

11.1 Types

11.1.1 The USSD TIP report 2022 noted:

'The government operated one specialized shelter and supported three specialized NGO-run shelters. The government allocated 22 million leks [£163,242¹⁸³] to NGO-run shelters to support 30 staff salaries, compared with 17.6 million leks [£130,632¹⁸⁴] in 2020. The government provided an additional 6.8 million leks [£50,474¹⁸⁵] for food support to NGO-run shelters in 2021 and 2020. The government allocated 20.9 million leks [£155.158¹⁸⁶] to the government-run shelter, compared with 29.3 million leks [£217,540¹⁸⁷] in 2020. The government also transferred 10.2 million leks [£75,730¹⁸⁸] to a fund of seized criminal assets for victim support services, compared with 4.6 million leks [£34,152¹⁸⁹] in 2020. Although the government increased resources to NGO-run shelters in 2021, NGO-run shelters continued to operate under financial constraints and relied on outside sources for operating costs. NGO-run shelters reported no funding delays from the government, as in previous years. However, experts reported the bidding process for social programs with municipal governments was not transparent and that no funds were dispersed to shelters.'¹⁹⁰

11.1.2 The USSD TIP report 2022 further noted that 'The four specialized shelters constituted the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS)...'¹⁹¹

11.1.3 The NCATS is composed of 3 NGO-run and one state-run:

- [Different & Equal](#), Tirana
- [Tjeter Vizion](#) (Another Vision), Elbasan
- ["Vatra" Psycho-social Center](#), Vlora
- National Reception Center, Tirana (state-run)

11.1.4 An official from UNICEF Albania told the Home Office FFM team that:

'There is a coalition of trafficking shelters, a state-run one and 3 NGO-run. We collaborate with the NGOs, they are a consortium of programmes, we

¹⁸² Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 88), December 2022

¹⁸³ Xe.com, '[Currency converter](#)', as at 9 December 2022

¹⁸⁴ Xe.com, '[Currency converter](#)', as at 9 December 2022

¹⁸⁵ Xe.com, '[Currency converter](#)', as at 9 December 2022

¹⁸⁶ Xe.com, '[Currency converter](#)', as at 9 December 2022

¹⁸⁷ Xe.com, '[Currency converter](#)', as at 9 December 2022

¹⁸⁸ Xe.com, '[Currency converter](#)', as at 9 December 2022

¹⁸⁹ Xe.com, '[Currency converter](#)', as at 9 December 2022

¹⁹⁰ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Protection), 22 July 2022

¹⁹¹ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Protection), 22 July 2022

have supported and provided services for VOT for the past 3 years. We provide a range of services including wellbeing, housing, health care and education. We have quite a few people who require assistance from the programme and 40% reach a level of reintegration as a result of our assistance. One of the shelters is in Tirana, and provides services for children, adolescents, men and women. One is in Elbasan providing for under-18s, and one is in Vlore for women, and women with children. The state-run shelter provides for all cohorts.¹⁹²

11.1.5 An official from D&E told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'There are no specific shelters for [adult] males. They are supported mostly outside the shelters, with housing and reintegration.'¹⁹³

11.1.6 The USSD TIP report 2022 stated that:

'... victims who required services not available in one shelter were referred to another shelter within the coalition. NCATS and the government provided assistance to all official and potential victims in both 2021 and 2020, including food, mental health counselling, legal assistance, health care, educational services, employment services, assistance to victims' children, financial support, long-term accommodation, social activities, vocational training, and post-reintegration follow-up. NGO-run shelters allowed adult victims to leave the shelter voluntarily; the state-run shelter required victims to receive permission from the shelter director for their security. One NGO-run shelter provided specialized services for victims younger than the age of 18 and rented apartments for male victims, where they received assistance from NGOs. Observers reported the shelters in the NCATS had professional staff and good quality of care, and the government reported good cooperation between NCATS and government institutions. The government and NGOs provided vocational training for 109 victims; however, experts reported a lack of resources for long-term care, employment, and other reintegration efforts, particularly for child victims and victims with children...'¹⁹⁴

11.1.7 Further information about shelters and the support offered is also covered in the [Support and reintegration services beyond shelters: General](#).

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11.2 Capacity

11.2.1 When asked about shelter capacity, an official from D&E told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'There is one government-run shelter, a national reception centre with up to 100 beds, which is never full. There are 3 NGO-run shelters, in Tirana, Elbasan and Vlorë – with 15 to 25 beds each. We cooperate with each other when receiving referrals and see what the best options for cases are, or if a shelter is over-capacity. The capacity for shelters is good up to now.'¹⁹⁵

11.2.2 In January 2023, the 3 NGO-run shelters provided information to the British

¹⁹² Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 10), December 2022

¹⁹³ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 17), December 2022

¹⁹⁴ USSD, '[TIP report 2022](#)' (Protection), 22 July 2022

¹⁹⁵ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 16), December 2022

Embassy, Tirana, on their overall existing shelter capacity:

Overall shelter capacity			
	Adult females	Adult males	Minors (please specify male and/or female)
Different and Equal ¹⁹⁶	15 cases (adults and minors) and 3 children		
Tjeter Vizion ¹⁹⁷			18 (9 girls and 9 boys)
Vatra ¹⁹⁸	12 and their children		20 female

- 11.2.3 Different and Equal and Vatra also provided information on their in-accommodation support outside of a shelter, for example in a rented apartment or with the VOT's family:

In-accommodation capacity outside of a shelter			
	Adult females	Adult males	Minors (please specify male and/or female)
Different and Equal ¹⁹⁹	45 cases (adults and minors) and 25 of their children	25 (adults and minors)	
Vatra ²⁰⁰	20	5	30 (18 girls and 12 boys)

- 11.2.4 The British Embassy letter to CPIT stated that 'Regarding capacity to support adult male victims/potential victims, they are already included within the overall provision and, specifically, Different and Equal, Vatra and Mary Ward Loreto provide support to adult male victims and potential victims outside the shelter, including in rented accommodation.'²⁰¹
- 11.2.5 In regards to identified VOT/PVOT and shelter capacity, the official from Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that the coalition of 4 shelters had responded to 100% of all cases referred to them, adding that

¹⁹⁶ Different and Equal [Annex A4](#)

¹⁹⁷ Tjeter Vizion [Annex A5](#)

¹⁹⁸ Vatra [Annex A7](#)

¹⁹⁹ Different and Equal [Annex A4](#)

²⁰⁰ Vatra [Annex A7](#)

²⁰¹ Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

the shelters had the capacity to cover all cases and that no one was 'left behind'²⁰². Similarly, Brikena Puka of Vatra noted that '... all cases will be provided with shelter if necessary. In all the 4 shelters no one is without shelter, if there is no capacity in one, they go to another shelter.'²⁰³

11.2.6 Brikena Puka of Vatra also told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'We also have shelter security and use a private security company, licenced by the Ministry of Interior, and the service is 24 hours for VOT and staff. We provide medical assistance and a doctor and collaborate with health institutions.'²⁰⁴

11.2.7 As noted on the NISMA ARSIS website:

'NISMA offers its services to children and young individuals who live under conditions of poverty, neglect, victimization, conflict, disapproval, exploitation, isolation, racism, in contact with the law, without parental care, don't have a family or a place to live. Generally, Nisma offers help to those living under difficult situations...

'NISMA ARSIS has established the first model of providing Multidisciplinary [National Emergency] Services to protect children from abuse, neglect, violence and exploitation in the Municipality of Tirana in the center "House of Colors" in the Administrative Unit no.7 in 2010 with the support of UNICEF and Municipality of Tirana. The model established as multi-functional center [including the emergency shelter] developed its services in accordance [with] the needs of children at risk covering the gaps of the system. This model and its methodology are approved by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and replicated in [the] Municipality of Tirana, Municipality of Shkodra and Municipality of Durrës. The center "House of Colors" provides support to children, youth and their families on daily bases, with a multidisciplinary team composed by social workers, psychologists, child careers, nurse, teachers, social animators, case managers, that work closely with child protection workers providing, food, hygiene, psychological counseling, psycho-social games, non-formal education, administrative and legal support, community development, family strengthening, counselling for employment, case management.'²⁰⁵

11.2.8 During the Home Office FFM 2022, the official from Caritas Albania referred to its 2 shelters which housed children (girls and boys) up to the age of 18, as well as a 72-hour emergency shelter for women and girls²⁰⁶.

11.2.9 The European Commission noted in its Albania Report 2022 that 'NGO-run shelters remained underfunded.'²⁰⁷

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Section updated: 6 February 2023

12. Support and reintegration services beyond shelters

²⁰² Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (pages 24 and 28), December 2022

²⁰³ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 67), December 2022

²⁰⁴ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 64), December 2022

²⁰⁵ NISMA ARSIS, '[Our actions and services - ARSIS](#)', no date

²⁰⁶ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 50), December 2022

²⁰⁷ European Commission, '[Albania Report 2022](#)' (page 42), 12 October 2022

12.1 General

12.1.1 See also [Shelters and short-medium assistance](#) for more information on the support available to victims of trafficking.

12.1.2 Sources cited in this section provide information about a range of support services, or their lack thereof, including access to accommodation, employment and financial aid, so should be read in conjunction with the subsequent subsections.

12.1.3 In July 2020, UNICEF reported:

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

‘Emergency safe accommodation is offered at multi-functional center “House of Colors” which is based in Tirana, with temporary accommodation (up to 72 hours) that is able to host up to 7 children and 5 adults (mothers usually) at high and immediate risk situation...

‘28 beneficiaries (23 children and 5 Mothers) received emergency protection services during past months. 70% of the assisted children needed emergency services at police stations. 7 beneficiaries (4 children and 3 mothers) received emergency services COVID-19 related ...’²⁰⁸

12.1.4 The OSCE report 2020, based on the evidence obtained from a review of 45 cases of potential child trafficking including 14 boys, noted ‘The access to services is another major concern. Firstly, the lack of residential centres for boys identified as potential victims of trafficking, in particular those above the age of 14 who manifest drugs and alcohol addictions. They are a difficult target group for the shelters’ staff, requiring specialised services and continuous adjustment of the Individual Protection Plan.’²⁰⁹

12.1.5 The European Commission’s Albania Report 2022 noted, in regard to VOT, that ‘Successful reintegration remains difficult because core protection, care and social services from the state are insufficient.’²¹⁰

12.1.6 The UNICEF 2022 Human Trafficking Evaluation report:

‘As of December 2021 [for the time frame between January 2020 and December 2021²¹¹], UNICEF reported that 6,357 at-risk individuals (including 4,507 females and 2,300 males) had received mental health and psychological care, and 654 individuals had received community services as per the tailored plan of interventions. By March 2022, UNICEF reported that 717 beneficiaries (including 417 males and 300 females) were identified at the community level and provided with emergency services. Among the 717 beneficiaries, 144 were PV/VoTs (including 78 females and 66 males) and 573 high-risk individuals (including 535 children and 38 adults). In addition, 341 PV/VoTs (including 314 females and 157 males) and 130 dependents

²⁰⁸ UNICEF, ‘[Interview of Child Protection Specialists at UNICEF...](#)’, 30 July 2020

²⁰⁹ OSCE, ‘[A typology of child trafficking cases in Albania](#)’ (page 36), July 2020

²¹⁰ European Commission, ‘[Albania Report 2022](#)’ (page 42), 12 October 2022

²¹¹ Haarr, R.N, ‘[Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#)’ (pages 63 to 64), November 2022

received comprehensive services as per tailored plans of intervention, and 237 PV/VoTs and their dependents were assisted by shelters. Also, 58 high-risk individuals and PV/VoTs benefited from economic empowerment programmes, of which 204 successfully completed the economic reintegration programme. To improve service delivery, 47 service providers were trained to improve their skills to support high-risk individuals and PV/VoTs.²¹²

12.1.7 UNICEF Albania, OSCE and Vatra, consulted during the Home Office FFM 2022, noted that whilst there was good legislation and policies in place to support VOT/PVOT, these were not implemented at all levels²¹³. According to Erion Prendi of SHKEJ, there was no budget to fund support services²¹⁴, whilst the official from Terres Des Hommes stated that, although Albania was doing better compared to neighbouring Balkan countries, funding for reintegration was less than half of what was needed²¹⁵.

12.1.8 In their 2020 Annual Report, D&E described their package of reintegration services provided to beneficiaries of its reintegration programme:

'Shelter, security and reintegration plan; Immediate medical assistance; Negotiation/mediation with the family; Psychological assessments and counseling; Legal support and assistance; Assistance for registration/continuation of the school system; Professional training; Social activities; Mentoring; Employment counseling and assistance; Financial support for housing; Information on services that exist in the community as well as necessary contacts/service map; Revenue-generating work programs; Assistance and support for children of victims of trafficking; Monitoring and follow-up of program beneficiaries.

'In addition to direct assistance to beneficiaries, D&E also supported the victim's family - for example, beneficiary children, assistance for a minor's parent to find work, family counseling, etc.'²¹⁶

12.1.9 An official from D&E explained to the Home Office FFM 2022 team the services it offered:

'We have a multi-disciplinary team consisting of a case manager, psychologist, doctor, teacher, lawyer, who all assess the case, make comprehensive needs assessments. Each VOT is assigned a case manager and they attend to the case from start to end until the VOT is reintegrated. After the needs assessment, the beneficiary, together with their case managers, design and follow their individual reintegration plan and the services provided are: medical assistance and psychological support to assess and reduce trauma. We provide education, vocational training and professional courses. There have also been cases where minors are placed in school following exploitation and trafficking. After the person has left the shelter we provide support for employment, counselling, opportunities in the labour market and we liaise with different businesses and different

²¹² Haarr, R.N, '[Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#)' (page 39), November 2022

²¹³ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (pages 11, 22, 68), December 2022

²¹⁴ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 83), December 2022

²¹⁵ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 93), December 2022

²¹⁶ D&E, '[2020 Annual Report](#)' (page 5), 10 September 2021

companies.

