



Home Office

Country Policy and Information Note

Albania: Trafficking of women for sexual exploitation

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Preface

Purpose

This note provides country of origin information (COI) and analysis of COI for use by Home Office decision makers handling particular types of protection and human rights claims (as set out in [Introduction](#) section). It is not intended to be an exhaustive survey of a particular subject or theme.

It is split into two main sections: (1) analysis and assessment of COI and other evidence; and (2) COI. These are explained in more detail below.

Assessment

This section analyses the evidence relevant to this note – i.e. the COI section; refugee/human rights laws and policies; and applicable caselaw – by describing this and its inter-relationships, and provides an assessment of, in general, whether one or more of the following applies:

- A person is reasonably likely to face a real risk of persecution or serious harm
- The general humanitarian situation is so severe as to breach Article 15(b) of European Council Directive 2004/83/EC (the Qualification Directive) / Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iii) of the Immigration Rules
- The security situation presents a real risk to a civilian's life or person such that it would breach Article 15(c) of the Qualification Directive as transposed in paragraph 339C and 339CA(iv) of the Immigration Rules
- A person is able to obtain protection from the state (or quasi state bodies)
- A person is reasonably able to relocate within a country or territory
- A claim is likely to justify granting asylum, humanitarian protection or other form of leave, and
- If a claim is refused, it is likely or unlikely to be certifiable as 'clearly unfounded' under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002.

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

Country of origin information

The country information in this note has been carefully selected in accordance with the general principles of COI research as set out in the [Common EU \[European Union\] Guidelines for Processing Country of Origin Information \(COI\)](#), dated April 2008, and the Austrian Centre for Country of Origin and Asylum Research and Documentation's (ACCORD), [Researching Country Origin Information – Training Manual, 2013](#). Namely, taking into account the COI's relevance, reliability, accuracy, balance, currency, transparency and traceability.

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

All information included in the note was published or made publicly available on or before the 'cut-off' date(s) in the country information section. Any event taking place or report/article published after these date(s) is not included.

All information is publicly accessible or can be made publicly available, and is from generally reliable sources. 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, and
- whether the COI is consistent with and/or corroborated by other sources.

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

Information is compared and contrasted, whenever possible, to provide a range of views and opinions. The inclusion of a source, however, is not an endorsement of it or any view(s) expressed.

Each piece of information is referenced in a brief footnote; full details of all sources cited and consulted in compiling the note are listed alphabetically in the [bibliography](#).

Feedback

Our goal is to continuously improve our material. Therefore, if you would like to comment on this note, please email [the Country Policy and Information Team](#).

Independent Advisory Group on Country Information

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

The IAGCI welcomes feedback on the Home Office's COI material. It is not the function of the IAGCI to endorse any Home Office material, procedures or policy. The IAGCI may be contacted at:

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Information about the IAGCI's work and a list of the documents which have been reviewed by the IAGCI can be found on the Independent Chief Inspector's pages of the [gov.uk website](#).

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Assessment

Updated: 19 June 2020

1. Introduction

1.1 Basis of claim

- 1.1.1 Fear of persecution or serious harm by non-state actors (usually traffickers) because the person is a (potential) female victim of trafficking for sexual exploitation.

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1.2 Points to note

- 1.2.1 Only expert decision makers in the UK's Single Competent Authority can decide whether or not there are reasonable grounds to accept the person as a victim of trafficking for the purpose of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. However, both Home Office decision makers and the court are able to take factual matters into account when making their findings in an asylum claim. If it has not already been done, decision makers dealing with the asylum claim must make an appropriate referral to the National Referral Mechanism (NRM). The case will then be routed to the 'Single Competent Authority'.
- 1.2.2 The conclusive grounds decision will be included in any outstanding asylum decision made after that decision as a finding of fact on whether the person was a victim of human trafficking or modern slavery or not, unless information comes to light at a later date that would alter the finding on human trafficking or modern slavery.
- 1.2.3 The outcome of the reasonable or conclusive grounds decision is not indicative of the outcome of any asylum claim. A positive or negative reasonable or conclusive grounds decision on modern slavery does not automatically result in asylum being granted or refused. This is because the criteria used to grant asylum are not the same as the criteria used to assess whether a person is a victim of modern slavery.
- 1.2.4 When a Competent Authority has issued a positive conclusive grounds decision in a case where the person has also claimed asylum, this should be afforded appropriate weight when considering future risk of persecution. Further, where there has been a negative finding by a Competent Authority, considerable weight can be placed on this. In these scenarios, because the Competent Authority's findings are subject to a higher standard of proof and are findings as to past treatment, it remains open to asylum decision makers to make different findings for the purpose of the asylum claim and future risk.
- 1.2.5 Information for Home Office staff who are trained specialists to help them decide whether a person referred under the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is a victim of trafficking is available in [Victims of modern slavery - competent authority guidance](#).
- 1.2.6 In cases where a 'positive conclusive grounds' decision has been made, a grant of discretionary leave may be considered. For further information, see [Discretionary leave considerations for victims of modern slavery](#).

2. Consideration of issues

2.1 Credibility

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

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2.2 Convention reason

- 2.2.1 Albanian women who have been trafficked form a particular social group (PSG) within the meaning of the 1951 UN Refugee Convention because they share a common characteristic that cannot be changed and have a distinct identity which is perceived as being different by the surrounding society.
- 2.2.2 Although Albanian women who have been trafficked form a PSG, this does not mean that establishing such membership will be sufficient to be recognised as a refugee. The question to be addressed in each case is whether the particular person will face a real risk of persecution on account of their membership of such a group.
- 2.2.3 For further guidance on particular social groups, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#).

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2.3 Risk

- 2.3.1 In the country guidance case of [TD and AD \(Trafficked women\) CG \[2016\] UKUT 00092 \(IAC\)](#) (heard 30 April, 6 May and 3 June 2015 and promulgated 9 February 2016) the Upper Tribunal held that 'it is not possible to create a typical profile of a trafficked woman from Albania; trafficked women come from all areas of the country and from varied social backgrounds' (paragraph 119(a)).
- 2.3.2 The Upper Tribunal found that whereas
'... some women are lured to leave Albania with false promises of relationships or work, ... others may seek out traffickers in order to facilitate their departure from Albania and their work in prostitution abroad. Although such women cannot be said to have left Albania against their will, where they have fallen under the control of traffickers for the purpose of exploitation there is likely to be a considerable degree of violence within the relationships and a lack of freedom, meaning that such women are victims of trafficking' (paragraph 119(c)).
- 2.3.3 The Tribunal stated:

‘Re-trafficking is a reality. Whether it is a risk 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 and age and her willingness and ability to seek help from the authorities. For a proportion of victims of trafficking, their circumstances may mean that they are especially vulnerable to re-trafficking, or being forced into other exploitative situations’ (paragraph 119(g)).

- 2.3.4 Trafficking in human beings is illegal in Albania, but it remains a problem. 95 official and potential victims were identified from April 2018 to March 2019, of whom 28 were adults and 67 were minors, 60 were female and 35 male, and one was non-Albanian. At least 36 were subjected to sex trafficking (see [Prevalence: Introduction](#)).
- 2.3.5 Methods of recruitment are varied and ever changing. Kidnapping is rare; traffickers generally use false promises of marriage, employment, education or a better life abroad to lure women into prostitution. Traffickers use family or other relationships to get to know a potential victim or contact them via social media. It is not possible to provide a generalised profile of women trafficked for sexual exploitation, but women or girls with economic, health or family difficulties are at greater risk of being targeted. The Roma and Egyptian population are more vulnerable to trafficking due to a combination of factors, including poverty, insecure accommodation and a low level of education. Victims of trafficking tend to be aged 18 to 25; amongst minors, girls aged 14 to 18 are most likely to be targeted. The majority of trafficking victims are from Elbasan, Vlorë, Tirana and Fier districts, but there are victims from many other areas of Albania as well. Some women, but not all, are aware that they will be required to work in the sex industry, but believe that they will earn more money than they would in the sex trade in Albania or have more control over what they do (see [Tactics used and risk factors](#)).
- 2.3.6 Although reports relied on by the UT in [TD and AD](#) indicated that 18% of women referred to shelters had been subject to re-trafficking, Different and Equal (D&E), an NGO working with victims of trafficking, told the HO FFT in 2017 that the figure is now 4 to 5%. Retrafficking has become a less common occurrence, with a very small percentage of women willingly leaving the security of shelters or re-integration assistance and being re-trafficked. Some women are willingly re-trafficked because they see it as an alternative to domestic abuse and some because they want to leave Albania and are not aware of other options for migrating. The risk of re-trafficking must be considered according to the facts of each individual case and their individual vulnerability to re-trafficking (see [Reintegration: Re-trafficking](#)).
- 2.3.7 In light of the above, and acknowledging the suggested reduction in the likelihood of re-trafficking, the evidence does not suggest there are ‘very strong grounds supported by cogent evidence’ to justify ‘not taking into account and following’ those findings in TD and AD (see para 47 of the Court of Appeal’s determination in [SG \(Iraq\) v Secretary of State for the Home Department \[2012\] EWCA Civ 940 \(13 July 2012\)](#)).
- 2.3.8 In July 2019, the UK Upper tribunal held in [DC \(trafficking: protection/human rights appeals\) Albania \[2019\] UKUT 00351 \(IAC\)](#) that:

‘(a) In a protection appeal, the “reasonable grounds” or “conclusive grounds” decision of the CA [Competent Authority] will be part of the evidence that the tribunal will have to assess in reaching its decision on that appeal, giving the CA’s decision such weight as is due, bearing in mind that the standard of proof applied by the CA in a “conclusive grounds” decision was the balance of probabilities.

‘(b) In a human rights appeal, a finding by the tribunal that the CA has failed to reach a rational decision on whether the appellant has been the victim of trafficking, such as to be eligible for leave to remain in the United Kingdom for that reason alone, may lead the tribunal to allow the human rights appeal, on the basis that removing the appellant at this stage would be a disproportionate interference with the appellant’s Article 8 ECHR rights. This scenario is, however, of narrow ambit and is unlikely to be much encountered in practice.

‘(c) In a human rights appeal, the question whether the appellant has been the victim of trafficking may be relevant to the issue of whether the appellant’s removal would breach the ECHR [European Convention on Human Rights], even where it is not asserted there is a trafficking-related risk of harm in the country of proposed return and irrespective of what is said in sub-paragraph (b) above: e.g. where the fact of trafficking may have caused the appellant physical or psychological harm. Here, as in sub-paragraph (a) above, the CA’s decision on past trafficking will be part of the evidence to be assessed by the tribunal’.

- 2.3.9 For further guidance on assessing risk, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#). See also the [Report of the Home Office fact-finding mission to Albania](#) for further information.