'The first stage starts with 3 to 6 months in the shelter, sometimes longer depending on security issues, or where minors cannot return home as their parents are involved in the exploitation, or they can't return to their home cities/towns due to stigma and discrimination. Even when the VOT improve their relations with parents, and they are supportive, we still provide services, for example, supporting parents if they need to find a job or assist siblings. Or support them to open a small business.

'Some women are pregnant or with children and we provide the same services. In later stages, when they are employed and do not have family support, we provide after school care for the children of VOT.'²¹⁷

12.1.10 When asked what reintegration support was offered to adult male VOT, an official from D&E indicated there was an issue with the quality of service, but told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'Men are able to access the same levels of service [as women] and can receive education and vocational training...'²¹⁸ The official from Tjeter Vizion similarly stated that, aside from access to shelters, 'In law VOT are equal and there should be no discrimination on ethnicity or gender, so men have the same access as women and girls.'²¹⁹

12.1.11 Referring to reintegration support in general, Brikena Puka of Vatra told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that:

'The state-run shelter provides only reception and rehabilitation services, not reintegration and only short term, not long term.

'But NGOs provide reintegration for women, men, girls and boys. Tjeter Vizion provide for children only. Few VOT are men but we provide housing, rented apartments, food packages, medical and psychological assistance. We have a multi-disciplinary team with social workers, nurse, doctor, psychologist, teacher and lawyer. Some cases have never gone to school and we provide support to enrol children or get them back into school.'²²⁰

12.1.12 Brikena Puka of Vatra also told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that after a VOT leaves their shelter:

'The reintegration lasts 5 years based on national standards for VOT and those at risk of being trafficked. But if the VOT after 2 years says, "I do not need any more support", she signs an agreement and they can opt out of the shelters and services. We follow up after they leave the shelter and we continue to offer support. In cases of mental health problems, we have some with more than 5 years support. In order to prevent re-trafficking we continue to offer support.'²²¹

12.1.13 An official from UNICEF Albania told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that:

'Once a person has left the shelter, support is still available. They have a cycle of support for 3 years, though this can be extended beyond 3 years,

²¹⁷ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 16), December 2022

²¹⁸ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 23), December 2022

²¹⁹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 28), December 2022

²²⁰ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 64), December 2022

²²¹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 65), December 2022

with professional support as well. This can continue with payments provided for accommodation, basic living needs, food and clothes. This is especially available to single mothers and for those in rural areas, as well as support beyond those leaving shelters.

‘Social care support for VOT includes cash benefits. Legislation exists, but there are resource and capacity constraints and for people on the ground the support is not happening.’²²²

12.1.14 When asked about reintegration support, the official from Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that:

‘... our services are not short-term but are long-term and robust. As regard children, our services are provided until they leave the shelter and they are placed in a foster family, who are often extended family members, such as grandparents, uncles and so on.

‘This applies to those children who don’t have close family. Those that do have siblings and or parents, they are placed with them.

‘What we do when we place children with foster families is support the family, and help them out with what they need, either jobs, or to be empowered or strengthened to help the child reintegrate much better.

‘In our experience reintegration is a long and tedious process which means we support them even after they are well into adulthood. Especially when these children are girls. So reintegration doesn’t end with placement into a family, it is an ongoing process until we know that they are no longer at risk of trafficking and can make it on their own.’²²³

12.1.15 An official at the Directorate of Social Services in Tirana Municipality told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that:

‘The rehabilitation and reintegration of trafficking victims requires a multifaceted approach involving different actors. Assistance to victims of trafficking is not conditioned by the victim’s desire to testify, it is provided in response to the victims’ needs and includes at least: suitable and safe housing, psychological and material assistance, access to immediate medical treatment, translation when necessary, counselling and information, especially about legal rights, assistance for presentation and consideration during the trafficker’s proceedings, access to education, professional training and employment. The services offered by the Directorate of Social Services in Tirana Municipality are:

‘a) free legal and/or psychological counselling

‘b) employment with the support of the Employment Promotion Directorate and the Tirana Regional Office

‘c) long-term housing through social housing programs that Tirana Municipality offers

‘d) support with the package of services offered in community centres.’²²⁴

²²² Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 10), December 2022

²²³ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 25), December 2022

²²⁴ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 107), December 2022

- 12.1.16 The United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) '[Infographics on Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania](#)', dated December 2021, showed the '... main data drawn from the study on "Mapping of Social Services in Albania", which presents the distribution of social care services by typology, source of funding, beneficiary groups and type of provider institution, based on administrative data collected directly from the 61 municipalities of the country.'²²⁵ According to the UNDP data, 53 municipalities had no services for VOT, and only 2% of social service beneficiaries were classified as VOT. The UNDP added that 'Four municipalities in the south of the country, Delvinë, Himara, Tepelena and Libohova, as well as the municipality of Rogozhine have no social service institutions at all.'²²⁶
- 12.1.17 Mary Ward Loreto provides support services to potential and victims of trafficking through Advice and Service Centres in the northern regions of Lezha and Rreshen, in Tirana, and the southern regions of Lushnja and Saranda. Direct beneficiaries are mostly adult men and women and they refer minors to the relevant child protection agencies and NGOs²²⁷. See [Annex A8](#) for services offered by Mary Ward Loreto.
- 12.1.18 In January 2023, the British Embassy informed CPIT that the MSF programme is funding 3 primary service providers to provide comprehensive reintegration support to an additional 140 survivors between Jan 2023 and March 2024. UNICEF signed the contract with these providers on 18 January 2023. This contract will provide assistance to identified victims of any gender or age, including returnees from overseas who wish to access support. This includes immediate and long-term support tailored to an individual's needs, comprising accommodation, medical treatment, mental health support and counselling, legal assistance, personal security, living costs and education and vocational training. The contract also sets out that the programme will support the primary service providers to innovate and advocate for sustainable resources to maintain the support they provide over the long term through the Albanian Government's National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking²²⁸.

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12.2 Financial assistance

12.2.1 The 2019 study by Ramaj noted that:

'Vocational training helped victims develop skills in cooking, tailoring, babysitting, hairdressing, or coffee machine repairing. Nevertheless, the income generated in these sectors is equal to Albania's minimum wage, which, as argued by most interviewees, is insufficient to cover basic living costs without external support. Ergo, the economic situation for trafficking victims not accommodated or financially supported by their families after leaving the shelter was particularly challenging.'²²⁹

12.2.2 The European Commission described Albania's social assistance package,

²²⁵ UNDP, '[Infographics on Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania](#)', 17 December 2021

²²⁶ UNDP, '[Infographics on Mapping of Social Care Services in Albania](#)', 17 December 2021

²²⁷ Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

²²⁸ Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

²²⁹ Ramaj K, '[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)' (page 13), 7 May 2021

noting that:

‘Social assistance (minimum income) in Albania is a non-contributory scheme covering individuals/households most in need of support. The Law 57/2019 on social assistance distinguishes between two main groups of social assistance beneficiaries:

‘a) those falling under one of the “special categories” of individuals/households in need, as identified by this law 57/2019 (e.g. children in foster care, orphan children not in institutions, households with triplets or more (i.e. households with three or more children under 18 born at the same time), victims of domestic violence and victims of trafficking); and

‘b) “poor” individuals/households who do not qualify under any of the special categories...’²³⁰

12.2.3 The UNICEF Albania July 2022 report noted that:

‘... trafficking survivors who are unemployed and have a declaration from an appropriate frontline professional that they are a survivor of human trafficking are entitled to receive ALL 9,000 [approximately £66²³¹] per month in economic assistance. However, the study identified that few survivors are accessing this economic assistance. The main reasons are that applying for economic assistance is time-consuming, the amount of such assistance is low, and the survivors may face discrimination from frontline professionals when applying for assistance.’²³²

12.2.4 The Home Office FFM 2022 team were told by officials from UNICEF Albania, D&E, Tjeter Vizion and SHKEJ that, to access state economic assistance, a person must be unemployed and prove that they are a VOT by providing relevant documentation. Some VOT were reluctant to declare their status due to stigma and discrimination²³³.

See also [Discrimination and stigma](#).

12.2.5 The European Commission reported that ‘In 2021 (up to 30 November...), there were 65,578 [social assistance] beneficiaries, of which only 1,831 belonged to the first group [those belonging to “special categories”, which includes VOT].’²³⁴ The same source noted that, though the level of social assistance had increased as of January 2022, ‘... the level of benefits remains well below the poverty risk threshold.’²³⁵

12.2.6 An official from UNICEF Albania informed the Home Office FFM 2022 team that the economic assistance provided to VOT ‘does not even cover basic living costs.’²³⁶

12.2.7 According to Ana Stakaj and Imelda Poole of Mary Ward Loreto, speaking to the Home Office FFM team:

‘The basic minimum wage in Albania is 33,000 lek a month (about 300 euro),

²³⁰ European Commission, ‘[ESPN Flash Report 2022/12 Albania: Recent developments...](#)’, April 2022

²³¹ Xe.com, ‘[Currency converter](#)’, as at 3 November 2022

²³² Davy D, UNICEF, ‘[Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#)’ (page 11) July 2022

²³³ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (pages 11, 18, 26 to 27, 79), December 2022

²³⁴ European Commission, ‘[ESPN Flash Report 2022/12 Albania: Recent developments...](#)’, April 2022

²³⁵ European Commission, ‘[ESPN Flash Report 2022/12 Albania: Recent developments...](#)’, April 2022

²³⁶ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 11), December 2022

and cheapest rent is 200 to 250 euro a month, leaving only a 100 euro to live on and with rising cost of living, it is almost impossible to live, it is moving into starvation level really. And that is for people in good jobs working in call centres. Call centres are the biggest employers for the youth. Wages in factories are even less – in sweat shops you earn 150 euro a month. But there is no alternative. And in the south they are not even declaring employees so they are not protected and recruited on the black market.²³⁷

- 12.2.8 The CLCI told the Home Office FFM 2022 team said that, in practice, the number of VOT applying for financial benefits was low due to prejudice. However, the same source stated that:

‘What I have seen in municipalities is that there are good practices and models supporting VOT to apply for support. At first they need to find and believe in the system and then when the VOT goes to the municipality office, they see an official and are asked for documents, so they need support with this too. Documentation requirements can cause barrier in getting support. Municipalities are doing their best in helping victims apply for support.

‘There are established good models of providing support for VOT to apply for help.’²³⁸

- 12.2.9 An official from UNICEF told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that resource and capacity constraints prevented the implementation of cash benefits in some areas²³⁹.

- 12.2.10 The European Commission reported that, other than a one-off payment at birth, there was no family or child benefit²⁴⁰.

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12.3 Housing and accommodation

- 12.3.1 According to an anonymous source cited in the Asylos/ARC report 2019, in regard to accommodation for male VOTs:

“There are shelters only for female victims – for males, there aren’t any shelters to accommodate them. Housing is an urgent need for many trafficked men and boys assisted in Albania. The services try to find rented apartments for them and they are accommodated in such rented apartments. They pay the rent of the apartment for a period of time and it depends case by case for the period of financial support. There have been cases that were supported for 1 year even more with the payment of the rent of apartment. This goes for men and the young boys who are 18 years old, but not for minors VoTs. In most of the cases the most basic need for them is housing.

²³⁷ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 96), December 2022

²³⁸ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 43), December 2022

²³⁹ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 11), December 2022

²⁴⁰ European Commission, ‘[ESPN Flash Report 2022/12 Albania: Recent developments...](#)’, April 2022

As most of the cases assisted are in street situations, with no stable residence, some of them came from child institutions or they have been in a street situation before they started the reintegration process, so they need housing. For the cases concerning minors and when they have a good relationship with their parents, they are sometimes supported in their family and receive services for the entire family to empower all the family of the male as VoT or potential VoT.