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2.4 Protection

- 2.4.1 The Upper Tribunal in [TD and AD](#) held that the Albanian government had ‘made significant efforts to improve its response to trafficking in recent years. This includes widening the scope of legislation, publishing the Standard Operating Procedures, implementing an effective National Referral Mechanism, appointing a new Anti-Trafficking Co-ordinator, and providing training to law enforcement officials.’ The Upper Tribunal concluded that, although there is in general a [Horvath-standard sufficiency of protection](#), this will not be effective in every case. Decision makers must therefore consider the individual circumstances of each case before deciding whether there is sufficiency of protection for each victim of trafficking (paragraph 119(d) of determination).
- 2.4.2 The Upper Tribunal found that whether a person is at risk of persecution and whether they will be able to access sufficiency of protection from the authorities will depend upon their ‘individual circumstances, including but not limited to the following’:
- The social status and economic standing of her family
 - The level of education of the victim of trafficking or her family
 - The victim of trafficking’s state of health, particularly her mental health

- The presence of an illegitimate child
 - The area of origin
 - Age
 - What support network will be available (paragraph 119(h)).
- 2.4.3 The Tribunal added that there is a reception and reintegration programme for victims of trafficking in Albania. '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' (paragraph 119(e) of determination).
- 2.4.4 The Upper Tribunal further noted that once asked to leave the shelter, a victim of trafficking may live on her own. The challenges she will face will be significant, and will include, but won't be 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 their former traffickers. The Tribunal stated that some women would have the capacity to deal with these challenges without undue hardship, but some victims of trafficking, with difficulties such as mental illness or psychological scarring, for example, cannot reasonably be expected to live alone in such circumstances. Therefore each person's circumstances must be carefully assessed (paragraph 119(f) of determination).
- 2.4.5 Trafficking for both sexual and labour exploitation is prohibited under the law and the penalties for these offences are 8 to 15 years' imprisonment for cases involving adult victims. 30 new criminal proceedings for trafficking were registered with the Prosecutor's Office in 2017, 21 in 2018 and 25 in 2019. There were 9 final convictions in 2017, 3 in 2018 and 5 in 2019 (see [Law: Trafficking](#) and [Prosecution: General](#)).
- 2.4.6 The US Department of State's Trafficking in Persons Report 2019 found that Albania did not yet fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking, but that it was making significant efforts to do so and that it had demonstrated increasing efforts compared to the previous year. Actions taken include updating standard operating procedures for victim identification and referral, an increased allocation of funds to combat trafficking, training for Border and Migration Police, judges, district prosecutors and Supreme Court inspectors, and the adoption of action plans and a strategy to address trafficking. The European Commission found the National Referral Mechanism to be 'fully functional.' In addition, the Office of the National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinator carried out extensive awareness campaigns and provided information to the Roma and Egyptian communities. However, although the government has steadily increased funding for NGO shelters over the last four years, funding can be delayed, which hinders operations and means that NGO-run shelters have to rely on other sources for financial help. In addition, law enforcement actions, such as the investigation, prosecution and conviction for trafficking offences, are at their lowest level for four years. Law enforcement does not always apply a victim-centred

approach when dealing with potential cases of trafficking (see [Action to combat trafficking: Introduction](#), [Action to combat trafficking: Government strategies](#), [Action to combat trafficking: Training for officials](#), [Action to combat trafficking: Awareness raising](#), [Systems to deal with trafficking: National Referral Mechanism \(NRM\)](#) and [Funding and assistance for shelters](#)).

- 2.4.7 The police have standard procedures to respond to victims of trafficking. In the main, they respect the procedures for interviewing suspected victims, know how the National Referral Mechanism (NRM) works and are aware that they need to refer victims to Social Services. The police have an Anti-Trafficking Unit and interview suspected victims of trafficking in a suitable environment in order to help and respect the women involved, with the presence of a psychologist and the identification of victims carried out by Social Services. Co-operation between police and both NGOs and prosecutors has improved in the last two years. However, the police do not consistently participate in the work of mobile identification units and do not always screen potential victims of trafficking during investigations of premises used for commercial sex. On occasion, mis-identification of crimes can occur, and with an over-reliance on arrest targets, and a lack of indicators in place to measure police response to victims of trafficking, some trafficking victims may be missed (see [Effectiveness of the police](#)).
- 2.4.8 By law, the police have a duty to ensure the confidentiality of data related to trafficking victims. The database is secure, data is entered by a designated person, and only the Responsible Authority has access to it. Sources spoken to by the Home Office fact-finding team (HO FFT), which visited Albania in October/November 2017, were in agreement that unauthorised access would be difficult and is unlikely. Police provide protection at state-run shelters and NGO shelters use private security companies (see [Systems to deal with trafficking: Personal data and confidentiality](#) and [Government and NGO assistance: Security at shelters](#)).
- 2.4.9 The government is continuing to bring about judicial reforms. There has been considerable investment in the training of the judiciary, which can be corrupt and inefficient, making it difficult for trafficking victims to trust in, and seek redress from, the justice system. Unlike some previous years, no one was penalised for forced prostitution in 2018, but some trafficking victims may have been penalised due to inadequate identification. Victims of trafficking who are considered at risk of harm from perpetrators are placed in the Vatra shelter and provided with protection, both at the shelter and as they are transported to court. However, the witness protection programme is not always used effectively, with victims and their families sometimes threatened as they pursue prosecution. Victims of trafficking are exempt from paying court fees but legal aid is not always accessible. By law, victims of trafficking may obtain restitution, but in practice, no victims have received restitution (see [The judiciary](#), [Protection and assistance for victims](#), [Compensation for victims](#) and [Convictions for prostitution](#)).
- 2.4.10 There are four shelters used by victims of trafficking; three are run by NGOs, and one by the government, and together, they form the National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters. The shelters work together effectively and the

combined capacity of the shelters is sufficient to meet needs. The shelters provide assistance which includes accommodation, medical and psycho-social assistance, legal assistance, education and training, accommodation in rented premises, monitoring and follow-up, and assistance to the children of victims of trafficking. The support provided by shelters generally consists of three phases, the first crisis intervention phase lasting three to six months, the next phase of transition to independent living lasting for at least a year, and support to full independence lasting up to three years. Shelters are regularly inspected by the Albanian Ombudsman and the standard is considered to be very good. The HO FFT was told that reintegration is not always successful, but this is not an issue unique to Albania (see [National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters \(NCATS\)](#), [Capacity of shelters](#), [Standard of shelters](#), [Reception on return to Albania](#), [Phases of assistance](#)).

- 2.4.11 Victims of trafficking are provided with free healthcare; this includes mental healthcare outside shelters. In addition, shelters usually have a psychiatrist. The HO FFT were told by one interlocutor that there are few opportunities for long-term mental health support but by another that a greater level of psycho-social support is offered to those leaving shelters and that this is provided for as long as it is needed (see [Healthcare](#)).
- 2.4.12 By law, every person leaving a shelter must receive financial benefits until they find employment, although benefits are not enough to live on. The state will pay for childcare for single women. When a woman leaves the government-run shelter, the regional welfare services draw up an individual reintegration plan and the woman will be offered internships and given priority access to jobs. NGO-run shelters also facilitate access to employment and training. Shelters will also assist women to obtain social housing from the state or will subsidise or pay their rent. However, access to social assistance for those in rural areas and those in Roma/Egyptian communities was poor. The different bodies which form the Responsible Authority will track the progress of each individual and assist with their reintegration. Women are monitored for at least two years after leaving a shelter, but this period is to be lengthened if required (see [Reintegration: General](#), [Social housing](#), [Other economic help](#), [Monitoring](#)).
- 2.4.13 Further progress has been made in providing assistance for women leaving shelters since the hearing of [TD and AD](#), as described above. Women are monitored for two years after leaving a shelter, healthcare has been provided free of charge to victims of trafficking since the end of 2014, and with re-education, vocational training, rent subsidies and economic help, the risk of re-trafficking is being reduced. The government and NGOs are working to raise awareness of trafficking, particularly with young people, with a view to prevention and increased reporting and to reduce the stigma which has been traditionally attached to those who have been trafficked. Although prejudice can be an issue, it has decreased and it is possible for women to live alone, working and paying rent, particularly in Tirana (see [Reintegration](#) and [Healthcare](#)).
- 2.4.14 Decision makers should take account of the vulnerability factors mentioned by the Upper Tribunal in [TD and AD](#) which might be faced by victims of trafficking when accessing protection and reintegration into Albanian society.

The sections below provide evidence of assistance for such women, including those with children, and give an indication of how the circumstances of returned victims of trafficking would compare to the societal norms within the country:

- [Social housing](#) – for information about social housing for trafficking victims who may have been rejected by their families or who are reluctant to return to their home area.
- [Other economic help](#) – for information about assistance with food and nursery costs and benefit payments for women and their children.
- [Women living alone](#) – for information about life for a woman living alone in different parts of the country, and employment opportunities.
- [Education and training](#) – for information about education for both trafficking victims and their children.
- [Healthcare](#) – including mental health care.
- [Tactics used and risk factors](#) – includes information about the age of those at risk of trafficking.
- [Monitoring](#) – for information about ongoing support.
- [Life in Albania](#) - for information about the average educational level, wage and employment situation in Albania, particularly the situation for women.

2.4.15 The government has made significant efforts to improve its response to trafficking in recent years, and in general, is both willing and able to protect victims or potential victims of trafficking. However, this protection may not be sufficient in every case, and each case must therefore be considered on an individual basis, with the onus on the person to demonstrate that protection would not be available.

2.4.16 For further guidance on assessing the availability of state protection, see the [Asylum Instruction on Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#). See also the Country Policy and Information Note on [Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](#) and the [Report of the Home Office fact-finding mission to Albania](#).

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2.5 Internal relocation

2.5.1 In the country guidance case of [TD and AD](#), the Upper Tribunal noted that ‘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) of determination).

2.5.2 However, current evidence indicates that the situation has improved since [TD and AD](#). Although stigma can be a concern for victims of trafficking, work is being done to address it. It is possible for women to live alone in Tirana and they can relocate there; it is harder for a woman to live alone in rural

areas, although some women do manage it successfully (see [Stigma attached to victims of trafficking](#) and [Women living alone](#)).

- 2.5.3 The onus is on the person to demonstrate why they believe they would be unable to relocate to a specific town/city to mitigate any risk. Tirana, for example, is a city of at least 494,000 inhabitants, and possibly many more (see [Area of origin: determining features](#)), and there are services available there which are specifically tailored to ensure the safety and re-integration of victims of trafficking. However, each case must be considered on its individual facts.
- 2.5.4 For information about the average educational level, wage and employment situation in Albania, particularly the situation for women, see [Life in Albania](#).
- 2.5.5 For further guidance on internal relocation, see the instruction on [Assessing Credibility and Refugee Status](#). See Country Policy and Information Note on [Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](#) for further information on these subjects. See also the [Report of the Home Office fact-finding mission to Albania](#).

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2.6 Certification

- 2.6.1 Where a claim is refused, it must be considered for certification under section 94 of the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 as Albania is listed as a designated state.
- 2.6.2 Prior to consideration of certification, a person who has received a positive conclusive grounds decision must be considered in line with the guidance on [Discretionary Leave for victims of modern slavery](#). If the claim falls for refusal on asylum grounds but discretionary leave is to be granted as a victim of modern slavery (or any other leave is granted), certification will not be appropriate. If no leave is to be granted as a victim of modern slavery, certification can be considered, taking all relevant factors into consideration.
- 2.6.3 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

Section 3 updated: 29 April 2020

3. Prevalence

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 In the Albania 2019 Report, published in May 2019, the European Commission noted, 'In 2018, there have been 94 victims of trafficking (VOTs) and potential victims of trafficking (PVOTs) who were identified and assisted.'¹
- 3.1.2 The United States Department of State Trafficking in Persons Report 2019 (USSD TiP Report 2019), covering the period April 2018 to March 2019, and published in June 2019, stated:
- 'The government maintained victim protection efforts. The government and NGOs identified 95 official and potential victims [in 2018] (105 in 2017). Of these, 28 were adults and 67 were minors (49 adults and 56 children in 2017), 60 were female and 35 male (80 female and 25 male in 2017), and one was foreign (nine foreign victims in 2017). Authorities identified 93 as potential victims and two as official victims (79 potential victims and 26 official victims in 2017). The government could not provide details about the type of exploitation for all official and potential victims but at least 36 were subjected to sex trafficking, 25 to forced labor, and 27 to forced begging.'²
- 3.1.3 In June 2019, Albania provided a [response to a questionnaire from GRETA](#) (the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the Parties), in which it provided statistics of victims of trafficking (VoT) from 2015 to 2018, disaggregated to show gender, adults/minors, the form of exploitation involved, nationality and country of destination (page 47 on)³.
- 3.1.4 Home Office officials who conducted a fact-finding mission to Albania from 31 October to 7 November 2017 (HO FFM) noted that from 1 January 2017 to 25 Sept 2017, 77 victims were brought to the attention of the authorities (22 were victims of trafficking and 55 were potential victims of trafficking); 38 were adults and 39 were children; and 70 were Albanian and 7 were from other countries⁴.
- 3.1.5 The Home Office fact-finding team (HO FFT) were told that, although it appears VoT figures have decreased over recent years, sources expressed concern about the focus being on the number of cases identified rather than those who aren't, and that numbers were not being recorded adequately. The HO FFT were told of a case where the police had caught a team of traffickers with a group of girls and none of the girls were referred for

¹ European Commission, 'Albania 2019 Report,' 29 May 2019, page 35, [url](#)

² USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

³ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 47, [url](#)

⁴ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 2.1.2, [url](#)

assistance – the police claimed they were referring women only on a voluntary basis⁵.

- 3.1.6 The University of Bedfordshire and the IOM conducted a joint, 2-year research study on human trafficking, which included a shared learning event in October 2017 in Tirana involving stakeholders from civil society organisations and government agencies, such as law enforcement, childrens' services and health services; a report of this event was subsequently published in July 2018 and stated:

'Statistics on trafficking could be improved. Although statistics were available from different agencies, further work to centralize and improve these would be beneficial, including recording exploitation type. The available data on trafficking within Albania does not provide a clear picture of the nature and trends of trafficking, nor does it assist in understanding what makes people vulnerable to trafficking. The underlying data in Albania requires further work in two key respects – recording of exploitation type in national statistics and a mechanism to compare cases and statistics recorded with those from other sources such as shelters.'⁶

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3.2 Tactics used and risk factors

- 3.2.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated: 'As reported over the past five years, human traffickers exploit domestic and foreign victims in Albania, and traffickers exploit victims from Albania abroad. Albanian women and children are subject to sex trafficking and forced labor within the country, especially during tourist season. Traffickers use false promises such as marriage or employment offers to force victims into sex trafficking.'⁷

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

'Regarding the recruitment method, are mostly selected girls with divorced parents, without support or in economic and health difficulties. Initially they 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

⁵ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 2.1.4, [url](#)

⁶ Uni of Beds, IOM, 'Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...]', July 2018, page 8, [url](#)

⁷ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

results, psychological and physical violence is used. In some cases victims have denounced physical and psychological violence. [...]

'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.'⁸

3.2.3 The report on the University of Bedfordshire/IOM shared learning event held in October 2017 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. It was suggested that the National Actions Plans for these forms of abuse should be linked to human trafficking Action Plans in a more coherent way. 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.

'Recruitment methods were varied, ever changing and related to close personal and family ties. It was considered that the use of social media was a key recruitment method for trafficking alongside previous recruitment methods within close family or close social ties. There are both risk and protective factors at the household and family level and the community level.

'[...]

"“Hope” and being willing to take “risks” to find better economic and social circumstances are key factors relating to migration and human trafficking within Albania.'⁹

3.2.4 The same report 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

3.2.5 The report further stated:

'The unequal nature of gender roles and relationships have discriminated against women and made them vulnerable to violence and exploitation [...]. Families exercise considerable authority over young women in terms of

⁸ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 34, [url](#)

⁹ Uni of Beds, IOM, 'Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...]', July 2018, page 7, [url](#)

¹⁰ Uni of Beds, IOM, 'Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...]', July 2018, page 19, [url](#)

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

3.2.6 The same report also noted:

‘Places of origin for people who had been identified within the ONAC [Office of the National AntiTrafficking Coordinator] figures were mainly Elbasani, Vlora, Tirana and Fieri districts. Limited numbers of people had been identified in Berat, Korçe, Durrës, Dibër and Shkodër districts. For the first time, Gjirokastër district had seen the identification of one person. Figures from a database from the Psycho - Social Centre “Vatra” were presented at the SLE of 99 cases between 2015 and September 2017 which constitute part of 144 cases from 2014 to date. These figures represent both those formally identified as trafficked and potential cases. These cases illustrated an extensive range of places of origin, including: Vlorë, Fier, Berat, Tirana, Elbasan, Lushnjë, Shkodër, Tepelenë, Librazhd, Peshkopi, Burrel, Pogradec, Sarandë, Korçë, Skrapar, Gramsh and Durrës.’¹²

3.2.7 Several sources told the HO FFT that kidnapping was rare now as awareness has risen and trafficked women are more commonly duped into marriage or conned into jobs. Traffickers always have ready recruits because parents are keen for their children to go abroad and they are sending them younger and younger.

Different networks sell the trafficked woman on and on and the first person they encounter isn’t usually the one who will use violence¹³.

3.2.8 Anila Trimi, from the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior, told the HO FFT that people are mainly recruited through marriage, and increasingly through the use of social media. She said they are also starting to see girls recruiting girls on behalf of the trafficker: one girl shows another pictures of a ‘beautiful life.’

She explained that typical women are 18-25 year olds, but there are also younger victims. Other than that, there is no typical profile; she had seen cases from different types of background. She went on to say that there are also cases where there is some degree of agreement or prior knowledge – at least at the start. For example, some women know they will work in the sex industry. They are already working as prostitutes in Albania, but they think they will have more of the money or more control over what they do. Some are also promised better jobs and she had seen a few cases of young women being promised better education¹⁴.

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¹¹ Uni of Beds, IOM, ‘Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...],’ July 2018, page 19, [url](#)

¹² Uni of Beds, IOM, ‘Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...],’ July 2018, page 23, [url](#)

¹³ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraphs 2.11.3 to 2.11.4, [url](#)

¹⁴ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraphs 2.11.6 to 2.11.8, [url](#)

3.3 Links with organised crime

3.3.1 In November 2018, Sky News reported on the link between trafficking and organised crime:

‘Most foreign victims [in the UK] are from Albania, trafficked by a network of criminal gangs which operate across European countries, selling victims as commodities.

‘The deputy director of the NCA [UK National Crime Agency], Tom Dowdall, says the groups are particularly resilient to law enforcement.

‘He said: “Albanian organised criminal gangs are operating at the higher end of sophistication [...]. They are what we call ‘poly-criminals’ as well, so not only are they involved in organised immigration crime and trafficking but also in drug smuggling, firearms trafficking and often violent and serious organised crime.”¹⁵

3.3.2 In June 2017 the BBC published an article on Albanian organised crime, which noted, ‘Organised criminal networks are using online methods to defraud and extort, but also facilitate the abuse of children and advertise the victims of human trafficking and modern slavery.’¹⁶

3.3.3 In January 2016, EU Observer reported, ‘Thousands of women and girls have been trafficked from Albania alone to western Europe as sex slaves in the last two decades. Well-organised criminal gangs control the trafficking, sometimes with the complicity of the victims’ own family members, and launder profits by buying property back in Albania, police and experts say.’¹⁷

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3.4 Schengen and the EU

3.4.1 An undated government document setting out the Albanian National Strategy on Migration and Action Plan, 2019 - 2022, stated:

‘Emigration of Albanian citizens, in particular toward European Union (EU) countries continues despite the constant improvement of living conditions in the country, a net stable growth of the Albanian economy and constant improvement of public safety. According to INSTAT [Albanian Institute of Statistics], five factors are estimated to currently influence emigration toward the EU, including; the work opportunities abroad (84%), family reunification (4.6%), unemployment rates in Albania (4.2%), study opportunities abroad (3.5%) and other factors (3.6%). Additional pull factors are also higher quality of training and educational opportunities abroad. In turn, shortcomings of public services have served as push factors, adversely affecting migrants’ efforts and chances to return and settle in Albania.’¹⁸

3.4.2 In the Albania 2019 Report, published in May 2019, the European Commission stated that Albanian women and children are subject to

¹⁵ Sky News, “‘Sophisticated’ Albanian gangs linked to people trafficking [...]”, 19 November 2018, [url](#)

¹⁶ BBC, ‘Albanian gangs “controlling” UK drug trafficking market,’ 29 June 2017, [url](#)

¹⁷ EU Observer, ‘Albanian women trafficked in EU: abused, rejected, [...]’, 25 January 2016, [url](#)

¹⁸ Government of Albania/IOM, ‘The National Strategy on Migration [...]’, undated, page 7, [url](#)

trafficking for sexual and labour exploitation within the country and in some EU Member States¹⁹.

- 3.4.3 In the same report, the European Commission advised the Albanian authorities to ‘further step up measures to address effectively the problem of unfounded asylum applications in the EU through addressing the “push factors” behind it, improving border checks and organising information campaigns on the rights and obligations of visa-free travel, continuing the relevant cooperation and dialogue with the most affected EU Member States.’²⁰
- 3.4.4 The same report noted:
‘With regard to migration, some progress was made in improving the institutional capacity on border management and asylum. Albania signed the European Border and Coast Guard Status Agreement with the EU in October 2018. Reception capacity to deal with mixed migration flows was further enhanced. The number of unfounded asylum applications lodged by Albanian nationals in the EU has decreased but remains high and requires continuous and sustained efforts, as well as to address the phenomenon of unaccompanied minors.’²¹
- 3.4.5 With reference to the possibility of travel for Albanians within the Schengen zone, several sources told the HO FFT that people may falsely claim to have been trafficked in the hope of being granted asylum when they have actually just migrated to Europe to get work²².
- 3.4.6 See [Border crossings and trafficking routes](#) for further information on these subjects.

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3.5 Border crossings and trafficking routes

- 3.5.1 The report of the shared learning event organised by the University of Bedfordshire and IOM, which took place in October 2017, stated:
‘It was suggested by one participant that trafficking routes from Albania have remained consistent over time with the following routes outlined [those not involving the UK have not been included here]:
- Albania > Belgium > UK
 - Albania > UK > Norway
 - Albania > Greece > Italy > France > Netherlands [sic] > UK’²³
- 3.5.2 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA which stated: ‘Regarding the methodology of border crossing, in cases of prostitution, traffickers generally instruct the victims without accompanying them, but there are cases when they have traveled together legally crossing

¹⁹ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 report,’ 29 May 2019, page 35, [url](#)

²⁰ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 report,’ 29 May 2019, page 31, [url](#)

²¹ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 report,’ 29 May 2019, page 5, [url](#)

²² Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 2.2.1, [url](#)

²³ Uni of Beds, IOM, ‘Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...],’ July 2018, page 25, [url](#)

the border. In some cases, mainly in neighboring countries, border crossing is done illegally.’²⁴

- 3.5.3 The USSD TiP Report 2019 also noted, ‘BMP [Border and Migration Police] updated internal SOPs [standard operating procedures] on identification and developed daily reporting requirements on trafficking victims; however, BMP could not consistently screen migrants due to increased migrant flows and a lack of BMP officers and interpreters.’²⁵
- 3.5.4 The Government of Albania published an undated report on the National Strategy on Migration and Action Plan, 2019 to 2020, in which it noted reception arrangements at the border for victims of trafficking: ‘The procedure for the identification, referral and case management of victims of trafficking is solid and well established in the country. However, it has only been tested on foreign citizens once in the past two years. Among persons on the move, victims of trafficking alone are legally entitled to residential care services provided by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.’²⁶
- 3.5.5 The HO FFT was told by several sources that there is a system in place to create an alert for people returning to the country without the children they had previously left with; although airports are reasonably well covered in this respect, land borders are less so²⁷.

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Section 4 updated: 29 April 2020

4. Law

4.1 Trafficking

- 4.1.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted: ‘Articles 110(a) and 128(b) of the criminal code criminalized sex trafficking and labor trafficking and prescribed penalties of eight to 15 years’ imprisonment for a trafficking offense involving an adult victim, and ten 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.’²⁸
- 4.1.2 Article 110/a of the Albanian Criminal Code, which deals with trafficking in adult persons, stated:
- ‘The recruitment, transport, transfer, hiding or reception of persons through threat or the use of force or other forms of compulsion, kidnapping, fraud, abuse of office or taking advantage of social, physical or psychological condition or the giving or receipt of payments or benefits in order to get the consent of a person who controls another person, with the purpose of exploitation of prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or forms similar to slavery, putting in use or transplanting organs, as well as other forms of exploitation, both within and

²⁴ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 34, [url](#)

²⁵ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

²⁶ Government of Albania/IOM, ‘The National Strategy on Migration [...],’ undated, page 20, [url](#)

²⁷ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 2.12.1, [url](#)

²⁸ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

beyond the territory of the Republic of Albania, shall be punishable by imprisonment from eight to fifteen years.