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

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

'Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019.'²⁴¹

12.3.2 The Asyls/ARC report 2019 added:

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

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

'Source: Anonymous source 1, written response to questions, March 2019.'²⁴²

12.3.3 The 2019 study by Ramaj reported that:

'According to the law on social housing (Ligji nr, 22-2018), Albanian trafficking victims are among the prioritized categories of vulnerable individuals in the application for government rent subsidy following their stay in a shelter. However, more than half of the practitioners argued that applying for affordable housing schemes was a tedious process, requiring numerous documents that victims were unable to secure due to their vulnerability and to matters that went beyond their control: "One of the required documents is a notarized rental contract. However, most landlords don't provide this contract ... the real estate system in Albania tends to be

²⁴¹ Asyls/ARC, '[Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#)', (page 154), May 2019

²⁴² Asyls/ARC, '[Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#)', (page 178), May 2019

informal” (SW3). The difficulties experienced by trafficking victims in gaining social housing endured even after submitting the application: “The waiting list is too long. Victims have to wait for years, without any guarantee that their application will be successful. It largely depends on the will of the Mayor” (SW7).²⁴³

12.3.4 The UNICEF Albania July 2022 report noted that:

‘Under the national legislation, [VOT] survivors may access a state housing bonus, and under this scheme, those (alongside survivors of violence) who are employed but have limited income, may receive a 50–100 per cent rent subsidy. However, the study found that very few survivors are able to access the bonus. Key challenges are that accessing the bonus requires proof of a rental tenancy agreement, which few survivors have, as well as state bureaucracy.’²⁴⁴

12.3.5 An official from the Ministry of Interior (Mol) told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that the Mol provided ‘... subsidies to VOT of trafficking to rent premises for businesses or homes.’²⁴⁵ A representative of the General Directorate for Social Services in Tirana Municipality stated that one of the services offered to VOT the Directorate included ‘... long-term housing through social housing programs...’ The representative added that ‘The housing services include rent subsidies, loan interest subsidies.’²⁴⁶

12.3.6 An official from D&E described to the Home Office FFM 2022 team some of the support it provided post-shelter, which it described as semi-independent living:

‘... where they go from shelter to a rented apartment, and we help pay rent on the apartment for one year (the cases are from all over Albania not only in Tirana). In this period D&E try to collaborate with municipalities to include the beneficiaries in the social housing programmes that they have. We help and support the VOT with the preparation of all the documents needed to profit from this programme. It can be difficult as different municipalities have different programmes and the cases are from all over Albania. We support them wherever they choose to live and to be reintegrated.’²⁴⁷

12.3.7 The official from D&E also told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that, without their support, VOT struggled to access state aid directly. ‘This is why we continue to help as we see that they have to fill in many forms or provide many documents for the service they want. They struggle to get economic aid, to profit from the housing programme, or rent leases, and we support them to provide these documents, this can be expensive, and sometimes support is needed from our lawyers.’²⁴⁸

12.3.8 The same source noted that not all VOT required shelter support, or declined it, in which case ‘... adults might be supported in a rented apartment directly

²⁴³ Ramaj K, ‘[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)’ (page 16), 7 May 2021

²⁴⁴ Davy D, UNICEF, ‘[Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#)’ (page 11) July 2022

²⁴⁵ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 57), December 2022

²⁴⁶ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 108), December 2022

²⁴⁷ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 17), December 2022

²⁴⁸ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 17), December 2022

when they enter the programme, or at home with their family.’²⁴⁹

12.3.9 Brikena Puka of Vatra told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that they provided rented accommodation for VOT, which lasted for ‘Sometimes 6 months and sometimes a year, especially when the victims have children. We do advocacy work to local authorities in order for them to provide support for victims through receipt of social housing bonus, after 6 months (or 1 year’s) support provided by Vatra.’²⁵⁰

12.3.10 The official from Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that ‘... when it comes to integration and reintegration our organisation provides to children (girls and boys) and women. Our reintegration services are provided in that individuals get a flat or apartment, are placed into families or supported to live independently.’²⁵¹ The same source stated that:

‘Regards women and girls, after they are over 18 and cannot be placed with families or foster families, we help them to find protective homes.

‘Until a while ago we provided apartments to girls aged 18 to 22 years. They were considered protected, by which we mean surveyed by our workers. These protected flats proved to be an excellent tool to integrate women and girls into society. Unfortunately we no longer have funds to run them. This leads us to the high autonomy flats provided to women aged over 22 years of age, high autonomy is accommodation with no surveillance, but we help to provide reintegration support, including help finding jobs, access to vocational training and career guidance.’²⁵² (see also [Employment](#))

12.3.11 Officials from CLCI told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that ‘Speaking of VOT and those who apply for social housing, we have good law on social housing and legal aid and all these laws that I mentioned foresee VOT as beneficiaries. In practice the number of cases applying for these benefits is low. It is not because we don’t have laws, but there is hesitation to apply due to prejudice, which makes VOT reluctant to apply for economic help, legal aid and social housing.’²⁵³

12.3.12 Ines Leskaj of AWEN told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that, generally. ‘Rents are high compared to salaries.’²⁵⁴

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12.4 Employment

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

‘Under the employment promotion law “vulnerable groups” are considered jobseekers, such as: mothers with children, persons over 50, youth under 18, long-term unemployed, persons below the poverty line, victims of

²⁴⁹ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 17), December 2022

²⁵⁰ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 64), December 2022

²⁵¹ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 25), December 2022

²⁵² Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 25), December 2022

²⁵³ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 43), December 2022

²⁵⁴ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 35), December 2022

trafficking, persons benefiting from the income support programs, unemployed mothers, divorced women with social problems, persons returning from emigration with economic problems, newly graduated, disoriented persons in the labor market, persons serving prison sentences, persons with disabilities; from Roma and Egyptian community, orphans, etc.’²⁵⁵

12.4.2 Officials from the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES) to the Home Office FFM 2022 team that:

‘Active measures in the labour office are in 3 types: employment, employment promotion (encouragement) programmes, and vocational education and training. Vulnerable groups usually participate in the third level of employability, so they are a good fit for vocational and training as well as employment promotion programmes.

‘Our services are free to job seekers. First, the job seeker comes to the labour office, second, they have an interview and a file is completed on their skills, education and so on. Based on this, the electronic system does some kind of selection and categorises into tiers:

‘Tier 1: employability is considered easier, and we try and match them to a job

‘Tier 2: employability level is not as high, but with vocational training they can possibly get jobs, or employment promotion programmes, like internships.

‘Tier 3: employability is much lower, so we cooperate with and incentivise employers to employ this group by subsidising/paying salaries and/or social/health contribution and other expenses according to the costs determined in each employment promotion programme (EPP)...

‘VOT job seekers usually score quite low because they usually have a low level of education and have been out of the labour market for some time. But by law they are considered disadvantaged whether or not they are categorised as tier 3.’²⁵⁶

12.4.3 Officials from the NAES described the vocational training provided to VOT at its Vocational Training Centres (VTC) told the Home Office FFM 2022 team:

‘Tirana has 2 training centres that are subordinate to us, one of the most successful centre[s] is called centre number 4. It has a very good cooperation with Linza, the state-run shelter, they were training VOT in nail art, manicure, pedicure and so on, as well as tailoring. During 2021, VTC Tirana 4, in collaboration with the Center for the Rehabilitation of Trafficked Women in Linza, developed a tailoring course and a manicure and pedicure course with VOT. The trainees attend the course at the Vocational Training Center accompanied by their social worker.’²⁵⁷

12.4.4 UNICEF’s July 2022 report stated, under the government’s policy and programmes to support the economic reintegration of trafficking survivors:

‘Female trafficking survivors fall under the category of “unemployed women”

²⁵⁵ Govt of Albania, ‘[11th National Report on the implementation of...](#)’ (page.6), 6 March 2020

²⁵⁶ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 111), December 2022

²⁵⁷ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 111), December 2022

in employment services. The employment promotion includes employment support for marginalised jobseekers (including trafficking survivors) for one year. This support includes paying survivors the minimum wage for six months. Another programme aiming to support trafficking survivors' economic reintegration is on-the-job training for jobseekers. Under this programme, jobseekers receive 100 per cent of the minimum wage during the duration of the four months of training. Unemployed trafficking survivors also have the right to register as job-seekers at the Albanian National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES), the government agency responsible for assisting Albanian citizens seeking employment. NAES offices reportedly prioritise jobseekers from vulnerable groups, including trafficking victims.²⁵⁸

- 12.4.5 The 2019 study by Klea Ramaj noted that while VOTs could register at the NAES, '10 professionals claimed that accessing such service was a time-consuming and demotivating process for trafficking victims: "Victims need to wait three months until their documents are processed and then normally another five months until they find a job. This gap causes financial instability, destroys their spirit, and makes them depressed".'²⁵⁹
- 12.4.6 Furthermore, Ramaj stated that
'... long-term reintegration was negatively influenced by a lack of economic sustainability and exploitative working conditions... employment was often unstable due to factors related to the employers' unwillingness to support victims' professional development or to the sporadic nature of the private businesses in which victims would find employment. According to the interviewees, trafficking victims were mainly employed as manual workers in sweatshops with poor working conditions...'²⁶⁰
- 12.4.7 The UNICEF Albania July 2022 report noted that its study '... identified some key challenges for survivors in entering and sustaining new employment, including lack of decent job opportunities in Albania, lack of interest in the jobs, lack of education, lack of affordable childcare, ongoing trauma and stigma. The study further identified that few survivors are successful in finding employment quickly after registering with the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES).'²⁶¹
- 12.4.8 Officials from the NAES told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'We don't have many VOT that are declared in labour offices and of the total number of those currently registered, they are all women... Until the end of last month [September 2022] there were 16 women registered.'²⁶² The NAES cautioned that it was up to the job seeker to declare themselves as a VOT²⁶³. Statistics provided by the NAES showed that only one registered VOT was in employment²⁶⁴.

²⁵⁸ Davy D, UNICEF, '[Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in...](#)' (pages 15 to 16) July 2022

²⁵⁹ Ramaj K, '[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)' (page 16), 7 May 2021

²⁶⁰ Ramaj K, '[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)' (page 13), 7 May 2021

²⁶¹ Davy D, UNICEF, '[Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania](#)' (page 10) July 2022

²⁶² Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 110), December 2022

²⁶³ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 110), December 2022

²⁶⁴ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 112), December 2022

- 12.4.9 The official from Key Adviser told the Home Office FFM team that through the project they had supported 240 VOT/PVOT in 2020 and 210 in 2021, 90% of whom were women. The official stated 'For these people involved in the project, 80% of them successfully completed the programme and they showed enhanced skills. In 2020 we financed 28 business ideas and 36 people were employed. In 2021 we financed 12 business ideas and 46 people were employed.'²⁶⁵
- 12.4.10 The UNICEF 2022 Human Trafficking Evaluation report referred to its partnership with Key Adviser to work on social and economic empowerment with PVOT/VOT, noting that:
- 'Empowerment initiatives were evidence-based with a focus on technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and skills building, coupled with grants to support start-up businesses and micro-businesses, and employment opportunities in the form of paid internships and jobs. Key Adviser offered a package of services that provided PV/VoTs with opportunities to be engaged in the labour market. After PV/VoTs finished a series of required trainings they were able to engage in internships for which Key Adviser paid the salary for three months, after which the businesses or companies could decide whether they wanted to employ the intern. Similarly, another implementing partner provided 18 PV/VoTs with grants for establishing mini-businesses and arranged internships and vocational training and connections with businesses that provide internships for youth. The Programme also helped to ensure that PV/VoTs registered with their local Employment Office for vocational training and job placement.'²⁶⁶
- 12.4.11 The same report stated 'To date, although the number of people employed by the Programme has not been that high, it is a beginning and people are gaining employment skills, and youth are provided with 21st century skills...'²⁶⁷
- 12.4.12 The report added that UNICEF had:
- '... documented good results with regard to social and economic empowerment. As of March 2022, UNICEF estimated that 249 families have shown reduced vulnerabilities to human trafficking and 367 adolescents (including 147 boys and 220 girls) used the knowledge and skills gained to prevent human trafficking. In addition, 1,369 adolescents were empowered through the Programme. These results, however, can be fragile given the high rates of unemployment in the target counties and the economic insecurity that many families face, particularly in light of the economic crisis caused by the global pandemic and its impact on the country's economy.'²⁶⁸
- 12.4.13 An official from D&E told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'For accessing vocational training or employment, this is not easy in some areas of Albania, even Tirana. If a person is displaced to Tirana they will need support to officially register in the civil state and to profit from the municipality

²⁶⁵ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 99), December 2022

²⁶⁶ Haarr, R.N, '[Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#)' (page 37), November 2022

²⁶⁷ Haarr, R.N, '[Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#)' (page 37), November 2022

²⁶⁸ Haarr, R.N, '[Evaluation of the Programme on Transforming...](#)' (page 38), November 2022

programmes and other services at a local level.’²⁶⁹ The same source also noted ‘We support the employment of males by collaborating with the Regional Employment Office and different business companies.’²⁷⁰

12.4.14 The official from Key Adviser told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that ‘When we talk to VOT we find that they fear they won’t be employed because they think the employers will judge them for being a VOT. However the opposite has happened. Businesses and employers were welcoming and didn’t have a problem and treated them equally, a great achievement.’²⁷¹ Similarly, the official from Tjeter Vizion stated that VOT were ‘... mostly hired in businesses or by employers known within the network of shelters. Several organisations help VOT to be employed in the private sector. Business owners no longer see VOT as criminals or prostitutes, that is people you cannot work with, they now see them as victims that need support.’²⁷²

12.4.15 In contrast, the 2019 study by Ramaj stated that ‘Six practitioners claimed that sex trafficking victims faced rejection in the job market due to discrimination: “In many cases, employers have refused to recruit victims after finding out about their sex trafficking experiences” (PSY4).’²⁷³

See also [Discrimination and stigma](#).