‘When such offence is committed against an adult female person, it shall be punishable by imprisonment of from ten to fifteen years.

‘The organization, management and financing of the trafficking of persons is punished with imprisonment of from seven to fifteen years.

‘When such offence is committed in collaboration, more than once, accompanied with maltreatment and forcing the victim to commit various actions through the use of physical or psychological violence, causing serious consequences to the health or threatening his life, is punishable by imprisonment of no less than fifteen years.

‘When the offence as a consequence has caused the death of the victim, it is punished by 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 ($\frac{1}{4}$) one fourth of the punishment given.’²⁹

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

‘Albanian legislation provides for the exclusion of victims of trafficking from punishment, rather than prosecution. Specifically, Article 52 / a paragraph 2 of the Criminal Code provides that: "Persons affected by criminal offenses related to the trafficking of a person may benefit from the release of the punishment, the commission of criminal offenses during the period of trafficking and the measure who was forced to commit those acts or unlawful inactions ". there is practically no criminal prosecution against victims of trafficking for the acts they are forced to commit for trafficking purposes. The body's process argues that the victim should not be prosecuted for violations committed because of the trafficking since the will of the victim is damaged and subjective is missing in the commission of the criminal offense.’³⁰

- 4.1.4 See [Convictions for prostitution](#) for further information on this subject.

- 4.1.5 In the Albania 2019 Report, the European Commission noted that ‘The improved legislative framework for VOTs, including amendments to the Criminal Procedural Code, has yet to be implemented.’³¹

- 4.1.6 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

²⁹ Legislation Online, Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania, 27 January 1995, [url](#)

³⁰ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 21, [url](#)

³¹ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, page 35, [url](#)

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.’³²

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4.2 Prostitution

4.2.1 Article 113 of the Criminal Code which addresses prostitution, states that, ‘Exercise of prostitution is punishable by a fine or up to three years of imprisonment. Giving a payment for personal benefit of prostitution shall be punished by a fine or imprisonment of up to three years.’³³

4.2.2 Article 114 of the Criminal Code, which deals with the exploitation of prostitution, stated:

‘Encouragement, mediation, or receipt of compensation for exercising prostitution shall be punishable by two to five years of imprisonment.

‘When the same offence is committed with minors, against several persons, with persons who are close kin, close kin of the spouse, who have custodial relationships or availing themselves of their official relationship, or when committed in complicity or more than once, or by state and public officials, shall be punishable by seven to fifteen years of imprisonment.’³⁴

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Section 5 updated: 29 April 2020

5. Police

5.1 Effectiveness of the police

5.1.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted that, ‘The Albanian State Police (ASP) investigated 38 trafficking cases with 51 suspects [in 2018] (69 cases with 80 suspects in 2017); nine of these suspects were investigated for child trafficking (22 in 2017) and 42 for adult trafficking (58 in 2017). The ASP also investigated three suspects for knowingly soliciting or patronizing a sex trafficking victim to perform a commercial sex act (none in 2017).’³⁵

5.1.2 The report further noted, ‘Local police improved implementation of child-specific procedures, including consistently involving social workers and psychologists when taking official statements from children.’³⁶

5.1.3 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA, in which it was noted: ‘To protect and respect the victims of the THB [trafficking in human beings] at each police commissariat, formal interviews are conducted in a suitable environment (friendly room) to realize the VT / VMT [victim of trafficking/ vulnerable or missing or trafficked] identification. Identification is done by the employees of the regional directorates of the

³² Government of Albania, ‘National report submitted [...],’ 22 February 2019, paragraph 51, [url](#)

³³ Legislation Online, Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania, 27 January 1995, [url](#)

³⁴ Legislation Online, Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania, 27 January 1995, [url](#)

³⁵ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

³⁶ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

State Social Service in cooperation with the employees of the anti-trafficking units. For the child identification cases during the interview, there is also the employee of the Child Protection Unit.³⁷

- 5.1.4 The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted, 'ASP maintained an Anti-Trafficking Unit, which investigated trafficking in persons in addition to drug and contraband trafficking. [...] Limited resources and constant turnover within law enforcement created additional obstacles in maintaining capacity to investigate trafficking. NGOs reported improved cooperation with law enforcement and prosecutors. The BMP [Border and Migration Police] institutionalized anti-trafficking training [...].'³⁸
- 5.1.5 In the Albania 2019 Report, published in May 2019, the European Commission noted, 'Cooperation between the police and prosecutors during investigations improved and administrative procedures were simplified.'³⁹
- 5.1.6 The USSD TiP Report 2019 further noted, 'Experts reported police did not participate consistently in the mobile victim identification units despite signing a memorandum of understanding that formalized their participation. Law enforcement rarely initiated cases when civil society identified a potential victim, but ASP noted definitional differences with civil society on what constituted trafficking caused obstacles in identification.'⁴⁰
- 5.1.7 The report also noted: 'Observers continued to report police did not consistently screen individuals for potential involvement in prostitution during raids and investigations on commercial sex establishments [...].'⁴¹
- 5.1.8 See [Standard Operating Procedures \(adults\)](#) and [National Referral Mechanism \(NRM\)](#) for further information about the identification of victims of trafficking.
- 5.1.9 Various sources expressed concern to the HO FFT about the police's response to VoT. There are no indicators in place to measure police response to victims of human trafficking and the focus for police targets is on arrests made rather than identifying and referring VoT.

Caritas Albania (an NGO working in anti-trafficking) commented that although 'the police are not the best' they know how the NRM (National Referral Mechanism) works and that they have to refer victims to social services.

Although police respect the procedures for interviewing VoT (eg presence of social worker and psychologist), Caritas said that interviews are often done in public spaces in police stations. Caritas has renovated some friendly interview rooms for VoT in police stations such as in Vlore and Lezhe and provided a room with beds in Kukes, Muriqan and Durres.

Mis-identification of crimes affects convictions, there is often an over focus on one specific offence and trafficking is sometimes not properly identified.

³⁷ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 26, [url](#)

³⁸ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

³⁹ European Commission, 'Albania 2019 Report,' 29 May 2019, page 35, [url](#)

⁴⁰ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

⁴¹ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

Caritas said that the police who work on trafficking cases know the SOPs well, but others only know the basics – for example that they have to refer cases and may not recognise practical indicators of PVoT (potential victims of trafficking).

Sources the HO FFT spoke to had not experienced, or were aware of, police collusion with traffickers.⁴²

5.1.10 For details of police training, see [Training for officials](#).

5.1.11 For further information on the Police, see Country Policy and Information Note on [Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](#).

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Section 6 updated: 29 April 2020

6. Prosecution

6.1 General

6.1.1 In the Albania 2019 Report, the European Commission stated that Albania should 'strengthen its criminal justice system.'⁴³ It further stated, 'The Prosecutor's Office registered 30 new criminal proceedings for trafficking in 2017 and 21 in 2018. Most of the referrals involved adults. The number of final convictions remained very low (9 in 2017 and 3 in 2018).'⁴⁴ In a report published in March 2020, the European Commission stated that in 2019, 25 new cases of human trafficking were referred to the prosecution. It noted that there were five final convictions in 2019⁴⁵.

6.1.2 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated:

'The Serious Crimes Prosecutor's Office (SCPO) prosecuted two cases with six defendants (five cases with five defendants in 2017); three of these defendants were prosecuted for child trafficking (two in 2017) and three for adult trafficking (three in 2017). Courts convicted five traffickers (seven in 2017); four for child trafficking (one in 2018) and one for adult trafficking (six in 2017). All convicted traffickers received prison sentences; one trafficker received two years and eight months for adult trafficking and four traffickers received sentences between six years and eight months to eighteen years for child trafficking. The appeals court reviewed and confirmed decisions on five traffickers.'⁴⁶

6.1.3 The HO FFT were told that there had been 22 convictions for trafficking in 2016.⁴⁷

6.1.4 In June 2019, Albania provided a [response to a GRETA questionnaire](#)⁴⁸ which included details of investigations, prosecutions and convictions of cases of trafficking (page 50 on).

⁴² Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraphs 2.4.1 to 2.4.5, [url](#)

⁴³ European Commission, 'Albania 2019 Report,' 29 May 2019, page 35, [url](#)

⁴⁴ European Commission, 'Albania 2019 Report,' 29 May 2019, page 35, [url](#)

⁴⁵ European Commission, 'Update on the Republic of Albania,' 2 March 2020, page 6, [url](#)

⁴⁶ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

⁴⁷ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 2.15, [url](#)

⁴⁸ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 50, [url](#)

6.2 The judiciary

6.2.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted:

‘The government continued judicial reforms that will eventually change court jurisdiction for trafficking cases, including transferring cases not related to organized crime from the Serious Crimes Court to district courts. However, SCPO [The Serious Crimes Prosecutor’s Office] reported district prosecutors did not have the experience and capacity to prosecute adequately trafficking cases. Authorities reported confusion between 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.’⁴⁹

6.2.2 The HO FFT were told that UN agencies have invested considerably in the training of the judiciary which is arguably the weakest part of the system. Traffickers have been able to escape justice due to its corruption or inefficiency. This makes it difficult for the victims to trust in, and seek redress from, the justice system. There is hope that the on-going justice reform and the vetting process of the judges and prosecutors will improve the judicial system⁵⁰.

6.2.3 Several sources told the HO FFT that the Serious Crimes Court will no longer deal with trafficking cases; they are being decentralised and trafficking cases will now be tried at district courts and there are concerns about the professionalism and suitability of these courts. The Mol clarified this, saying that if a single person is accused of trafficking this will be tried at a local level, but if it is more structured – a group - this will remain with the Serious Crimes Court⁵¹.

6.2.4 See [Corruption](#) for further information on this subject. For further information on the Judiciary, see Country Policy and Information Note on [Background information, including actors of protection and internal relocation](#).

6.3 Protection and assistance for victims

6.3.1 Albania submitted a [response](#) in June 2019 to a questionnaire from GRETA which provided comprehensive information about the rights of victims of trafficking and the support available to them as they deal with the justice system⁵² (page 16, page 22 on).

6.3.2 Albania’s response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire further stated: ‘With the entering in the program, all the cases that have collaborated with justice institutions, and have denounced traffickers, perpetrators, are intermediated and assisted by centre’s lawyers during all the process, from the denouncement, investigation and in the court till the end of the court procedures. centre’s staff also (lawyers), assist victims during their civil

⁴⁹ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

⁵⁰ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 2.6.1, [url](#)

⁵¹ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 2.6.2, [url](#)

⁵² CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, [url](#)

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.’⁵³

6.3.3 The same report provided information about legal aid:

‘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.’⁵⁴

6.3.4 The same [response to the GRETA questionnaire](#) included details of legal aid provided, and the number of recipients, at page 49⁵⁵.

6.3.5 The same report 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.’⁵⁶

6.3.6 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated, ‘Law enforcement did not consistently offer sufficient security and support, and victims and their families received threats during court proceedings. SCPO possessed equipment that allowed

⁵³ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 5, [url](#)

⁵⁴ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 6, [url](#)

⁵⁵ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 49, [url](#)

⁵⁶ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 23, [url](#)

testimony via video conferences, which was used in one case. Victims who testified against traffickers had access to the witness protection program; none participated in the program (one in 2017).⁵⁷

- 6.3.7 The same report noted: ‘Five victims cooperated with law enforcement in investigations and prosecutions (23 in 2017); however, the government did not consistently apply a victim-centered approach to investigations and prosecutions. [...] The government issued implementing legislation on providing free legal aid and funded victim coordinators in every prosecution office starting in 2019; prosecution offices hired five victim coordinators.’⁵⁸
- 6.3.8 Caritas told the HO FFT that as there is no protection programme available for VoT whilst a trial is proceeding victims can be too scared to make a denunciation of a trafficker. Diocesan Caritases operating in the north of Albania have centres where the VoT can stay with nuns until their case is concluded⁵⁹. The HO FFT was also told by several sources that the witness protection scheme was not used effectively and there was just one person using it at the time of the fact-finding mission (October/November 2017)⁶⁰.
- 6.3.9 The collaborative report from the University of Bedfordshire and IOM of July 2018 stated that there was a lack of access to free legal aid and access to justice mechanisms for victims of trafficking⁶¹.
- 6.3.10 [Albania's response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire](#) also provided full information about the treatment of child victims of trafficking (page 26 on)⁶².

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6.4 Compensation for victims

- 6.4.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated: ‘Victims could obtain restitution from the government or file civil suits against traffickers; no victims have received restitution.’⁶³
- 6.4.2 The HO FFT was told by several sources said that although compensation for victims is recognised in law, it doesn’t really happen in practice: if someone is awarded money from a trafficker often the government can’t find the perpetrator to seize the money. However, The Tirana Legal Aid Society noted that, ‘Legislation has gone through major changes, and in our opinion this expands the victims’ rights. This is a good thing. Contains elements that were missing before, like demanding compensation.’⁶⁴
- 6.4.3 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA which stated:

‘In addition to written laws, in practice, there are no cases that have ended with an effective compensation payment to victims of trafficking. There are

⁵⁷ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

⁵⁸ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

⁵⁹ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 2.6.3, [url](#)

⁶⁰ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 2.14.1, [url](#)

⁶¹ Uni of Beds, IOM, ‘Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...]’, July 2018, page 8, [url](#)

⁶² CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 26, [url](#)

⁶³ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

⁶⁴ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraphs 2.7.1 to 2.7.2, [url](#)

only two cases with a decision Court in favor of the victim: The first decision was taken at Tirana District Court no. 1202, dated 19.02.2010. According to this decision, the victim for the quality of the civil lawsuit has received the right of compensation in the amount of 40,000 euros as a result of the non-proprietary property damage. There is also a recent case assisted by the Court by D&E Organizations in cooperation with the Center for Civic Initiatives, which ended with a decision in favor of the victim, the decision of the Tirana District Court no. 4432 dated 16.05.2018. According to the decision, the victim has the right to be compensated in the amount of €44,000. The process started on 31.08.2016 and ended in the first instance on 16.05.2018. The matter has been appealed by the perpetrator's lawyer and still continues at the Court of Appeals.⁶⁵

- 6.4.4 The same response noted that '[...] within 2019 there will be a special fund for compensation of victims of trafficking.'⁶⁶

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6.5 Avenue of redress

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

'Ombudsman Institution, in order to prevent any case of human rights violations and to protect them, including children, besides the classic process of guaranteeing the right of citizens to complain to the institution, has worked firmly in terms of finding the right and proper mechanisms, to ensure and guarantee in this case a proactive approach of all citizens. Such we can mention: online portal, phone, smartphone application, real-time complaint / request, and postal service.

'Likewise, to be inclusive and with a wide geographical spread, Ombudsman Institution operates seven regional offices in our country, which promote human rights, as well as contact with citizens to identify violations of their rights from bodies of the state administration.

'Also, the possibility of dealing with child-initiated cases and conducting various inspections in public administration institutions that provide public services such as health, education, social services, institutions of deprivation of liberty, etc., are the functional duties of the Ombudsman Institution, which have made it possible to increase the visibility on the ground.

'In any case, appeals to Ombudsman Institution are free of charge [...].'⁶⁷

- 6.5.2 Further information about avenues of redress is available in [Albania's response to GRETA, June 2019](#).

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6.6 Convictions for prostitution

- 6.6.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted: 'Unlike some previous years, the government did not knowingly penalize victims [for forced prostitution], but

⁶⁵ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 10, [url](#)

⁶⁶ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 11, [url](#)

⁶⁷ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 17, [url](#)

may have penalized some trafficking victims due to inadequate identification efforts.’⁶⁸

- 6.6.2 See [Law](#) for information about legal provision to protect victims of trafficking from punishment as a result of being trafficked.

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Section 7 updated: 29 April 2020

7. Action to combat trafficking

7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated:

‘The Government of Albania does not fully meet the minimum standards for the elimination of trafficking but is making significant efforts to do so. The government demonstrated overall increasing efforts compared to the previous reporting period; therefore Albania remained on Tier 2 [this indicates that the government does not fully meet the TVPA’s (Trafficking Victim’s Protection Act’s) minimum standards but is making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance with those standards⁶⁹].

‘These efforts included updating standard operating procedures (SOPs) for victim identification and referral, allocating funding for victim coordinators in every prosecution office starting in 2019, and institutionalizing training on trafficking within the Border and Migration Police (BMP). The government also doubled the budget for the Office of the National AntiTrafficking Coordinator (ONAC) and adopted the 2018-2020 national action plan.

‘However, the government did not meet the minimum standards in several key areas. The government continued to investigate, prosecute, and convict fewer cases, leading to the lowest level of reported law enforcement actions in four years. Additionally, the government lacked proactive identification efforts and law enforcement, in particular, did not consistently participate in mobile victim identification units or consistently screen vulnerable populations. The government continued to delay funding for NGO-run shelters and did not consistently apply victim-centered approaches to investigations and prosecutions.’⁷⁰

7.1.2 The USSD TiP Report 2019 contained the following recommendations for Albania:

- ‘Vigorously investigate, prosecute, and convict traffickers - including complicit officials - under Articles 110(a) and 128(b) of the criminal code.
- ‘Institutionalize and provide training for law enforcement, prosecutors, and judicial officials, particularly district prosecutors, on investigating, prosecuting, and trying trafficking cases, including guidance on overlapping elements of exploitation of prostitution and trafficking.

⁶⁸ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

⁶⁹ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 36, [url](#)

⁷⁰ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 61, [url](#)

- 'Increase efforts to screen vulnerable populations and train police, labor inspectors, and other front-line officials on proactive identification of victims.
- 'Create funding mechanisms that allocate adequate funding and resources on a consistent and regular basis to the government-run and NGO-run shelters for trafficking victims.
- 'Expand the jurisdiction of labor inspectors to inspect businesses that are not legally registered.
- 'Improve the sustainability of, and law enforcement participation in, mobile trafficking victim identification units.
- 'Increase reintegration services, including access to education for child victims.
- Implement victim-centered approaches and victim-witness protection measures during court proceedings.'⁷¹

7.1.3 In the Albania 2019 Report, the European Commission stated that Albania should 'step up efforts to prevent human trafficking.'⁷² It also made the following recommendations to the Albanian authorities: 'Albania is encouraged to conduct financial investigations related to trafficking in human beings cases; ensure early identification of VOTs; improve cross-border and international cooperation; contribute to successful reintegration of victims; and provide child victims of trafficking with adequate protection.'⁷³

7.1.4 The collaborative report from the University of Bedfordshire and IOM of July 2018 stated: 'There is an implementation gap between a strong legislative and policy framework in Albania with practice in reality. Stakeholders at the SLE highlighted high level political commitment to responding to human trafficking in Albania, evidenced by the adoption of a number of policy and legislative measure but there was a feeling that these are not being fully implemented in practice.'⁷⁴

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7.2 Government strategies

7.2.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated: 'The government increased efforts to prevent trafficking. The government adopted the 2018-2020 national action plan and committed 488.9 million leks (\$4.57 million) for its implementation. The government allocated 11.9 million leks (\$111,160) to ONAC [Office of National Antitrafficking Coordinator], compared to 5.7 million leks (\$53,250) in both 2016 and 2017.

'[...] The government did not take steps to reduce demand for commercial sex.'⁷⁵

⁷¹ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

⁷² European Commission, 'Albania 2019 Report,' 29 May 2019, page 35, [url](#)

⁷³ European Commission, 'Albania 2019 Report,' 29 May 2019, page 35, [url](#)

⁷⁴ Uni of Beds, IOM, 'Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...],' July 2018, page 8, [url](#)

⁷⁵ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

- 7.2.2 In the Albania 2019 Report, the European Commission noted that Albania has a cross-cutting strategy on organised crime, illicit trafficking and terrorism (2017-2020)⁷⁶.
- 7.2.3 The US Department of Labor Report 2018 (US DoL Report 2018) noted the following action plans:
- ‘National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Persons (2018–2020): Ensures the identification and referral for the protection of child victims and potential victims of human trafficking in accordance with standard operating procedures. Increases the use of CPUs [Child Protection Units], police, and border controls to identify victims, including children in street situations. Raises public awareness of all forms of human trafficking, including forced labor.
 - ‘The Action Plan for the Social-Economic Reintegration of Women and Girl Victims of Trafficking (2018–2020): Increases resources available to victims and attempts to reintegrate female trafficking victims by providing education and social services to combat future forced labor and human trafficking. Part of the Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Persons Action Plan. Active in 2018.’⁷⁷
- 7.2.4 See [Education and training](#) for information about the education and training available to victims of trafficking.
- 7.2.5 [Albania's response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire](#) set out international agreements signed by Albania on action against human trafficking (page 45 on)⁷⁸.

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7.3 Bodies responsible for dealing with trafficking

- 7.3.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated:
- ‘Observers reported ONAC coordinated anti-trafficking efforts but faced internal and external challenges. The government maintained a multi-disciplinary working group and a separate task force to develop and monitor anti-trafficking policies. Twelve regional anti-trafficking committees comprising local officials and NGOs worked on prevention and victim assistance. ONAC had not published regular activity reports on its website since 2017 but held four meetings with stakeholders involved in the NRM. Observers reported prosecutors rarely attended NRM meetings.’⁷⁹
- 7.3.2 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a GRETA questionnaire in which it listed the following bodies responsible for addressing trafficking:
- ‘The National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator [ONAC] is the lead coordinator of all anti-trafficking efforts in the country. The National Coordinator is at the same time the Deputy Minister of Interior and initiates, coordinates, and monitors various agencies' anti-trafficking activities.

⁷⁶ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2020, page 33, [url](#)

⁷⁷ US DoL, ‘2018 Findings on the Worst [...]’, Govt policies on child labor, 27 September 2019, [url](#)

⁷⁸ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 45, [url](#)

⁷⁹ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

‘The State Committee against Trafficking in Persons is a multidisciplinary working group that sets out the anti-trafficking vision, mission, policies and goals. The State Committee is chaired by the Minister of Interior and is comprised of deputy minister level representatives from: The Ministry of Internal Affairs (MOIA); State Police; Ministry of Education and Sport; Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MOSWY); Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Ministry of Health; Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Finance; Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Enterprise; Ministry of Energy and Industry; Ministry of European Integration; General Prosecutor’s Office; State Intelligence Service; Ministry of Defense. Representatives from the Shelters Coalition and civil society partners are invited to participate in the State Committee meetings.

‘The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) [...]

‘The Responsible Authority for Identification, Referral, Protection and Reintegration of VT/VMT [victims of trafficking/ persons who are vulnerable, missing or exploited] guides the implementation of the NRM regarding all cases of potential victims / potential victims of trafficking identified and referred to under this mechanism in accordance with SOPs.

‘The Regional Anti-Trafficking Committees (RATC) assess and address local trafficking issues. During the reporting period RATCs were active in addressing TIP issues in their area, through establishing local action plans, and conducting various meetings in cooperation with partners.’⁸⁰

7.3.3 See [National Referral Mechanism \(NRM\)](#) for further information on this subject.

7.3.4 The HO FFT was told by Caritas that there are 12 Regional Anti Trafficking Committees in Albania, coordinating on counter trafficking actions headed by the Prefect. They receive information on cases of VoT by the technical round table. All the local institutions such as Education Directorate, Border and Migration Police, Local Police, Health Directorate, Social Services etc are part of the RATC.⁸¹

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7.4 Training for officials

7.4.1 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire issued by GRETA. The [response](#) provided detailed information about training provided for officials (page 11 on and page 19 on)⁸².