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12.5 Healthcare and psychological support

12.5.1 The study by Rama of 2021 found that:

‘Similar to every Albanian citizen, trafficking victims had the right to be issued a health card, which covers the expenses of basic medical services, such as blood tests or doctors’ visits... victims suffered from a host of health complications following their trafficking experience, most of which required medical treatment. Nevertheless, five interviewees suggested that the costs of such medication were not covered by the health card: “The Albanian government needs to invest on drug funds, particularly for vulnerable individuals such as trafficking victims. Medicaments are expensive, while victims’ salaries are quite low ... this situation causes discontent among victims” (MD). In addition to a lack of medications, trafficking victims were also faced with scarce psychological assistance after leaving the shelter. Even though most organizations continued the provision of counseling services after victims had been reintegrated in the community, such services were not offered by the Albanian state. Psychotherapy sessions following the victims’ exit from the shelter were infrequent. For example, one interviewee claimed that the staff of her organization would meet with the victims once in every six months after they started to live independently (SW5).’²⁷⁴

12.5.2 Quoting other sources, the Asylor/ARC report 2019 stated ‘All centres [shelters] offer “psychosocial” counseling services, but these services offer

²⁶⁹ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (pages 17 to 18), December 2022

²⁷⁰ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 20), December 2022

²⁷¹ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 100), December 2022

²⁷² Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 27), December 2022

²⁷³ Ramaj K, ‘[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)’ (page 13), 7 May 2021

²⁷⁴ Ramaj K, ‘[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)’ (page 16), 7 May 2021

very basic provision that may fall short of the individual mental health needs of a trafficker person in terms of both length of support, appropriateness and quality. Indeed, treatment is often limited to the prescription of anti-depressants and, where available, counseling is conducted by shelter staff who have no formal training in psychiatry or psychology.²⁷⁵

- 12.5.3 An official from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that:

‘Regarding protection of VOT, the 2014 law on compulsory health care insurance was enacted in 2014 and health insurance for VOT is covered by the state. This enables these individuals to become part of the public health system and reduce the burden to those who provide care. So this assistance is provided from primary health care and also includes referral and provision of secondary and tertiary care including mental health (MH) services. This is provided free and covered by the state budget to VOT, so could include medicines and intermediary diagnostic or treatment services, as well as other free of charge healthcare packages, provide by both public and non-public hospitals (as in nephrology, cardio-surgery, hearing problems, etc.). These packages are 100% financed by the Compulsory Health Care Insurance Fund and are implemented based on protocols approved by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.’²⁷⁶

- 12.5.4 According to the OSCE official, speaking to the Home Office FFM 2022 team, ‘Members of the NRM have been asking for dedicated mental health support, however there are no dedicated services, not even in the shelters. The NRM refers cases to state providers of mental health services however I doubt it is sufficient or is tailored to VOT. There are no standard operating procedures (SOPs) around the provision of mental health support.’²⁷⁷

- 12.5.5 When asked what mental health (MH) support was available to VOT, an official from D&E told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that there were a lack of specialised centres, but added that:

‘Every shelter has psychological counselling based on needs and for serious [mental health] MH problems we cooperate with psychiatric hospitals and they have qualitative programmes. Psychological support continues in each phase of the reintegration programme, from shelter into reintegration until they leave the programme. We provide art therapy and occupational therapy, which affect positively VOT by being a stress relief activity, relaxation, building creativity, self-worth and self-esteem, and continue to be an important activity for the psychological support. There are some cases with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a few cases with personality disorder who need to go further with psychological doctor.’²⁷⁸

- 12.5.6 The official from D&E further told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that long term solutions for VOT with MH problems was difficult, adding that ‘... in 2 cases when the VOT had MH problems, we tried to collaborate with social

²⁷⁵ Asylos/ARC, ‘[Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#)’, (page 162), May 2019

²⁷⁶ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 77), December 2022

²⁷⁷ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 22), December 2022

²⁷⁸ Home Office, ‘[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)’ (page 16), December 2022

services and provide appropriate accommodation, but this was hard so they stayed with us for between 3 and 5 years.'²⁷⁹

- 12.5.7 The official from Tjeter Vizion, which supports minors, told the HO FFM 2022 team that PVOT/VOT were '... provided with psychologists, social workers and doctors during their stay with us.'²⁸⁰ The official from NISMA ARSIS also noted that it provided psycho-social support to children in its care²⁸¹.
- 12.5.8 The official from Caritas Albania told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that it offered support in one of its homes for girls, 'Rozalba House', which '... represents a safe place where young woman can feel protected and respected through psycho-social recovery, giving them a new chance to reintegrate back in the community.'²⁸² Brikena Puka of Vatra stated that they provided '... psychological support and assistance for victims of trafficking and gender-based violence.'²⁸³
- 12.5.9 Officials from Kukes Municipality told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that it provided VOT with '... psychological support until we are sure the individual has fully reintegrated into society, like going back to school, working or living independently, personally or psychologically.'²⁸⁴ The Directorate of Social Services in Tirana Municipality noted that it provided support according to the needs of the VOT, which included free psychological counselling²⁸⁵.
- 12.5.10 An official from the Ministry of Health and Social Protection told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that it had established 2 national online helplines for adults and children who were victims of sexual abuse, domestic violence and trafficking, and that during 2021 it had provided 2,383 online counselling and psycho-social sessions and 827 direct counselling sessions (face to face).'²⁸⁶
- 12.5.11 Ines Leskaj of AWEN told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that, due to a need for such services, it provided mental health support through licensed therapists, though added that, in general, state-run mental health services were lacking²⁸⁷. Erion Prendi of SHKEJ, stated that 'Only psychiatric support is available from the state, but not psychological support. There is one psychologist for every 2 or 3 schools, but they are only there twice a week for 600 children. Psychological support has to be paid for. Psychologists are not free for anyone, only free psychiatric help.'²⁸⁸
- 12.5.12 The official from Key Adviser told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that there were barriers to providing psychological support and explained that:
- 'In the Albanian context psychological support is a new concept. Not just in small communities but also in wealthy and well-educated communities. Personally speaking, if you ask for psychological support in Albania people

²⁷⁹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (pages 20 to 21), December 2022

²⁸⁰ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 25), December 2022

²⁸¹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (pages 29 to 31), December 2022

²⁸² Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 50), December 2022

²⁸³ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 70), December 2022

²⁸⁴ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 62), December 2022

²⁸⁵ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 107), December 2022

²⁸⁶ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 75), December 2022

²⁸⁷ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (pages 38 to 39), December 2022

²⁸⁸ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 83), December 2022

consider you are insane. If you tell someone they need this support they feel judged and feel reluctant to accept such support. But we include psychological support in our soft skills training so they can step in if needed, this way we don't directly target beneficiaries by saying they needed psychological support, so there is a way around it. Psychological support is indispensable for these people, they need the full support and counselling.'²⁸⁹

12.5.13 In the letter to CPIT, dated January 2023, the British Embassy, Tirana, noted that the MSF programme recognised that taboos around mental health were a contributing driver of human trafficking. The letter confirmed that:

'As a result, alongside the inclusion of mental health support in reintegration services..., the programme is developing tools to engage young people actively in discussions about mental health. UNICEF has signed a contract with Together Foundation Albania to provide web-based mental health and psychological counselling services support through www.nukjevetem.al to approximately 1000 individuals/year. This dedicated psychological assistance is open to all but provided mainly to young people, as well as adults living in remote, rural or marginalised communities. The web-based service provides Q&As from an expert in the field (psychology, medicine) and real-time direct support from counsellors through the chat function. Ten 45-minute sessions are offered. After the 10th session, the individual is assessed and if direct intensive therapy is required, they are referred to psychologists in their area, including free services if needed. If no services are available, or travel is not feasible, online counselling continues.'²⁹⁰

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Section updated: 6 February 2023

13. International assistance

13.1.1 Through the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund, the UK Government has invested over £3.5m of Official Development Assistance between December 2019 and September 2022 in a programme delivered by a consortium led by UNICEF. The extended programme aims to strengthen an efficient nationwide system response to human trafficking in and from Albania with the aim of reducing its prevalence²⁹¹. See [Annex A](#) for key outcomes.

13.1.2 Since October 2022, the UK Government has signed revised Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with UNICEF and OSCE to continue the delivery of the MSF programme up to March 2025 through an investment of over £2.9m of Official Development Assistance. These MoUs (available on request) set out that the programme extension will work closely with the Government of Albania to:

- Strengthen the resilience of people identified as at risk of trafficking/retrafficking from the pull and push factors of trafficking in the four specified regions of Albania

²⁸⁹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 100), December 2022

²⁹⁰ Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

²⁹¹ Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

- Provide survivors of trafficking with quality care and protection but also empower them to voice safely their opinion and have a direct say on how to shape their future
- Invest in partnerships with state and non-state institutions, the private sector and human rights groups to strengthen high-level advocacy and facilitate legislative changes and state budgetary allocations to counter human trafficking sustainably
- Produce a scoping study identifying current capabilities, gaps and needs to investigate and prosecute human trafficking²⁹²

13.1.3 In January 2023, the OSCE provided information to the British Embassy on its internationally-funded work in Albania in regard to human trafficking:

'The OSCE Presence in Albania (the Presence) addresses trafficking in human beings (THB) through a multi-disciplinary approach, building on its long-standing support for the improvement of anti-trafficking legislation and action plans, particularly in the areas of multi-agency procedures for identifying trafficking victims and capacity development to facilitate implementation of the legal framework and OSCE commitments. Over time, the assistance provided by the Presence has evolved into a policy-to-practice strategy, and specifically, the Presence is supporting the country's policy framework for the identification, referral and assistance of victims of trafficking, with a focus on the Anti-Trafficking National Referral Mechanism Framework (NRM). It is presently offering technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior in assessing and launching the revision of the NRM, as the main institutional mechanism that assists state and non-state institutions to identify human trafficking victims and ensure their protection. In doing so, it is also addressing the nexus of technology-facilitated trafficking and migration.

'To address challenges faced when dealing with the exploitation of children in street situations, the Presence supported the State Agency for the Rights and the Protection of the Child to issue a Guidance on "Data gathering, analysis and determination of action for children at risk of exploitation or trafficking". To support its implementation, the Presence assisted in the development of a web-based database that unifies and standardizes child trafficking data collected from child protection workers and law enforcement agencies. Together, these actions have led to the development, with the Presence's assistance, of a Council of Ministers' Decision on child trafficking data collection, which will standardize institutional data on children at risk and trafficking victims.

'The Presence also prioritizes capacity development for judges and prosecutors on the effective application of victim-centred and human rights based approaches in the criminal proceedings. With funds from the UK Government, the Presence organized the first ever simulation-based training for anti-trafficking practitioners in Albania in October 2021 and a mock-trial training for students of the School of Magistrates on how to prosecute and convict human trafficking cases in February 2022. In 2021, the Presence developed e-learning anti-trafficking courses for judges and prosecutors

²⁹² Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

through the School of Magistrates and for police through the Security Academy.

'With funding from the governments of the United States, Norway and Italy, the Presence is focused on building a cohort of specialized staff for the anti-trafficking capacity building at the School of Magistrates and Security Academy, through a training of trainers approach to improve the curricula, introduce innovative training techniques in the continuous education and conduct anti-trafficking related academic research.'²⁹³

- 13.1.4 Regarding law enforcement and criminal justice and Albania's capacity to investigate trafficking in accordance with the obligation under Article 4 ECHR, the UK has funded a project delivered by OSCE to deliver simulation-based training (SBT). The OSCE provided details:

'The first Albanian human trafficking simulation-based learning initiative was prepared and delivered by the Presence for the first time in Albania for 52 multidisciplinary trainees, promoting an innovative approach to capacity building in which anti-trafficking practitioners participated in real-time simulated scenarios to identify and investigate human trafficking, improving synergy among key national stakeholders in the restoration and protection of trafficking survivors' human rights and fundamental freedoms. This training was delivered under a UK-funded project. The project increased knowledge and influenced the attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of police, prosecutors, judges, victims' advocates, social workers, and labor inspectors to deal with human trafficking cases from a human rights-based and multi-agency approach using innovative and sustainable training tools, based on written feedback from the project's beneficiaries, written correspondence with institutions.'²⁹⁴

- 13.1.5 OSCE are now delivering a scoping report:

'The Scoping Study will analyse the THB trends, starting from traditional patterns such as irregular migration that creates vulnerabilities leading to THB, to new challenges like technology-facilitated THB. The report will analyse the law enforcement and prosecution's ability to investigate and prosecute cases, institutional efforts and infrastructure for THB data collection in order to identify gaps and provide recommendations on necessary interventions to improve the law enforcement and criminal justice co-operation and capability to disrupt and prosecute offenders.'²⁹⁵

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14. Freedom of movement and reintegration

14.1 Demography and relocation rights

- 14.1.1 Albania is roughly 28,000sqkm²⁹⁶, a little larger than Wales²⁹⁷, with a

²⁹³ OSCE, [Annex A2](#), 19 January 2023

²⁹⁴ OSCE, [Annex A2](#), 19 January 2023

²⁹⁵ OSCE, [Annex A2](#), 19 January 2023

²⁹⁶ UN data, [Albania](#), no date

²⁹⁷ CIA, The World Factbook, [United Kingdom](#), updated 23 September 2022

population estimated to be between 2.8million²⁹⁸ and just over 3million²⁹⁹. The population of Tirana differs across a number of sources, ranging from just under 500,000 to over 900,000 across the 24 administrative units of the capital^{300 301 302}. Over 60% of the population live in urban areas and people continue to move to towns and cities, however in general there is a fairly 'even distribution, with somewhat higher concentrations of people in the western and central parts of the country.'³⁰³

14.1.2 Around a third of the population is estimated to be under 24, two-fifths between 25 and 54 and remainder 55 and older. Most are ethnic Albanian, around 1% other ('including Vlach, Romani, Macedonian, Montenegrin, and Egyptian') and the remainder 'unspecified'. A small majority are Muslim, while the rest are a mix of faiths, including 'Roman Catholic 10%, Orthodox 6.8%, atheist 2.5%, Bektashi (a Sufi order) 2.1%, other 5.7%, unspecified 16.2%.'³⁰⁴