7.4.2 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated: ‘The BMP [Border and Migration Police] institutionalized anti-trafficking training and the government, at times in cooperation with civil society, trained 59 police officers, 53 judges, 119 district prosecutors, and three Supreme Court inspectors.’⁸³

7.4.3 The US DoL Report 2018 stated: ‘During the reporting period, police officers received trainings on child protection and human trafficking, especially in the

⁸⁰ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 36, [url](#)

⁸¹ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 2.13.1, [url](#)

⁸² CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, [url](#)

⁸³ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

context of migration flows through the Western Balkans. In addition, 180 police officers were trained to handle cases involving minors, and the European Border and Coast Guard Agency and the IOM held trainings on countering human trafficking.⁸⁴

- 7.4.4 The Ministry of Interior told the HO FFT that they have started common training with prosecutors and police. This is a new way of investigating and special skills are required. Experiences from the Serious Crimes Courts are being shared. The police are being trained and are pushed to do more⁸⁵.
- 7.4.5 Caritas told the HO FFT that it has provided training on protection of victims of trafficking for police officers. A training module has been developed with the collaboration of the National Coordinator against Trafficking and is used as a school curriculum in the Police Academy⁸⁶.
- 7.4.6 UN agencies also told the HO FFT that they have invested considerably in the training of the police⁸⁷.

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7.5 Corruption

- 7.5.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted, 'The government did not report any investigations, prosecutions, or convictions of government employees complicit in trafficking offenses; however, official complicity and corruption were significant concerns.'⁸⁸
- 7.5.2 See [The judiciary](#) for further information about corruption.

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7.6 Awareness raising

- 7.6.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 reported that, 'ONAC, in cooperation with civil society, conducted awareness campaigns for students, teachers, and the general public. ONAC also conducted informational meetings with representatives from the Romani and Balkan Egyptian communities.'⁸⁹
- 7.6.2 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a GRETA questionnaire, which stated:

'The Albanian government, and especially ONAC, through awareness campaigns, informs and involves the public on trafficking, identification of potential victims of trafficking and their prevention. Activities for the prevention of human trafficking have included mass of people in general, as well as the most vulnerable groups such as children, young people, marginalized groups etc. For this purpose, manuals, leaflets, brochures for prevention of trafficking and irregular migration are published and distributed, and television commercials, documentaries, television and radio programs are realized for information and awareness. What is more, within the

⁸⁴ US DoL, '2018 Findings on the Worst [...]', Enforcement of laws [...], 27 September 2019, [url](#)

⁸⁵ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 2.5.1, [url](#)

⁸⁶ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 2.5.2, [url](#)

⁸⁷ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 2.5.3, [url](#)

⁸⁸ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

⁸⁹ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

framework of awareness, a number of programs are organized with electronic and printing media about proper reporting of cases of trafficking of persons. National anti-trafficking awareness campaign all over Albania organized during the October month – the month against trafficking in persons, every year since 2015.⁹⁰

7.6.3 The same report stated:

‘[...] on 14 and 16 June 2017, Ministry of Interior organized 2 informative meetings with representatives of the Roma and Egyptian communities in the area of Selita and Yzberisht, Tirana, with a total of about 60 participants. The activities were conducted in cooperation with the Organization "ARSIS" and the Child Protection Unit in the Municipality of Tirana. The purpose of the meetings was to raise awareness of the Roma and Egyptian communities on the phenomenon of trafficking, forms of trafficking, ways and indicators for identifying possible victims of trafficking, assistance, reporting forms such as National Line 116006 and the Application "Report! Save "!'⁹¹

7.6.4 The [Albania response of June 2019 to the GRETA questionnaire](#) provided further detailed information about actions taken to raise awareness, including providing information to schools, training, workshops, camps and marches, and television shows (page 38 on)⁹².

7.6.5 The HO FFT were told by the Department of Social Services at the Ministry of Tirana that they have a dedicated person who works with the NGO D&E on preventing trafficking by going to schools and talking about the subject⁹³.

7.6.6 Anila Trimi of the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior told the HO FFT that they had just approved a module for pre-university education level training on how to prevent trafficking and how to report cases.

She said they also have a free app for Android phones where people can not only report cases, but also see information about cases and understand more about what support and information is available. Most of these activities are done in schools in cooperation with partners⁹⁴.

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Section 8 updated: 29 April 2020

8. Systems to deal with trafficking

8.1 Standard Operating Procedures (adults)

8.1.1 In the Albania 2019 Report, the European Commission noted, ‘In August 2018, the government adopted new standard operating procedures for the protection of VOTs/PVOTs [victims of trafficking/ potential victims of trafficking]. These procedures provide for the identification, referral, protection and assistance of VOTs/PVOTs, including children.’⁹⁵

⁹⁰ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 38, [url](#)

⁹¹ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 44, [url](#)

⁹² CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 38, [url](#)

⁹³ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 2.12.3, [url](#)

⁹⁴ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 6.1.6, [url](#)

⁹⁵ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, page 35, [url](#)

- 8.1.2 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a GRETA questionnaire which explained the purpose of standard operating procedures (here referred to as 'standard action procedures'):

'By the Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) Nr. 499, dated 29.08.2018 "On the Adoption of Standard Action Procedures for Protection of Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking", Standard Action Procedures (SOPs) were adopted for the protection of victims and potential victims of trafficking. SOPs are the basic document for identifying, referring, protecting and assisting victims / potential victims of trafficking. The purpose of the SOPs approval is to protect, including timely and appropriate identification of potential victims of trafficking, whether adults or minors, Albanians, foreigners or stateless persons, for all types of exploitation, internal or international trafficking, whether or not linked to organized crime.'⁹⁶

- 8.1.3 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated that, 'The government maintained a multi-disciplinary national referral mechanism (NRM) and updated SOPs for identifying and referring victims to services. First responders referred potential victims to law enforcement and state social services who conducted joint interviews to determine official victim status. The law provided equal services for both potential and officially recognized victims.'⁹⁷

- 8.1.4 The same report noted:

'NGOs identified the majority of victims; the government identified only 33 of the 95 official and potential victims [in 2018] (60 in 2017), including only five identified by law enforcement (11 in 2017). NGOs, with the support of the government, maintained mobile victim identification units consisting of social workers and police in three regions, but the units' sustainability was uncertain due to the lack of permanent staff, formalization, and resources. Mobile victim identification units identified 51 potential victims (26 in 2017).'

- 8.1.5 See [Effectiveness of the police](#) for information about police participation in mobile victim identification units.

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8.2 National Referral Mechanism (NRM)

- 8.2.1 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a GRETA questionnaire which stated:

'The National Referral Mechanism (NRM) is an agreement between state and non-state institutions for the identification, referral and protection of victims and possible victims of terrorism [sic]. The NRM is a formal system, a network established between police, social service, diplomatic and consular services, health, education, prosecution, international organizations (IOM [International Organization for Migration], WV [World Vision] and ARSIS [Association for the Social Support of Youth]), as well as reception and rehabilitation centers for victims of trafficking. Purpose: A framework of cooperation defining the responsibilities of key actors in the fight against trafficking in human beings regarding the identification, referral,

⁹⁶ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 37, [url](#)

⁹⁷ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

⁹⁸ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 62, [url](#)

accommodation, assistance and rehabilitation of Victims of Trafficking [sic]; Ensure timely and full coverage of relevant VoT services and implementation of SOPs. In 2018, the National Referral Mechanism was added with 2 new members: Mary Ward Loreto and Terre des Hommes.⁹⁹

8.2.2 In the Albania 2019 Report, published in May 2019, the European Commission stated, 'The national referral mechanism for VOTs/PVOTs was fully functional.'¹⁰⁰

8.2.3 The HO FFT was told that the NRM is an organisation of 13 agencies who come together to identify, refer and protect VoT and the IOM gave a detailed assessment of the NRM:

'Since 2005, Albania has the National Referral Mechanism for identification, referral and assistance of victims and potential victims of trafficking and the IOM is a member of the NRM. Currently, in Albania, the framework is a good one. The Responsible Authority follows all the cases identified outside of Albania, at the border and in the territory in accordance with the Standard Operating Procedures approved in July 2001 with decision of Council of Ministers. The penal code and others relating to TiP internal and external and are in line with the international conventions. The identification, referral and assistance of unaccompanied children could maybe be improved a bit. It's the implementation that needs improving. Albania created the SOPs, for clear procedures for VoT and PVoT [potential victims of trafficking] – in Albania, outside Albania and at the border. Clear steps for people to follow. In 2012, revision of NRM process – to get more involved in the identification of VoT.

'All cases are referred as PVoT and a group composed of anti-trafficking police and social worker conducts the formal interview for determining the status of victim of trafficking. They are then entitled to access all the packages that are available in Albania.'¹⁰¹

8.2.4 The IOM also commented, positively, that there is more focus on referrals from Albanian embassies abroad and they have also heard of two referrals from a school psychologist. This is the result of the work of all the stakeholders under the coordination of the ONAC and as a result of national information awareness raising campaigns conducted during the October anti trafficking month.¹⁰²

8.2.5 The Director of Social Services in Kukes explained to the HO FFT that when they get cases they refer them to the NRM: 'There is a place online where we refer cases. But we are stuck in this phase at the moment where we make the referral, but we don't get a reply. When it comes to the re-organisation of the Ministries, we are in a limbo. We don't know who to refer to for now until it is settled. We are sceptical, because we didn't get enough help from the MoSW; now that it is moving to the MoH, we are concerned.'¹⁰³

⁹⁹ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 36, [url](#)

¹⁰⁰ European Commission, 'Albania 2019 Report,' 29 May 2019, page 35, [url](#)

¹⁰¹ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraphs 2.8.1 and 2.8.2, [url](#)

¹⁰² Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 2.8.3, [url](#)

¹⁰³ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 2.8.4, [url](#)

[In 2017, responsibility for Social Services was moved from the Ministry of Social Work, which has now been dis-established, to the Ministry of Health.]

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8.3 Personal data and confidentiality

8.3.1 In 2016, GRETA produced a report (GRETA report 2016), which stated:

‘Article 127 of Law No. 108/2014 on the National Police states that police officers have a duty to safeguard the confidentiality of all personal data collected, kept and processed by the police to which they have access.

‘The SIVET database set up to gather information on victims of THB from different sources (such as the police, NGOs, social services) is secure and all the information is entered into the database by a designated person from the Office of the National Anti-trafficking Co-ordinator ... Only the Responsible Authority has access to the personal data of victims so that their situation and reintegration can be monitored.’¹⁰⁴

8.3.2 The report on the shared learning event held by the University of Bedfordshire and the IOM in October 2017 stated:

‘Data protection, confidentiality and anonymity were under-regarded in practice. It appears that there is little emphasis given to data protection, confidentiality and anonymity for people who have experienced trafficking across a broad range of sectors within Albania, including within media reports. This is particularly important given historic disregard for data protection and associated principles as well as the geographic and context-specific considerations of a closely connected population within Albania.’¹⁰⁵

8.3.3 The NRCVDV [National Reception Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence] told the HO FFT that they can update data on victims. But because of the confidential nature of the data, it can only be accessed by Social Services and by an order of the court¹⁰⁶.

8.3.4 Anila Trimi at the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior explained to the HO FFT that they also have a database with data about identification to reintegration. It can also identify trends, for example, where people are moving around. It contains the data from the forms that accompanies the standard operating procedures that are sent. It is the responsibility of the Office of the National Coordinator who are the only people with access.

She went on to say that personal details are included on the database, but this is done only with the consent of the victim and to the best of her knowledge no women had refused consent to date.