14.1.3 The USSD human rights report 2021 noted:

'The constitution and law provide for freedom of internal movement, foreign travel, emigration, and repatriation, and the government generally respected these rights.'³⁰⁵ Freedom House in its report covering events in 2021 similarly noted 'Albanians generally enjoy freedom of movement, though criminal activity and practices related to historically predominant honor codes limit these rights in some areas. People are generally free to change their place of residence or employment.'³⁰⁶

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14.2 Single women and single mothers

14.2.1 The 2019 study by Ramaj noted:

'The importance of family support in attaining a successful reintegration following the victims' release from shelters was emphasized at least three times in every interview: "Family is really important, and I will bring it up in every sentence that includes the word 'reintegration'" (PSY3). All interviewees noted that supportive families were key in most successful cases of reintegration. A common view among practitioners was that apart from being a psycho-emotional support system, families can also help

²⁹⁸ UN data, [Albania](#), no date

²⁹⁹ CIA, The World Factbook, '[Albania](#)', updated 30 August 2022

³⁰⁰ UN data, [Albania](#), no date

³⁰¹ Bashkia Tiranë, '[Administrative Areas](#)', no date

³⁰² Instat, '[Population of Albania](#)', 1 January 2022

³⁰³ CIA, The World Factbook, '[Albania](#)', updated 30 August 2022

³⁰⁴ CIA, The World Factbook, '[Albania](#)', updated 30 August 2022

³⁰⁵ USSD, [Human rights report 2021](#) (section 2d), 12 April 2022

³⁰⁶ Freedom House, '[Freedom in the World 2022](#)' (G1), February 2022

victims strengthen economically by accommodating them, raising their children, or meeting their financial needs until they found a stable job. Nevertheless, reunification with the family was often prevented by early conflictual relationships that had begun before victims were trafficked and/or by the family's reluctance to accept the victims once returned.³⁰⁷

14.2.2 The official from Vatra told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that, in regard to female VOT, that 'When they have support of family the reintegration is easier for them. We, the family and institutions need to work together on reintegration for it to be successful.'³⁰⁸ The official from Key Adviser stated 'It is very difficult for VOT to make it without family support.'³⁰⁹

14.2.3 Officials from Tirana municipality told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that '... reintegration is extra hard for single mothers as they have more challenges to overcome. It's actually multi-faceted as in addition they have someone else to care for, financial issues, find a job, child care is an issue when they find a job, who will care for child? Lack of family help, or lack of a family, is an issue also.'³¹⁰

14.2.4 When asked whether women could live independently, Mary Ward Loreto representatives told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that:

'There is a huge difference between villages and cities. In Tirana there are some independent girls and women, but there are also some that are submissive to male relatives. Women and girls are mostly blamed and considered responsible for anything that happens to them by men. "Don't dress up and don't go out", so males are not considered guilty because they are just being men. This is the mentality in isolated areas, women and girls are mostly submissive and some of them are not allowed to go to school, some have arranged marriages since they were adolescent, so they cannot escape. Some come to Tirana to study and are independent here, but when they go back it is the same and they go back to being submissive.'³¹¹

14.2.5 The official from Caritas Albania told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that, in regard to women living independently, that:

'For single women with children this is a big issue, we are receiving a lot of requests for financial support and support with housing costs. It is expensive here in Tirana, they are not well educated, they have some problems with their families, and sometimes they marry someone who is not accepted by their family and so they are not supported. And so before, a lot of money from outside was received and 200 euro was enough, but now remittance is very low, and it's not easy to live in Tirana. For women victims of violence and VOT it seems impossible to integrate as they don't have the psychological ability to stay in employment.'³¹²

14.2.6 When asked by the Home Office FFM 2022 team if women VOT could live

³⁰⁷ Ramaj K, '[The Aftermath of Human Trafficking...](#)' (page 11), 7 May 2021

³⁰⁸ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 66), December 2022

³⁰⁹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 101), December 2022

³¹⁰ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 109), December 2022

³¹¹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 97), December 2022

³¹² Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 51), December 2022

independently, according to Ines Leskaj of AWEN, who said, 'It is difficult, almost impossible for women to live independently without the support of civil societies... There are few job opportunities, poor salaries unable to meet the cost of living. It is not only difficult for single women, but also for children. Social housing programmes are provided by the state, but there are not many opportunities in rural municipalities. The provision of social services to people in general is low.'³¹³

- 14.2.7 Referring to single mothers, the official from Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'It is much more difficult to reintegrate these mothers and their children because they are faced with family abandonment as well as societal rejection.'³¹⁴ An official from D&E stated that, with support, '... some cases finally live independently but it is a long process. There are financial difficulties, especially for those with children.'³¹⁵
- 14.2.8 Mary Ward Loreto representatives told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'With arranged marriage (more like forced marriage), for the communities in Albania, in the north mostly, the attitude is that woman should be married, if not she has no worth. She is created to be married and have children. She has no rights even in her own house.'³¹⁶
- 14.2.9 Brikena Puka of Vatra told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'In Albania there is a mentality in rural areas that families don't accept divorce. A family thinks when their daughter gets married she should stay with her husband despite DV [domestic violence]. The other issue is there may be no possibility for families support their daughters, because of poverty and lack of accommodation. Families do not have the resources to support their daughters due to acute financial needs.'³¹⁷

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14.3 Anonymity in Albania

- 14.3.1 The Asylor/ARC report 2019 noted the following views from interviewees:

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

³¹³ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 37), December 2022

³¹⁴ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 26), December 2022

³¹⁵ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 19), December 2022

³¹⁶ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 97), December 2022

³¹⁷ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 64), December 2022

relate always somebody through their patrilineage. “Who’s your father?” Mother’s family now matters as well, but you are always judged in terms of whether you are from a good or bad family through your parents’ lineages.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

‘Source: James Simmonds-Read, Service Manager at The Children’s Society, interview record, February 2019.’³¹⁸

14.3.2 The Asylos/ARC report 2019 noted:

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

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

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

“But the problems are not in the rented apartments but mostly in the daily

³¹⁸ Asylos/ARC, [‘Albania: Trafficked boys and young men’](#), (page 159), May 2019

activity that they do, if they go to school or their place of work, they face difficulties in the street, if they have seen the traffickers and they call the police. But the traffickers don't know the apartment where they stay."

'Source: Anonymous source 2, interview record, December 2018 and January 2019.'³¹⁹

- 14.3.3 Officials, including from AWEN, Caritas, Kukes Municipality and Key Adviser, described Albania, to the Home Office FFM 2022 team, as a small country³²⁰, with some indicating that it would be relatively easy to be located.
- 14.3.4 Brikena Puka of Vatra told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'It is not difficult to find someone, because sometimes the girls or the women are not very careful and they put themselves on social media. Even when they go to a job placement we say don't share information with those in the work place, don't share your story as you don't know about the other people, you don't have to share.'³²¹
- 14.3.5 When asked if a victim of trafficking could internally relocate to avoid being found by their trafficker, Ines Leskaj of AWEN told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that 'It is difficult. Albania is very small and it is easy for the traffickers to find what they're looking for. There is less possibility to reintegrate and have a normal life.'³²² The official from Caritas Albania indicated that it would be easy to be located and added that 'We are a very small country, we all know each other. It might not be the same trafficker, but someone from within the same network.'³²³
- 14.3.6 In regard to being located by a trafficker, the official from Tjeter Vizion told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that it was '... not so easy for the victims to be located by traffickers, however it is not always the same trafficker so some victims are re-trafficked, but not always by the same person.'³²⁴ Ines Leskaj of AWEN stated that 'Criminal groups are responsible for re-trafficking the same women they trafficked in the first place.'³²⁵
- 14.3.7 The General Prosecutors Office (GPO) told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that if a person was in fear of their trafficker they could be placed in the state-run shelter and receive state protection³²⁶.
- 14.3.8 Officials from UNICEF Albania told the Home Office FFM 2022 team that recent cyber-attacks resulted in the release of everyone's personal data³²⁷.
- 14.3.9 In a [Joint Communiqué](#) between the UK and Albania signed on 13 December 2022, the UK commits to "provide support for bolstering cyber communications security to reinforce Albanian GDPR compliance."³²⁸ The

³¹⁹ Asyls/ARC, '[Albania: Trafficked boys and young men](#)', (page 159), May 2019

³²⁰ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (pages 38, 51, 58, 62, 97), December 2022

³²¹ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 66), December 2022

³²² Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 36), December 2022

³²³ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 51), December 2022

³²⁴ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 28), December 2022

³²⁵ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 38), December 2022

³²⁶ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 48), December 2022

³²⁷ Home Office, '[Report of a FFM, October 2022](#)' (page 13), December 2022

³²⁸ UK Government, '[UK-Albania Joint Communiqué: Enhancing bilateral Cooperation in areas of common interest](#)', 13 December 2022

letter to CPIT added that 'The UK is providing support to the Albanian State Police (ASP) through a new £750,000 UK-funded cyber programme, which started in January 2023. This will help bolster ASP's cyber and communications security and resilience, with benefits for GDPR.'³²⁹

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³²⁹ Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana, 30 January 2023 [Annex A](#)

Annex A: Correspondence from British Embassy, Tirana



British Embassy
Tirana

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30 January 2023

Dear Country Policy and Information Team (CPIT),

1. Following the CPIT fact-finding mission in October 2022, you asked for an update on Albania's national response to human trafficking, especially in light of the [UK-Albania Joint Communiqué](#) signed on 13 December.³³⁰ The response below is based on our review of the 'Country Policy and Information Note Albania: Human Trafficking Version 12.0 December 2022' (CPIN), first-hand observations of British Embassy Tirana staff, conversations, correspondence and collaboration with the Albanian Government and key organisations in the field, and UK-funded projects. You can find further information and supporting evidence in the hyperlinks and annexes (attached). Unless otherwise specified, we have received written consent from third parties for disclosure of this information in the CPIN (available on request).

Modern Slavery Fund Programme

2. First, I would like to provide further information about **international assistance** (CPIN, Section 9, p. 75). Through the **Home Office Modern Slavery Fund**, the UK Government has invested over £3.5m of Official Development Assistance between December 2019 and September 2022 in a programme delivered by a consortium led by UNICEF. The extended programme aims to strengthen an

³³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-albania-joint-communique-enhancing-bilateral-cooperation-in-areas-of-common-interest>

efficient nationwide system response to human trafficking in and from Albania with the aim of reducing its prevalence. Key outcomes in this timeframe include:

- i. A stronger 'whole-of-system' approach through support to develop the Albanian Government's National Action Plan against Human Trafficking 2021-2023 ([here](#))³³¹.
- ii. Long-term reintegration services provided to over 376 victims of trafficking and 137 dependents, with over 57% of survivors reporting successful reintegration.
- iii. [Increased understanding](#) of the attitudes, drivers and challenges that survivors and service providers face in accessing/providing economic reintegration support in Albania³³².
- iv. A shared understanding of [knowledge, attitudes and practices of youth](#) regarding human trafficking in four regions of Albania (Tirana, Dibra, Kukesi and Shkodra)³³³, and of how knowledge and attitudes [are gradually improving](#)³³⁴.
- v. [Strengthened understanding](#) of the relationships between victims and human traffickers in and from Albania³³⁵.
- vi. Economic and vocational skills training for over 475 people identified as being at high risk of trafficking; support for 78 of these cases with employment opportunities, out of which 41 have started their own businesses.
- vii. Increased early identification of victims of trafficking through establishment of three mobile units working in targeted areas. The units have identified 156 potential victims of trafficking, including 112 children.
- viii. Five police stations equipped to enable sensitive interviewing and safer case handling.
- ix. Revised training manuals for law enforcement institutions, judges, prosecutors and other legal professionals and simulation-based training for first-line responders to support a multi-agency approach to combatting human trafficking. The simulation-based training, implemented by OSCE, brought together 52 professionals, including prosecutors, police officers, victims' advocates, labour inspectors, social services and child protection units. Practitioners participated in real-time simulated scenarios to identify and investigate human trafficking.

3. You can find more detail about what has been delivered under the programme at www.endhumantrafficking.al and in the [Evaluation of the Programme](#) (November 2022)³³⁶. Further information about the simulation-based training can be found at [Udhëzues praktik – Trajnimi simulues për identifikimin, referimin dhe mbrojtjen e](#)

³³¹ [VKM-nr-670-date-10.11.2021-Plani-Kombetar-Antitrafik-2021-2023.pdf](#)

³³² [Economic reintegration of trafficking survivors in Albania | UNICEF Albania](#)

³³³ [First Wave Survey Study on Youth Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices with Regard to Human Trafficking, in Four Regions in Albania | UNICEF Albania](#)

³³⁴ [Survey on youth knowledge, attitudes & practices regarding human trafficking in 4 regions of Albania | UNICEF Albania](#)

³³⁵ [Trafficked by Someone I Know | UNICEF Albania](#)

³³⁶ [End Human Trafficking; 2022 Human Trafficking Evaluation | UNICEF Albania](#)

[viktimave dhe hetimin proaktiv të trafikimit të genieve njerëzore | OSCE](#) and <https://fb.watch/bxRoiCvFOW/>³³⁷. Manuals produced for the police and judiciary respectively can be found at [Trafficking of human beings - a handbook for police officers | OSCE](#) and [Trafikimi i genieve njerëzore - manual për gjyqtarë, prokurorë dhe profesionistë të tjerë ligjorë | OSCE](#)³³⁸.

4. Following the CPIT fact-finding mission to Albania in October 2022, the UK Government has signed revised Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with UNICEF and OSCE **to continue the delivery of this programme up to March 2025** through an investment of over £2.9m of Official Development Assistance. These MoUs (available on request) set out that the Modern Slavery Fund programme extension will work closely with the Government of Albania to:
 - i. Strengthen the resilience of people identified as at risk of trafficking/retrafficking from the pull and push factors of trafficking in the four specified regions of Albania.
 - ii. Provide survivors of trafficking with quality care and protection but also empower them to voice safely their opinion and have a direct say on how to shape their future.
 - iii. Invest in partnerships with state and non-state institutions, the private sector and human rights groups to strengthen high-level advocacy and facilitate legislative changes and state budgetary allocations to counter human trafficking sustainably.
 - iv. Produce a scoping study identifying current capabilities, gaps and needs to investigate and prosecute human trafficking.
5. I would like to draw your attention to elements of this programme extension, which are of significance to the CPIN:
 - i. The CPIN outlines the **protection and reintegration services** provided by the coalition of shelters and other organisations. The UK-funded programme is funding three primary service providers to provide comprehensive reintegration support to an additional 140 survivors between Jan 2023 and March 2024. UNICEF signed the contract with these providers on 18 January 2023. This contract will provide assistance to identified victims of any gender or age, including returnees from overseas who wish to access support. This includes immediate and long-term support tailored to an individual's needs, comprising accommodation, medical treatment, **mental health support and counselling**, legal assistance, personal security, living costs and education and vocational training. The contract also sets out that the programme will support the primary service providers to innovate and advocate for sustainable resources to maintain the support they provide over the long term through the Albanian Government's National Action Plan Against Human Trafficking ([Annex A1](#)).

³³⁷ [Udhëzues praktik – Trajnimi simulues për identifikimin, referimin dhe mbrojtjen e viktimave dhe hetimin proaktiv të trafikimit të genieve njerëzore | OSCE](#); [Shikoni videon e trajnimit të simulues kundër trafikimit të genieve njerëzore në Shqipëri. Trajnimi u organizua nga Prezenca e OSBE-së më 18-21 tetor... | By OSCE Presence in Albania | Facebook](#)

³³⁸ [Trafficking of human beings - a handbook for police officers | OSCE](#); [Trafikimi i genieve njerëzore - manual për gjyqtarë, prokurorë dhe profesionistë të tjerë ligjorë | OSCE](#)

- ii. The CPIN refers to the challenges around **mental health support** for victims of human trafficking. The programme has also identified that taboos around mental health were a contributing driver of human trafficking. As a result, alongside the inclusion of mental health support in reintegration services (outlined in 5.i.), the programme is developing tools to engage young people actively in discussions about mental health. UNICEF has signed a contract with Together Foundation Albania to provide web-based mental health and psychological counselling services support through www.nukjevetem.al to approximately 1000 individuals/year.³³⁹ This dedicated psychological assistance is open to all but provided mainly to young people, as well as adults living in remote, rural or marginalised communities. The web-based service provides Q&As from an expert in the field (psychology, medicine) and real-time direct support from counsellors through the chat function. Ten 45-minute sessions are offered. After the 10th session, the individual is assessed and if direct intensive therapy is required, they are referred to psychologists in their area, including free services if needed. If no services are available, or travel is not feasible, online counselling continues.
- iii. The CPIN outlines the challenges of **stigma**. Research under the programme has also identified that harmful social and gender norms and stigmatisation of survivors are drivers of human trafficking and re-trafficking. As a result, starting in the first quarter of 2023, the programme will develop a new communication strategy that will deliver tailored and targeted messages seeking to change harmful social and gender norms across communities in the four specified regions of Albania.
- iv. The CPIN refers to the Albanian Government's **National Action Plan (NAP) for the Fight against Human Being Trafficking 2021-2023** ([here](#) [in Albanian] [Annex A1](#)).³⁴⁰ The NAP document states that it is "an instrument aimed at coordinating state and non-state actors, including international organizations, engaged in the fight against human being trafficking", and that "the mission of the NAP is to promote an effective, adequate and coordinated response to prevent and combat trafficking in persons based on international cooperation, effective inter-institutional cooperation within the country, the participation of victims/potential victims of trafficking and the involvement of civil society and community." Through the programme, UNICEF will deploy a monitoring and evaluation consultant from February 2023 to support delivery of the NAP within the Anti-Trafficking Sector in the Albanian Ministry of Interior. The consultant will assist with mid-year and yearly progress reports on implementation of the NAP, and may be involved in the early preparations for the next NAP. The Government of Albania has also requested support to meet its commitment under the NAP to establish "**an emergency and multifunctional centre in the north of the country** in cooperation with non-state partners for reintegration and support of vulnerable groups of society, at risk of trafficking, including [potential/victims of trafficking]." As a result, UNICEF will work with the Anti-trafficking Sector in the Albanian Ministry of Interior to deliver a feasibility study on the shelter before the end of March 2023. Establishment of the shelter itself will require funding.

³³⁹ [Home - NJV \(nukjevetem.al\)](http://Home - NJV (nukjevetem.al))

³⁴⁰ [VKM-nr-670-date-10.11.2021-Plani-Kombetar-Antitrafik-2021-2023.pdf](#)

- v. The CPIN refers to the risk of **re-trafficking**. As part of its efforts to strengthen the resilience of vulnerable individuals, the programme will improve access to community-based social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking in the four specified regions. UNICEF has signed contracts with Terre des Hommes to train officials at the municipal level and to coordinate with social services and employment offices to identify and reach individuals at risk and provide them with increased access to social protection, training and information about employment. This partnership is also providing technical and financial assistance to Multi-Functional Community Centres (MFCCs) in Kukesi and Shkodra, and will establish a new MFCC in Bulqiza (Dibra region) in March 2023. These MFCCs work to assist vulnerable families and individuals at risk of trafficking and refer them to additional required social services and livelihood opportunities to prevent trafficking and re-trafficking.
- vi. Regarding **Albania's capacity to investigate human trafficking** (see also paragraphs 2.ix and 6.i–ii), OSCE are delivering a scoping study that “will analyse the THB (trafficking in human beings) trends, starting from traditional patterns such as irregular migration that creates vulnerabilities leading to THB, to new challenges like technology-facilitated THB. The report will analyse the law enforcement and prosecution's ability to investigate and prosecute cases, institutional efforts and infrastructure for THB data collection in order to identify gaps and provide recommendations on necessary interventions to improve the law enforcement and criminal justice co-operation and capability to disrupt and prosecute offenders.” ([Annex A2](#)). OSCE will present preliminary findings in February 2023 with the final report due at the end of March. Subject to funding and discussions with the Government of Albania, the intention is to support delivery of its recommendations through the Home Office Modern Slavery Fund.

Other UK-Funded Programmes:

- 6. In addition to the Modern Slavery Fund programme, the UK is providing wider assistance of relevance to the CPIN:
 - i. **Supporting Albania's capacity to investigate human trafficking:** Home Office International Operations (HOIO) collaborated with the Albanian State Police in September 2022 on a public human trafficking **awareness-raising** campaign at Tirana Airport, which opened up collaboration between UK Border Force and the Albanian Border Police.
 - ii. As part of the [UK-Albania Joint Communiqué](#), HOIO and the National Crime Agency (NCA) have established with the Albanian authorities an operational UK-Albania Joint Migration Taskforce (JMTF).³⁴¹ HOIO is leading on construction of a building that will be the centre of operations for the Task Force. In January 2023, the UK began deploying subject matter experts in Organised Immigration Crime (OIC) to work in partnership with the Albania authorities to agree the structures and operating procedures for the Task Force, which will include intelligence sharing, capacity-building

³⁴¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-albania-joint-communique-enhancing-bilateral-cooperation-in-areas-of-common-interest>

and joint work including to tackle human trafficking according to identified needs.

- iii. **Reintegration:** £11.1m in grant funding for financial years 22/23- 24/25 (£3.7m per year) across ten priority countries, including Albania. The programme will be accessible to all forms of returns (both voluntary and enforced) and will include services such as:
 - a. pre-departure information;
 - b. a 'meet and greet' service on arrival at the airport;
 - c. access to temporary accommodation prior to any onward journey to a final destination;
 - d. signposting to existing local services;
 - e. support with redocumentation/identification;
 - f. and job counselling and additional support with accessing the labour market.
- iv. £8.4m three-year project in the north-eastern Albanian region of Kukesi. The project takes a whole-of-community approach, thus also reaching individuals vulnerable to human trafficking. The project aims to improve the socio-economic conditions that often drive people to migrate illegally to the UK from the North by increasing communities' resilience to pressure to migrate illegally to the UK; improving social-economic conditions and opportunities, especially for growth; and enhancing relations between communities, the private sector and local governance for local economic development. (See [Annex A3](#) for more details). Further UK funding is being sought to expand this programme and to extend it geographically to other source areas of migration, for example Dibra.
- v. **Cyber security and GDPR compliance:** the CPIN refers to the cyber-attacks Albania has suffered (CPIN, p.81). In the [Joint Communiqué](#), the UK commits to "provide support for bolstering cyber communications security to reinforce Albanian GDPR compliance."³⁴² The UK is providing support to the Albanian State Police (ASP) through a new £750,000 UK-funded cyber programme, which started in January 2023. This will help bolster ASP's cyber and communications security and resilience, with benefits for GDPR. This programme will help ensure that the close cooperation between the UK and the Albanian State Police on tackling serious and organised crime and illegal migration remains secure. The cyber programme could be expanded in the future, with further uplifts in funding, subject to agreement from the UK Government and the Albanian State Police.

Other Non-UK-Funded Programmes

- 7. Beyond the UK-funded programmes, we are aware of other projects that are supporting Albania's national response to human trafficking. For example, OSCE has provided us with the following information about their work:

³⁴² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-albania-joint-communique-enhancing-bilateral-cooperation-in-areas-of-common-interest>

“The OSCE Presence in Albania (the Presence) addresses trafficking in human beings (THB) through a multi-disciplinary approach, building on its long-standing support for the improvement of anti-trafficking legislation and action plans, particularly in the areas of multi-agency procedures for identifying trafficking victims and capacity development to facilitate implementation of the legal framework and OSCE commitments. Over time, the assistance provided by the Presence has evolved into a policy-to-practice strategy, and specifically, the Presence is supporting the country’s policy framework for the identification, referral and assistance of victims of trafficking, with a focus on the Anti-Trafficking National Referral Mechanism Framework (NRM). It is presently offering technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior in assessing and launching the revision of the NRM, as the main institutional mechanism that assists state and non-state institutions to identify human trafficking victims and ensure their protection. In doing so, it is also addressing the nexus of technology-facilitated trafficking and migration.

To address challenges faced when dealing with the exploitation of children in street situations, the Presence supported the State Agency for the Rights and the Protection of the Child to issue a Guidance on ‘Data gathering, analysis and determination of action for children at risk of exploitation or trafficking’. To support its implementation, the Presence assisted in the development of a web-based database that unifies and standardizes child trafficking data collected from child protection workers and law enforcement agencies. Together, these actions have led to the development, with the Presence’s assistance, of a Council of Ministers’ Decision on child trafficking data collection, which will standardize institutional data on children at risk and trafficking victims.

The Presence also prioritizes capacity development for judges and prosecutors on the effective application of victim-centred and human rights based approaches in the criminal proceedings. With funds from the UK Government, the Presence organized the first ever simulation-based training for anti-trafficking practitioners in Albania in October 2021 and a mock-trial training for students of the School of Magistrates on how to prosecute and convict human trafficking cases in February 2022. In 2021, the Presence developed e-learning anti-trafficking courses for judges and prosecutors through the School of Magistrates and for police through the Security Academy. [See above section on UK-funded projects]

With funding from the governments of the United States, Norway and Italy, the Presence is focused on building a cohort of specialized staff for the anti-trafficking capacity building at the School of Magistrates and Security Academy, through a training of trainers approach to improve the curricula, introduce innovative training techniques in the continuous education and conduct anti-trafficking related academic research.”

8. The CPIN refers to Albania’s **National Referral Mechanism (NRM)** and process for identifying victims and referring them for protection and reintegration services. As noted by OSCE (paragraph 7 above), reform of the NRM is underway. As outlined in the NAP, the revision is “to ensure the continued effective and efficient functioning of the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) through local, coordination

groups to ensure the continued application of standards and SOPs for the treatment of trafficked persons.” (see [Annex A1](#) and [Annex A9](#)).

Capacities

9. The [Joint Communiqué](#) refers to a potential increase in returns, “including those over the age of 18, who, have been identified by UK competent authorities as victims of modern slavery (as defined in the UK legislation) and as victims of human trafficking (as defined in the Albanian legislation)” and notes that “on return to Albania, any support needs arising for that individual and protection from re-trafficking, will be available as set out in ECAT” and the Albanian Government “assures that it will continue to implement effectively the joint commitments in the framework of ECAT and ECHR with regard to the treatment of returnees, the prevention and future identification of trafficking victims, and taking into consideration the gender specifics of the returnees.” ³⁴³
10. Regarding **Albania’s capacity** to support these returns according to need, on p.57 of the CPIN, you refer to the capacity of the shelters. Annexes A4-7 outline the overall and current (Jan 2023) capacity of the National Coalition of Shelters and the services they provide in the shelters, in accommodation provided outside the shelters, in families/the wider community.