She said she was also not aware of unauthorised access; ‘The name and address of the shelter is not included; only the name of the city. And where people go back to the community, that is what it says.’¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ GRETA report 2016, adopted on 11 March 2016, published 2016, paragraph 129, [url](#)

¹⁰⁵ Uni of Beds, IOM, ‘Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...]’, July 2018, page 9, [url](#)

¹⁰⁶ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 2.8.5, [url](#)

¹⁰⁷ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 2.8.6 to 2.8.8, [url](#)

8.3.5 In the Albania 2019 report, published in May 2019, the European Commission stated:

‘On the protection of personal data, the capacities of the office of the Commissioner for the Right to Information and Data Protection need to be adequate to perform its tasks effectively. In 2018, the Commissioner received 170 complaints from data subjects, carried out 190 administrative inspections, issued 30 decisions, and imposed 61 administrative sanctions, which represent an increased activity compared to 2017. Further efforts are needed to align the personal data protection legislation with the General Data Protection Regulation 2016/679 and the Police Directive 2016/680. Albania has not yet signed or ratified the 2018 Protocol amending the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data.’¹⁰⁸

8.3.6 For further information see the [Country Policy and Information Note Albania: Domestic Violence](#).

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Section 9 updated: 29 April 2020

9. Government and NGO assistance

9.1 National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters (NCATS)

9.1.1 NCATS published undated information which stated that it was formed in 2007 and summarised the organisation as working on the ‘Collaboration and coordination of activities and services for the protection, assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration of women, girls and children victims of trafficking.’¹⁰⁹ NCATS is composed of the following shelters:

- “Vatra” Psycho-social Center, Vlora
- ‘National Reception Center, Tirana
- ‘Reception Center, Gjirokastra
- “Different & Equal” organization, Tirana
- “Tjeter Vizion” [“Another Vision”] association, Elbasan’¹¹⁰

9.1.2 The same document stated that ‘NCATS collaborates and coordinates the protective and supportive actions for victims of trafficking through:

- ‘Supporting the rehabilitation and reintegration assistance of victims of trafficking throughout Albania
- ‘Providing expertise in developing National Policies in supporting victims of trafficking
- ‘Reinforcing cooperation with State Institutions at the central and local level, as primary actors in fighting human trafficking

¹⁰⁸ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, [url](#)

¹⁰⁹ NCATS, ‘National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Albania,’ undated, [url](#)

¹¹⁰ NCATS, ‘National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Albania,’ undated, [url](#)

- 'Sharing experience and expertise, coordinating actions in line with standard operating procedures for victims of trafficking
- 'Striving to pursue the sustainability of the services offered'¹¹¹

9.1.3 The same publication noted that the following services were offered by NCATS members:

- 'Safe accommodation
- 'Medical assistance
- 'Legal counselling and assistance
- 'Psycho-social assistance
- 'Mediation with families
- 'Visits counselling of the victim's family
- 'Education and vocational training
- 'Counseling and employment mediation
- 'Literacy courses and registration in schools
- 'Socio-cultural activities
- 'Temporary accommodation in rented facilities
- 'Economic empowerment support through small businesses
- 'Monitoring and follow up of beneficiaries
- 'Assistance to the children of trafficking victims'¹¹²

9.1.4 The same document also noted that the following categories of beneficiaries were assisted:

- 'Women and girls, victims of human trafficking
- 'Women and girls at risk of being trafficked
- 'Trafficked children or at risk of being trafficked
- 'Women and girls, victims of domestic violence
- 'Children of the above mentioned beneficiaries'¹¹³

9.1.5 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated:

'[...] victims who required services not available in one [of the four NCATS shelters] were referred to another shelter within the coalition. NCATS and the government provided assistance to 78 official and potential victims [in 2018] (101 in 2017), including food, mental health counseling, legal assistance, medical care, educational services, employment services, assistance to victims' children, financial support, longterm accommodation, social activities, vocational training, and post-reintegration follow-up.'¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ NCATS, 'National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Albania,' undated, [url](#)

¹¹² NCATS, 'National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Albania,' undated, [url](#)

¹¹³ NCATS, 'National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters in Albania,' undated, [url](#)

¹¹⁴ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

- 9.1.6 The HO FFT noted that shelters operate in close cooperation with each other to prevent over reach. The Municipality of Tirana said they have a good relationship with the shelters, referring cases to each other. The Albanian Social Services confirmed this, stating that an initiative created ten years ago by the Ministry of Interior effected cooperation between the state and the NGO run shelters.¹¹⁵
- 9.1.7 For further information about the services provided by both government and NGO shelters, see [National Reception Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking \(NRCVHT\)](#) and [NGO shelters](#).

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9.2 Capacity of shelters

- 9.2.1 The HO FFT was told by several official sources that the combined capacity of the various shelters is sufficient to address the need from adults and there is no national capacity problem¹¹⁶.

- 9.2.2 The HO FFT further noted that the capacity of the NRCVHT (National Reception Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking) is 80 people. Since 2003, when the centre opened, it has treated 620 people. The average is about 20-30 people per year.

The Director of the NRCVHT said that it has never had a situation where it has had to refuse a person. They have more capacity than requests at the moment.

The Albanian Ombudsman said that the NRCVHT has only 9 residents as at November 2017 so there is capacity for supporting other regions that don't have a safe house – e.g. northern regions – or returnees¹¹⁷.

- 9.2.3 D&E told the HO FFT that they estimated they had supported 70 VoT throughout 2016¹¹⁸.

- 9.2.4 The GRETA report 2016 stated that 'The shelters in Tirana and Vlora have respectively 15 and 20 places, and the National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking currently has 15 places. A building previously used to accommodate irregular migrants was in the process of being refurbished at the time of the visit and it would provide a further 90 places.'¹¹⁹

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9.3 Funding and assistance for shelters

- 9.3.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated:

'The government allocated 21.6 million leks (\$201,770) to NGO-run shelters to support 29 staff salaries, compared to 20.2 million leks (\$188,700) to support 29 staff salaries in 2017. The government provided an additional 5.2 million leks (\$48,580) for food support to NGO-run shelters, compared to 5.5 million leks (\$51,380) in 2017.

¹¹⁵ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 4.1.3, [url](#)

¹¹⁶ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 4.1.3, [url](#)

¹¹⁷ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraphs 4.7.1 to 4.7.4, [url](#)

¹¹⁸ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 4.12.5, [url](#)

¹¹⁹ GRETA report 2016, adopted on 11 March 2016, published 2016, paragraph 103, [url](#)

‘The government allocated 22.5 million leks (\$210,180) to the government-run shelter, compared to 22.2 million leks (\$207,380) in 2017.

‘The government did not transfer resources to a fund of seized criminal assets for support services, compared to 4.7 million leks (\$43,900) in 2017.

‘Funding for NGO-run shelters steadily increased over the past four years; however, continued funding delays hindered shelter operations and the government decentralized funding mechanisms for all social programs to municipal governments starting in 2019. Municipality grants prioritized NGOs providing local assistance rather than the national scope needed for trafficking shelters, and experts alleged solicitation and bidding procedures at the municipal level were rife with nepotism and corruption. NGO-run shelters operated under financial constraints and relied on outside sources for operating costs.’¹²⁰

- 9.3.2 In the Albania 2019 Report, published in May 2019, the European Commission stated that the NGO-run shelters are under-funded¹²¹.
- 9.3.3 In June 2019, Albania provided a [response to a GRETA questionnaire](#) which included details of government funding provided for NGO-run shelters from 2015 to 2018 (page 48 on)¹²².
- 9.3.4 The HO FFT was told by several official sources that the government now funded the salaries of staff in NGO shelters and there had been efforts to use the funds from confiscated, seized assets. The government also funds food and support for vocational training and health care.

The Albanian Red Cross told the HO FFT that they support both VoT and VDV in shelters with such things as food, blankets, clothes and toys for children¹²³.

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9.4 Standard of shelters

- 9.4.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted, ‘Observers reported professional staff and good quality of care at the shelters in the NCATS.’¹²⁴
- 9.4.2 The Albanian Ombudsman told the HO FFT that they have an inspection strategy, that they regularly inspected the national centres and they inspected the Centre in Vlore for the first time in October 2017¹²⁵.
- 9.4.3 D&E told the HO FFT that shelters are licensed and regulated by the Inspectorate of Social Services so they must adhere to the official standards regarding the level and quality of care and the standard of security they provide for clients. The Human Rights Officer from the US Embassy in Tirana thought the shelters were very good, particularly those run by the NGOs, who are among the best civil society organisations in Albania. He

¹²⁰ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

¹²¹ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, page 35, [url](#)

¹²² CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 48, [url](#)

¹²³ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraphs 4.1.6 to 4.1.7, [url](#)

¹²⁴ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

¹²⁵ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 4.1.1, [url](#)

commented that once the girls are there they are generally happy and well taken care of¹²⁶.

- 9.4.4 One of the participants at the shared learning event held by the University of Bedfordshire and the IOM in October 2017 stated: ‘Shelters offer people a protective place where they can be provided with support but they do not offer paradise or replace what they have lost.’¹²⁷

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9.5 Reception on return to Albania

- 9.5.1 The report on the shared learning event, held in October 2017 and organised by the University of Bedfordshire and IOM, noted the experiences of an Albanian victim of trafficking who was trafficked to the UK, and stated that, ‘She was eventually identified by the police [...]. She returned to Albania and was received at the airport by a local NGO who began providing her support services.’¹²⁸

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9.6 Phases of assistance

- 9.6.1 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA, in which the rehabilitation provided by the 3 NGO-run shelters was described: ‘The National Reception Center for Victims of Trafficking has provided rehabilitation services, by referring the beneficiaries for reintegration services to the other 3 shelters of NCATS, which offer a full package of reintegration services. The reintegration program is divided into three phases, including emergency services, rehabilitation services and long-term monitoring during the process of social inclusion. The reintegration services of these 3 shelters include: accommodation, medical assistance, psychological assistance, psycho-social assistance, education, legal assistance, vocational training, coaching for employment, counseling and support, social activities, mentoring, services for economic empowerment; assistance to children of victims of trafficking.’¹²⁹
- 9.6.2 For further information about the shelters run by NGOs, see [NGO shelters](#).

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9.7 National Reception Centre for Victims of Human Trafficking (NRCVHT)

- 9.7.1 The GRETA report 2016 stated: ‘The delegation ... visited the National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking. The shelter is located on the outskirts of Tirana and its security is ensured by the national police. Victims who have undergone formal identification and are assessed to be in a particularly dangerous situation are placed in this centre... In the first six months of 2015, 10 people were accommodated in the centre. In addition to risk assessment, counselling,

¹²⁶ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 4.1.4, [url](#)

¹²⁷ Uni of Beds, IOM, ‘Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...],’ July 2018, page 23, [url](#)

¹²⁸ Uni of Beds, IOM, ‘Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...],’ July 2018, page 28, [url](#)

¹²⁹ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 45, [url](#)

medical assistance and legal advice, the centre provides vocational training in partnership with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Youth, either within the shelter or outside it if the victim's safety is not compromised.¹³⁰

9.7.2 The HO FFT was told by the director of the NRCVHT that length of stay depends on age; and where a minor is involved custody transfers to the centre. Usually victims stay for 3 to 6 months; but there have been cases where people have stayed for two years. The Ministry of Interior stated there is no time limit.¹³¹

9.7.3 The Director of the NRCVHT also stated:

‘Another important factor when it comes to the NRCVHT is the proceedings that are going on with the trafficker. We evaluate the risk to the person. Depending on that, it affects the length of the stay. But when the person feels safe, or ready for reintegration, they leave. But the NRCVHT maintains contact with regional authorities, NGOs and others to ease integration and maintain support and contact.’¹³²

He further stated that the age limit for children remaining in the centre with their mother is 18¹³³.

9.7.4 See [National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters \(NCATS\)](#) for information about the assistance provided by shelters.

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9.8 Procedures for entering NRCVHT

9.8.1 The Director of the NRCVHT told the HO FFT that for entry to this shelter, you don't need a referral from the court. The police start the proceedings and they send the person to the shelter. It's also a multi-disciplinary approach to evaluating the needs of the person. He said:

‘It includes a doctor, a lawyer and a person from Social Services. They all make their own separate evaluation of the case, including the psychological evaluation. Due to the fact that there are different proceedings, each shelter has its own approach.

‘The first impact when the person arrives at the centre is to understand their specific, immediate needs. Then we look further, including at mental health needs.

‘Each of the shelters is fully-equipped with:

1. Psychologist
2. Lawyer
3. Social services
4. Education/teacher

¹³⁰ GRETA report 2016, adopted on 11 March 2016, published 2016, [url](#)

¹³¹ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 4.6.1, [url](#)

¹³² Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 4.6.2, [url](#)

¹³³ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 4.10.1, [url](#)

‘Every aspect is covered, and while they are there, they are monitored by all of the above.’¹³⁴

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9.9 Employment in NRCVHT

- 9.9.1 The Director of the NRCVHT told the HO FFT that for security reasons someone staying at the NRCVHT is not able to leave the centre to go to work¹³⁵.