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11. The CPIN refers to support provided by other organisations not in the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters. Please note that [Mary Ward Loreto \(Annex A8\)](#) provides support services to potential and victims of trafficking through Advice and Service Centres in the northern regions of Lezha and Rreshen, in Tirana, and the southern regions of Lushnja and Saranda³⁴⁴. Direct beneficiaries are mostly adult men and women and they refer minors to the relevant child protection agencies and NGOs. Services include:
 - i. Identification according to standard operating procedures;
 - ii. rented accommodation and assistance to access social housing programme;
 - iii. monthly food packages;
 - iv. clothes and hygiene sets;
 - v. medical assistance (costs for medications and ensuring access to healthcare);
 - vi. mental health (counselling and therapy);

³⁴³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-albania-joint-communique-enhancing-bilateral-cooperation-in-areas-of-common-interest>

³⁴⁴ [Human Trafficking Mission in Albania and UK - Mary Ward Loreto](#)

- vii. legal aid and access to free legal services;
- viii. economic reintegration including advice and guidance to attend free professional courses, coaching for employment, vacancy research and guidance, preparation and accompaniment for job interviews;
- ix. reintegration through life and soft skills training.

12. As suggested by the interviews conducted by the CPIT fact-finding mission in October 2022, we understand that to date the shelters have had the capacity to support all identified cases of victims and potential victims, although we do not have data on potential numbers of unidentified cases (CPIN, p.57.). Should there be a need to increase capacities, support in rented accommodation is scalable with the necessary funding and lead-in time to recruit and train additional staff. The shelter and support provider Different and Equal confirmed that: "it needs less than two months to recruit and fully train a new member of staff. If we have the necessary funding, we can assist and support as many cases [adult/minor males and females and accompanying children in accommodation provided outside the shelter] as are needed to be provided with services." ([Annex A4](#)).

13. Regarding capacity to **support adult male victims/potential victims**, they are already included within the overall provision and, specifically, Different and Equal, Vatra and Mary Ward Loreto provide support to adult male victims and potential victims outside the shelter, including in rented accommodation. In addition, the specific needs of male victims/potential victims are being considered as part of the feasibility study for the multifunctional centre/shelter in northern Albania.

I remain at your disposal for any further detail you require, and will update you further with any substantial developments.

Yours faithfully,

Alastair King-Smith

Alastair King-Smith

His Majesty's Ambassador to Albania

List of annexes

[Annex A1:](#)

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[Annex A2:](#) OSCE information request response

[Annex A3:](#) One-pager New Perspectives for Kukes

[Annex A4:](#) Different and Equal

[Annex A5:](#) Tjeter Vizion

[Annex A6:](#)

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[Annex A7:](#) Vatra

[Annex A8:](#) Mary Ward Loreto

[Annex A9](#)

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Annex A1

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Annex A2

Input from OSCE requested by the British Embassy for the UK Country Policy and Information Note

19 January 2023

1. Beyond the UK-funded project, could you please provide information on the other projects OSCE is implementing and contributing to Albania's response to human trafficking. The CPIN report on Albania ALB CPIN Human trafficking (publishing.service.gov.uk) mentions OSCE projects and support in page 76. We would like to include more updated information, if applicable.

The OSCE Presence in Albania (the Presence) addresses trafficking in human beings (THB) through a multi-disciplinary approach, building on its long-standing support for the improvement of anti-trafficking legislation and action plans, particularly in the areas of multi-agency procedures for identifying trafficking victims and capacity development to facilitate implementation of the legal framework and OSCE commitments. Over time, the assistance provided by the Presence has evolved into a policy-to-practice strategy, and specifically, the Presence is supporting the country's policy framework for the identification, referral and assistance of victims of trafficking, with a focus on the Anti-Trafficking National Referral Mechanism Framework (NRM). It is presently offering technical assistance to the Ministry of Interior in assessing and launching the revision of the NRM, as the main institutional mechanism that assists state and non-state institutions to identify human trafficking victims and ensure their protection. In doing so, it is also addressing the nexus of technology-facilitated trafficking and migration.

To address challenges faced when dealing with the exploitation of children in street situations, the Presence supported the State Agency for the Rights and the Protection of the Child to issue a Guidance on "Data gathering, analysis and determination of action for children at risk of exploitation or trafficking". To support its implementation, the Presence assisted in the development of a web-based database that unifies and standardizes child trafficking data collected from child protection workers and law enforcement agencies. Together, these actions have led to the development, with the Presence's assistance, of a Council of Ministers' Decision on child trafficking data collection, which will standardize institutional data on children at risk and trafficking victims.

The Presence also prioritizes capacity development for judges and prosecutors on the effective application of victim-centred and human rights based approaches in the criminal proceedings. With funds from the UK Government, the Presence organized the first ever simulation-based training for anti-trafficking practitioners in Albania in October 2021 and a mock-trial training for students of the School of Magistrates on how to prosecute and convict human trafficking cases in February 2022. In 2021, the Presence developed e-learning anti-trafficking courses for judges and prosecutors through the School of Magistrates and for police through the Security Academy.

With funding from the governments of the United States, Norway and Italy, the Presence is focused on building a cohort of specialized staff for the anti-trafficking capacity building at the School of Magistrates and Security Academy, through a training of trainers approach to improve the curricula, introduce innovative training

techniques in the continuous education and conduct anti-trafficking related academic research.

2. Regarding law enforcement and criminal justice and Albania's capacity to investigate trafficking in accordance with the obligation under Article 4 ECHR, the UK has funded a project delivered by OSCE to deliver simulation-based training

Could you please provide brief/concrete details about the SBT and the impact:

The first Albanian human trafficking simulation-based learning initiative was prepared and delivered by the Presence for the first time in Albania for 52 multidisciplinary trainees, promoting an innovative approach to capacity building in which anti-trafficking practitioners participated in real-time simulated scenarios to identify and investigate human trafficking, improving synergy among key national stakeholders in the restoration and protection of trafficking survivors' human rights and fundamental freedoms. This training was delivered under a UK-funded project. The project increased knowledge and influenced the attitudes, intentions, and behaviors of police, prosecutors, judges, victims' advocates, social workers, and labor inspectors to deal with human trafficking cases from a human rights-based and multi-agency approach using innovative and sustainable training tools, based on written feedback from the project's beneficiaries, written correspondence with institutions.

OSCE are now delivering a scoping report

The Scoping Study will analyse the THB trends, starting from traditional patterns such as irregular migration that creates vulnerabilities leading to THB, to new challenges like technology-facilitated THB. The report will analyse the law enforcement and prosecution's ability to investigate and prosecute cases, institutional efforts and infrastructure for THB data collection in order to identify gaps and provide recommendations on necessary interventions to improve the law enforcement and criminal justice co-operation and capability to disrupt and prosecute offenders.

3. Could you please send documentation related to SBT, including a review/report/video/manual and any other related document; Terms of Reference for scoping report and any other documentation you think is relevant

- Practical Handbook on How to Conduct Simulation-based Training Exercises to Combat Human Trafficking in Albania

[Udhëzues praktik – Trajtimi simulues për identifikimin, referimin dhe mbrojtjen e viktimave dhe hetimin proaktiv të trafikimit të qenieve njerëzore | OSCE](#)

- Albanian SBT:

Facebook: <https://fb.watch/bxRoiCvFOW/>

- Manual for police:

Trafficking of human beings - a handbook for police officers | OSCE

- Manual for judiciary:

[Trafikimi i qenieve njerëzore - manual për gjyqtarë, prokurorë dhe profesionistë të tjerë ligjorë | OSCE](#)

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Annex A3



Perspektiva të reja | New perspectives



The "New Perspectives in Kukes" project, funded by the UK Government aims to improve key socio-economic conditions that often drive people to migrate illegally to the UK from the North of Albania. The project is carried out by Swisscontact, in partnership with TAG; and runs between September 2022 to 31 March 2026.

The project pursues three key objectives, namely to:

-  increase communities' resilience to pressures to migrate illegally to the UK;
-  improve social-economic conditions and opportunities in Kukes County, especially for youth; and
-  enhance relations between communities, private sector and local government for local economic development.

The project is currently in its inception phase, gathering improved understanding of the dynamics of the local labour market, the entrepreneurial ecosystem, and opportunities for economic and entrepreneurship development. It also is setting up structures that will enable effective implementation.

The project will:

-  increase the employability of people who currently lack skills or access to (self) employment.
-  provide training tailored to the labour market and micro-entrepreneurship that allows people to economically prosper in Kukes.
-  work with local businesses to provide opportunities for (self) employment, or training people in innovative sectors that allow remote working (e.g. the IT sector).
-  connect businesses to micro-finance institutions, amplify opportunities for investment into the region and improves the enabling business environment.

-  The project adopts an inclusive approach to understanding and addressing key issues that influence the decisions of people and families to migrate illegally. It works with them to enhance their resilience to external pressures and empowers them to seize local economic and entrepreneurial opportunities. The project also addresses the corresponding social norms, communicates positively about opportunities, facilitates (young) people making informed life choices and promotes gender equality.
-  The project maps the business and employment opportunities in the area, among others (agro) tourism, medicinal plants, improved agro-processing or ICT-based services. It aims to cultivate local entrepreneurship, strengthen local businesses and improving their market systems. It also facilitates attracting Albanian and foreign investment that is socially responsible and sustainable.
-  The project collaborates with local and national government, to listen to citizens' and business communities' voices and be more accountable. It assists local authorities to elaborate plans and create a more enabling environment for local economic development that can harness the full potential of the people of Kukes.



Annex A4



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Different and Equal,

1. How many victims/potential victims of human trafficking do you have the total capacity to support within your current resources (budget, staff, and infrastructure)?

<i>Overall existing capacity</i>	Adult females	Adult males	Minors (please specify male and/or female)
In the shelter	15 cases (adults and minors) and 3 children		
In accommodation you provide outside the shelter	45 cases (adults and minors) and 25 their children	25 males (adults and minors)	
Other (please specify)			

2. How many are you currently supporting?

<i>Current support</i>	Adult females	Adult males	Minors (please specify male and/or female)
In the shelter	5 cases and 4 their children		3 females

In accommodation you provide outside the shelter (rented apartment, in their origin family)	26 cases and 24 their children	8 cases and 2 their children	19 females 15 males
Other (please specify)			

**3. If you had the necessary funding, could you increase your capacity?
How much would it cost per head and how long would it take?**

<i>Increasing capacity</i>	Adult females	Adult males	Minors (please specify male and/or female)
In the shelter	<i>For example you might note that it wouldn't be possible to support additional victims in the shelter without additional infrastructure</i> The capacity of the shelter is 15 cases adults and minors (2-3 their children)	<i>You might say that you don't currently provide support to adult male victims.</i> We do not run shelter for male victims. All the males are assisted in rented apartments or in their families	The minor cases in the shelter are over 15 years old
In accommodation you provide outside the shelter	<i>For example you might note that it would take x months to recruit the additional staff required and cost x per additional case for the full support and reintegration package.</i>	It needs less than 2 months to recruit and fully	

	It needs less than 2 months to recruit and fully train a new member of staff; If we have the necessary funding, we can assist and support as many cases as are needed to be provided with services.	train a new member of staff; If we have the necessary funding, we can assist and support as many cases as are needed to be provided with services.	
Other (please specify)			

4. Please outline the support packages that you provide (eg medical assistance, food, clothes, mental health care, legal assistance, professional courses etc.)

D&E provides a full package of reintegration assistance to women, girls and males victims of trafficking, sexual abuse and domestic violence through three phase's program: 1) initial crisis intervention, 2) stabilization and transition and 3) social inclusion and reintegration. The package of services includes:

- Accommodation, security, and reintegration plan;
- Immediate medical assistance;
- Intermediation/facilitation with the family of origin;
- Assessment and psycho-social counselling;
- Support and legal assistance;
- Assistance to register and attend schooling;
- Professional training;
- Social activities;
- Mentoring;
- Counselling and support for employment;
- Support for housing like subsidizing the rent and support for long term accommodation through including VoTs in social housing program.
- Information on available services in the community and respective contact information;
- Employment programs aiming to create jobs;
- Assistance and support for the children of the victims of trafficking;
- Monitoring and on-going follow up of the beneficiaries of the program.

5. The information you provide may be cited in a letter from the Embassy to the Country Policy and Information Team and may be published on gov.uk in the [Country Policy and Information Notes](#). Please confirm that you consent to the information being used in this way and/or please specify if you do not want any of the above information to be included.

We confirm the consent to the information being used in this way. Regarding the manner of identification as a source of information, we would like to be identified as organization not with our personal names

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Annex A5



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Tjeter Vizion,

1. How many victims/potential victims of human trafficking do you have the total capacity to support within your current resources (budget, staff, and infrastructure)?

The overall capacity of the TVO shelter is 18 beds, which is divided 15 beds used in normal time +3 beds are used for emergency situations. The methodology of assistance is mixed one, male and females assisted with a staff of 9 professionals composed of social workers, psychologist, teachers, and part time nurse, include here also guard and cook.

<i>Overall existing capacity</i>	Female minors	Male minors
In the shelter	9	9
Other (please specify) Mobile Unit & in distance assistance	40 cases of minors as PVoT/VoTs	

2. How many are you currently supporting?

<i>Current support</i>	Female minors	Male minors	Female adult	Male adult

In the shelter	5	4	1	
Other (please specify)	6	7	2	
Mobile Unit & in distance assistance				

3. Please outline the support packages that you provide (eg medical assistance, food, clothes, mental health care)

TVO NGO provides a full package of reintegration assistance to minors as victims of trafficking/potential victims of trafficking through three phase's program: 1) initial crisis intervention in Shelter, 2) stabilization and transition and 3) social inclusion and reintegration.

24/7 Accommodation, security, and reintegration plan;
This assistance is provided in residential center or in distance. Beneficiaries are provided with shelter accommodation, which are provided for each case on an average from 3-6 months according to their needs.

❖ Immediate medical assistance;

The TVO NGO staff in cooperation with different health institutions provide medical assistance for all the beneficiaries of the program. A health assessment is done by TVO NGO medical staff for all the cases entered in the program. Based on this assessment, the beneficiaries are provided with necessary medical visits, analysis and treatments.

❖ Support in the family of origin;

TVO staff make efforts to establish healthy relations between minors and families. Knowing the importance of functional family relations to the reintegration process of beneficiaries into the social life, mediation with the family of the beneficiaries is one of the principal services that TVO NGO provides in their program. For the cases who will be reunited with the family of origin, the assistance will be continue to be provided for the whole family.

❖ Assessment and psycho-social counseling;

The counseling sessions with beneficiaries of the program are conducted individually and in groups by the TVO NGO psychologist and social workers.

❖ Support and legal assistance;

Legal assistance is provided for minors as VoTs/ PVots through the TVO NGO lawyer and in cooperation with the other Legal Centers. All the beneficiaries are informed about their rights, and they are supported with the required legal assistance. Dedicated legal assistance is provided for the cases that had juridical processes against their traffickers.

❖ Assistance to register and attend schooling;

An education assessment is done by the TVO teachers for each of the cases entered in the program and an educational plan is build up together with the cases. The minors, are assisted to reinsert into the school mainstream and follow up.

- ❖ Social and Cultural activities;

Different social and cultural activities are organized and are planned to be organized in different environments of the country, in different youth and community centers and different excursions in other districts of Albania. During summer season, summer camps is organized for minors as PVots/VoTs

Support and economic empowerment for victims of trafficking

- ❖ Professional training;

The beneficiaries who compute 16 years old and up and are drop from the regular education system are helped by the staff of TVO NGO to identify and develop their vocational skills through consultation and insertion in vocational courses. The selection of the vocational trainings is made based on the personal skills and desires of the beneficiaries, taking as well in consideration the job placements demands of the job market. The vocational trainings are provided from VET centers of TVO as we are licensed from the Ministry of health and welfare, but also in collaboration with State Professional Training Centers but as well with private vocational training centers.

- ❖ **Assistance and support for employment;**

The beneficiaries 16 years old and up who are assisted in distance are supported in their efforts to engage in the regular job market. The beneficiaries are helped with counseling and training sessions focusing mainly on increasing their skills and abilities. This assistance is provided through the advisory cycle "Coach for employment". The purpose of this advisory cycle is to help the beneficiaries increase their skills and abilities in finding and keeping a job.

- ❖ **Internship / on job training program for beneficiaries;**

- ❖ **Support beneficiaries for opening small businesses;**

Life skills building and independency

- ❖ Support for housing like subsidizing the rent and support for long term accommodation through including VoTs in social housing program.

Young PVoTs/ VoTs who compute 18 years old and are willing to live independently are also be supported toward their economic independence - e.g. after completing vocational training and maintaining a job for some time, they move out of the shelter into protected apartments, subsidized by TVO NGO through project financing.

- ❖ **Information on available services in the community and respective contact information;**

TVO case managers provide ongoing support for the cases of the second and third phase of reintegration program, by offering them the needed information on the existing services in the community. A map on community services has been

prepared and is delivered to the beneficiaries, who are sometimes even directly accompanied by their case managers to know directly the addresses of these kinds of services.

❖ **Monitoring and ongoing follow up of the beneficiaries of the program.**

TVO staff monitors beneficiaries' progress in protected houses, in family and in distance, providing regular psycho-social assistance, counseling's or other types of support needed from them

4. The information you provide may be cited in a letter from the Embassy to the Country Policy and Information Team and may be published on gov.uk in the [Country Policy and Information Notes](#). Please confirm that you consent to the information being used in this way and/or please specify if you do not want any of the above information to be included.

We do fully agree and give our consent in using the above information

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Annex A7



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Vatra,

1. How many victims/potential victims of human trafficking do you have the total capacity to support within your current resources (budget, staff, and infrastructure)?

<i>Overall existing capacity</i>	Adult females	Adult males	Minors (please specify male and/or female)	Children of victims
In the shelter (aprox. Per year)	12 The capacity of the shelter is 16 adult and minors females per day.	-	20 female	Around 15 children of victims are supported with accommodation in the shelter In the shelter there are 4 beds for children under 4 years old.
In accommodation you provide outside the	20 women	5 men	30 minors (18 girls and 12 boys)	35- 40 children of victims per year

shelter (aprox.per year)				
Other (please specify) long – term monitoring	25	8		25 children of victims

2. How many are you currently supporting (data for January 2023)?

<i>Current support</i>	Adult females	Adult males	Minors (please specify male and/or female)	Children of victims
In the shelter	4	-	6 girls	3 (children of victims)
In accommodation you provide outside the shelter	15	1	11 (6 girls and 5 boys)	26 children of women victims
Other (please specify) in long term monitoring	20	3		17 children of victims

3. If you had the necessary funding, could you increase your capacity? How much would it cost per head and how long would it take?

<i>Increasing capacity</i>	Adult females	Adult males	Minors (please specify male and/or female)
In the shelter	<i>Actually we can support 12 victims (female adult and minors) per day, because the cost for food for victims (provided by the state) is only for 12 beneficiaries and their children. As well salaries of the staff that provide direct</i>	<i>We don't provide</i>	

	<i>assistance in the shelter, (provided by the state for 12 workers) are lower compared to the other residential centres. In this case, the total cost for services in the shelter actually is 144 000 EUR</i> <i>If we provide services for more 4 beneficiaries in the shelter (according to our capacity) and if we consider higher salaries (according to the average salary), the total cost for covering direct assistance in the shelter would be around 165 000 EUR</i>		
In accommodation you provide outside the shelter	<i>Actually total cost for services in the community are 92885 EUR for the support of 26 beneficiaries per year and their children.</i> <i>If we support a total of 60 beneficiaries per year in the community, cost of services would be around 110 000 EUR</i> <i>For recruitment of an extra staff we</i>		

	<i>need less than 2 months.</i>		
Other (please specify)	The actual budget is 236 885 EUR. The necessary budget needed for the program in shelter and community, for Vatra program is about 275 000 EUR.		

4. Please outline the support packages that you provide (eg medical assistance, food, clothes, mental health care, legal assistance, professional courses etc.)

The package of services, provided for beneficiaries in the framework of the reintegration programme are:

1. Accommodation and support in the protected shelter (24 hours service)
 2. Provision of basic needs in the shelter (food, clothing, hygienic items, etc)
 3. Medical assistance (shelter and community)
 4. Psychological assistance (shelter and community)
 5. Legal assistance (shelter and community)
 6. Mediation and support to the family members
 7. Occupational activities and cultural activities inside and outside the shelter
 8. Educational support for school for victims and their children (shelter and community)
 9. Mediation and support for vocational training (shelter and community)
 10. Provision with training toolkit (for vocation training) (shelter and community)
 11. Training for employment and on the job-training (shelter and community)
 12. Support and mediation for employment (shelter and community)
 13. Support for establishing of microbusiness (community)
 14. Financial support for rented apartment (community)
 15. Financial support with basic needs, medicines, educational items, etc in rented apartments and/or in family of origin (community)
 16. Mentoring, monitoring and support according to the needs, in long term monitoring (community)
 17. Proactive identification and referral for services by Mobile Units (community)
5. The information you provide may be cited in a letter from the Embassy to the Country Policy and Information Team and may be published on gov.uk in the [Country Policy and Information Notes](#). Please confirm that you consent to the information being used in this way and/or please specify if you do not want any of the above information to be included.

We give our consent for the information we provided, to be cited and published under the Authorities mentioned above.

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Annex A8



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Mary Ward Loreto,

1. Please could you outline the main services your organisation provides to potential and victims of trafficking. For example, food, clothes, rented accommodation, medical assistance, mental health care, legal aid, economic reintegration services...

MWL provides services to potential and victims of trafficking including:

- the initial identification according to standard operation procedures, leading to further steps for protection within the system in Albania (referral to Competent Authority, police and shelters for protection)
- Rented accommodation and assistance to benefit from social housing programs
- Food packages monthly
- Clothes and hygiene sets
- Medical assistance (covering the costs for medications) and ensuring access to health care
- Counselling and therapy for the survivors
- Legal aid and access to free legal services
- Economic reintegration through: advice and guidance in attending free professional courses, coaching for employment, vacancy research and guidance, preparation and accompaniment for job interviews
- Reintegration through Life and Soft skills Training

2. In what regions of Albania does your organisation provide these services?

MWL provides services to potential and victims of trafficking through Advice and Service Centres MWL – ASC in Lezha, Rreshen, Tirana, Lushnja, Saranda.

3. Does your organisation support adult women, adult men, unaccompanied/accompanied male minors, female minors, or all of the above?

MWL supports all of the above. The direct beneficiaries are mostly adults, while for the minors we apply the referral to child protection agencies and NGOs which target minors. Meantime, additional and complementary services are provided by MWL.

4. Within your current resources (budget, staff, infrastructure etc.) what is your total capacity to support victims/potential victims with your services (eg you are able to support x number of victims/potential victims with x services).

- Rented accommodation and assistance to benefit from social housing programs for up to 3 months = 15 beneficiaries
- Food packages monthly up to 3 months = 45 beneficiaries
- Clothes and hygiene sets up to 3 months = 45 beneficiaries
- Medical assistance (covering the costs for medications) and ensuring access to health care = 15 beneficiaries
- Counselling and therapy for the survivors = 45
- Legal aid and access to free legal services = 45
- Economic reintegration through: advice and guidance in attending free professional courses, coaching for employment, vacancy research and guidance, preparation and accompaniment for job interviews = 75
- Reintegration through Life and Soft skills Training = 30

5. Roughly how many are you supporting per year at the moment?

10 – 15 potential / victims of trafficking per year

6. We are interested in understanding what would potentially be needed to increase Albania's capacity to provide protection and reintegration services to potential/victims of human trafficking according to need and would welcome any information that you can provide that would help us with this assessment. Please provide us with any estimated information you can about what would be required to increase your organisation's capacity to support potential/victims of human trafficking with the services you provide and how long would be needed to do so. For example you might say that it would take x months to recruit and train the additional staff required and cost between x and x per additional case for a full support and reintegration package.

We estimate as crucial to support NGOs working on the prevention of human trafficking and reintegration of the survivors of trafficking with funds for direct services and support, and covering the salaries for the staff members.

A full support reintegration package for 1 survivor for 1 year = 7000 euro

Covering of payments for staff per year = 100,000 euro

A full support package for highly vulnerable/at risk to trafficking (individuals victims of domestic and GBV in poverty) for 1 year = 4500 euro

7. With your consent, the information you provide may be cited in a letter from the Embassy to the Country Policy and Information Team and may be published on gov.uk in the [Country Policy and Information Notes](#). Please confirm that you consent to the information being used in this way and/or please specify if you do not want any parts of the above information to be used in this way.

[BE Tirana: consent by Mary Ward Loreto given separately by email. Available on request.]

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Research methodology

The country of origin information (COI) in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual](#), 2013. Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

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

Sources and the information they provide are carefully considered before inclusion. Factors relevant to the assessment of the reliability of sources and information include:

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

Wherever possible, multiple sourcing is used and the COI compared and contrasted to ensure that it is accurate and balanced, and i provides a comprehensive and up-to-date picture of the issues relevant to this note at the time of publication.

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

Each piece of information is referenced in a footnote.

Full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

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Terms of Reference

A 'Terms of Reference' (ToR) is a broad outline of what the CPIN seeks to cover. They form the basis for the [country information section](#).

The Home Office's Country Policy and Information Team uses some standardised ToR, depending on the subject, and these are then adapted depending on the country concerned.

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Law on trafficking – men, women, children
- Trafficking – men, women, children
 - Prevalence
 - Risk factors
 - Forms of trafficking
- Action by the state
 - Government action to address trafficking
 - Action by the police
 - Action by the judiciary
- Assistance for victims of trafficking - men, women, children
 - Shelters
 - Financial assistance
 - Employment
 - Situation for those leaving shelters, including accommodation
- Healthcare for victims of trafficking – men, women, children
 - General
 - Mental health
- Societal attitudes
 - Attitudes to victims of trafficking
 - Attitudes to single mothers
 - Life for single women/mothers

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Version control and feedback

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- version **15.0**
- valid from **18 March 2024**

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Redacted; for Home Office use.

Official – sensitive: End of section

Changes from last version of this note

Removal of paragraph regarding the certification of cases where an asylum claim has been refused but permission to stay has been granted as a victim of modern slavery (or any other leave is granted).

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Feedback to the Home Office

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

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Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

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

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

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

Independent Chief Inspector of Borders and Immigration

1st Floor

Clive House

70 Petty France

London

SW1H 9EX

Email: chiefinspector@icibi.gov.uk

Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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