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9.10 NGO shelters

- 9.10.1 D&E described their mission on their website, stating, ‘D&E is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing high quality reintegration services for victims of trafficking, exploitation and abuse, and to improving the legal, institutional and social context to prevent and counter these violations of human rights.’¹³⁶

- 9.10.2 D&E also set out their services on their website and described their activities as below:

‘Reintegration services for Albanian victims of trafficking and their children including residential and community services;

‘Activities to facilitate and increase access of victims of trafficking in public services;

‘Community awareness about the consequences of trafficking and the rights of victims of trafficking;

‘Activities for the evaluation of the formal labor market and increasing the access of victims to it;

‘Technical and financial support for income generation and self-employment;

‘Training for NGOs and state institutions;

‘Studies and evaluations of the process of reintegration of victims of trafficking;

‘Participation in the process of identifying victims of trafficking;

‘Information and technical advice on drafting laws and legislation to protect victims of trafficking.’¹³⁷

- 9.10.3 D&E described its work to the HO FFT:

‘D&E, an NGO operating in Albania since 2004, runs a shelter in Tirana which is open to women from all over Albania suffering from sexual abuse, DV or trafficking. It can house 15 women plus 4/5 accompanying children. It can also house pregnant women. They also support people outside of the shelter and can provide support to men by paying for apartments.

¹³⁴ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 4.2.1, [url](#)

¹³⁵ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 4.11.1, [url](#)

¹³⁶ D&E, About us, undated, [url](#)

¹³⁷ D&E, “Different & Equal” [D&E] is an Albanian non-for-profit organization [...],’ undated, [url](#)

'D&E said they had been able to accommodate everyone who had been referred to them: they cooperated with other NGO and the state run shelter to ensure capacity.

'D&E described the shelter saying they decided support needs on an individual basis and build a bespoke reintegration plan. The shelter included:

- Case managers (their background is on social work mostly)
- A psychologist
- A doctor
- A lawyer
- A teacher

'D&E estimated they had supported 200 (70 VoT) people, including children throughout 2016, with 40 cases still ongoing.'¹³⁸

9.10.4 The GRETA report 2016 stated:

'The delegation visited the shelter run by the NGO D&E in Tirana, which occupies an entire building at a secret address. During the visit, it housed nine women, two of them with a child. In addition, 30 victims were accommodated in flats rented by the NGO. The women assisted by the NGO D&E are mostly victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation. In addition to therapeutic activities, victims are offered a range of vocational training possibilities and foreign language courses.'¹³⁹

9.10.5 The GRETA report 2016 also referred to the shelter managed by the NGO, Vatra:

'The delegation also visited the shelter managed by the NGO Vatra, located in Vlora at a secret address. At the time of the visit, it accommodated nine female victims, seven of whom aged between 16 and 18. Another seven victims assisted by the NGO were accommodated outside the shelter and 25 others were in the reintegration phase. The vast majority of the victims had been sexually exploited abroad or in Albania. In addition to psycho-social support, victims are offered literacy classes, schooling and vocational training. The NGO Vatra supports victims in their integration into working life, by helping to fund their professional project.'¹⁴⁰

9.10.6 The Tjeter Vizion ('Another Vision') shelter provided the following undated information about its services on its website:

'1. The Social Services for children and families in difficulty, opened in May 2002, is composed of :

- 'Residential centre for children
- 'Shelter community is a residential facility that welcomes children in state of abandonment in whole or in part, come from families with socio-economic problems, trafficked children or at risk of trafficking.

¹³⁸ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraphs 4.12.2 to 4.12.5, [url](#)

¹³⁹ GRETA report 2016, adopted on 11 March 2016, published 2016, [url](#)

¹⁴⁰ GRETA report 2016, adopted on 11 March 2016, published 2016, [url](#)

'Shelter community offers a protected area, appropriate and friendly, where children face the process of growth, from the physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive and relational profile.

'The service is developed in several phases:

'The first hosting, service offering (School proceeding, activity awareness, sanitary activities, organized parties, sportive activities, creative and manuals activities), the return to the family of origin, fostering, adoption, or move into protected apartments through the conduct of the beneficiary to the autonomy in the everyday live.

2. 'Centre for women and girls in difficulty opened in September 2002 and composed of:

- 'Residential Centre for girls and women

'The shelter is a residential facility that accommodates the girls and women accompanied from children who have suffered physical, psychological, sexual and economic violence and / or women and girls victims of trafficking. For these target groups, the centre offers: 24 hours accomodation, sustainability, medical care, emotional, psycho –social and health support, legal advice, awareness, help to mother-child relationship, help in external relations, the growth of communication skills and coexistence in community, support in the path of independence and social integration.

- 'Woman Daily Centre

'The Woman daily centre is a service offered to girls and women with problems of exclusion, discrimination, abuse and trafficking. The daily centre offers consultation and emotional support to girls and women that have presented social and economic problems such as violence, economic problems, problems for children custody, divorce issues, problems with nutritional pension of their children, problems with the liquidation of micro-credit, difficulty with the custody of children after divorce, the risk of traffic. The centre also offers educational activities, social and recreational activities (seminars, ludo-creative activities, the library, the catering business, and the group of aerobic [sic])

'Apartments of high autonomy

'Structures that offer more possibility for the growth of autonomy, responsibility and integration.

3. 'Youth Centre "RIEMAR" opened in September 2003 to help young people in difficulty"

'The Centre is proposed as a place of aggregation, for the implementation of creative, social, cultural, educational initiatives and relational for young people in difficulty. For this category the centre offer activities like:

'Sensitizing activities, information angle, recreational activities, football, cinema, massive festivals, cultural activities, library activities, music activities, Theatre Laboratory.

4. 'Centre for Professional training

‘This service aims to integrate in the job market young and women in difficulty through the assessment of the market, training on the job, job orientation.

‘The centre offers vocational training courses for: sewing, cooking, foreign languages (Italian, English) P courses, hairdressing course.’¹⁴¹

9.10.7 Further information about the involvement of Tjeter Vizion with bodies at both national and local level in their work to combat people trafficking is available on their [website](#)¹⁴².

9.10.8 See [Phases of assistance](#) and [National Coalition of Anti-Trafficking Shelters \(NCATS\)](#) for further information about the help provided by the NGO-run shelters.

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9.11 Foreign victims

9.11.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated that, ‘Foreign victims had access to the same services as domestic victims and the law provided foreign victims a three-month reflection period with temporary residency status and authorization to work for up to two years. The government granted or renewed residency to seven foreign victims (six in 2017).’¹⁴³

9.11.2 The same report noted, ‘The law provided repatriation assistance to Albanian citizen victims identified abroad; authorities assisted in the voluntary repatriation of three Albanian victims from Germany, Portugal, and the UK (four in 2017). The same report noted that the government also repatriated foreign victims, including one from Kosovo and one from North Macedonia’¹⁴⁴

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9.12 Security at shelters

9.12.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted that NGO-run shelters allowed adult victims to leave the shelter voluntarily, whereas the state-run shelter required victims to notify the shelter director of their whereabouts in order to assist in their protection¹⁴⁵.

9.12.2 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a GRETA questionnaire, stating:

‘All Vatra beneficiaries rated at high risk, or if their opportunities for reintegration in their country of origin are absent, they refer to Vatra Shelter, according to their will. Housing is provided for 24 hours by a licensed private company of the Police, from the Ministry of Interior. When necessary, in case of high risk for victims and escorting victims to law enforcement institutions, Vatra staff requires assistance and protection from the police institution and also the Prosecution Office.

¹⁴¹ Tjeter Vizion, ‘Shoqata Tjeter Vizion,’ undated, [url](#)

¹⁴² Tjeter Vizion, ‘Shoqata Tjeter Vizion,’ undated, [url](#)

¹⁴³ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

¹⁴⁴ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

¹⁴⁵ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

‘The Other Vision organization is equipped and provides the safety and security of the juvenile reception centers through the 24-hour service of cameras, during a night shift a guard is contracted to provide nighttime security. The center is located near the police and in case of any security problem they react immediately and are present. The local police department is working and cooperating with our NGO to provide protection to the victims.’¹⁴⁶

9.12.3 The HO FFT was told that the NRCVHT has high security provided by the Albanian state police at every stage – at the shelter and when moving to and from it¹⁴⁷. The Director explained that victims are asked if they want to remain in the centre, or move to an NGO shelter where the security is less tight¹⁴⁸.

9.12.4 The HO FFT was told that police provide armed security for the state shelters, whereas the NGO-run shelters employ a private security company which operates 24/7. Cases are risk assessed and, for high risk cases, victims will be accompanied by security guards to court, school etc.

To enhance security D&E said that they put the following in place:

- Victims only communicate with their families via the office phone in the staff room at the shelter so the location cannot be traced
- Family members, even trusted ones, are not allowed to know the location of the shelter

The victim’s civil registration is the NGO’s office address rather than the shelter address so that even a corrupt or unprofessional police officer with access to the civil registration system cannot compromise the victim’s location¹⁴⁹.

9.12.5 See [Personal data and confidentiality](#) for further information on this subject.

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9.13 Hotline

9.13.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated: ‘The State Police Directorate’s hotline received three trafficking-related calls, which were referred to the appropriate authorities.’¹⁵⁰

9.13.2 The United Nations report 2016 noted that ‘In June 2014, in collaboration with World Vision and Vodafone, was launched the National Contact Line 116 006 and the application “Report! Save”. This service contact line is provided free for the public to report suspected cases of trafficking.’¹⁵¹

9.13.3 Several sources consulted by the HO FFT referred to the hotline¹⁵².

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¹⁴⁶ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 26, [url](#)

¹⁴⁷ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 4.8.1, [url](#)

¹⁴⁸ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 4.9.1, [url](#)

¹⁴⁹ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraphs 4.13.1 to 4.13.2, [url](#)

¹⁵⁰ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

¹⁵¹ UN, Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant [...], 19 December 2016, [url](#)

¹⁵² Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraphs 2.9.1 to 2.9.2, [url](#)

10. Reintegration

10.1 General

10.1.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted, 'The law provided repatriation assistance to Albanian citizen victims identified abroad; authorities assisted in the voluntary repatriation of three Albanian victims from Germany, Portugal, and the UK (four in 2017).'¹⁵³

10.1.2 The GRETA report 2016 stated:

'When a victim leaves the National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking, the regional welfare services draw up an individual reintegration plan. GRETA was informed that victims of THB enjoy priority access to jobs and are offered state-remunerated internships. Similarly, the NGO-run shelters seek the co-operation of employment agencies and potential employers to facilitate access to the labour market for victims of THB, which nevertheless remains difficult. The database ... is updated to enable the different entities making up the Responsible Authority to track victims' progress and contribute to their reintegration.

'Civil society representatives pointed out that social services monitoring of the reintegration phase was inadequate, chiefly as a result of understaffing. Moreover, trafficked victims do not have priority access to social housing.'¹⁵⁴

10.1.3 D&E described their three-stage programme of support to the HO FFT:

- Crisis intervention, typically for the first 3-6 months
- Transition to independent living, typically for at least a year
- Full independence, up to 3 years

The support they provide included arranging education/vocational training, in cooperation with both government and private industry, supporting job searches – including arranging internships and subsidising salaries and (with donor support) assisting in the set-up of a small business.

D&E said that women who had been through the shelter/reintegration programme would come back to speak to those experiencing it now¹⁵⁵.

10.1.4 At a meeting with the NRCVHT and Albanian Social Services, the HO FFT was told that they try to provide women leaving the shelters with social support and social housing from the state – both VDV and VoT receiving the same levels of support. They commented that state-run processes are sometimes more bureaucratic than that the NGOs can offer.

When asked by the HO FFT about re-integration, Anila Trimi, at the Office of the National Coordinator for Combating Trafficking in Persons at the Ministry of Interior, acknowledged that they are not 100% successful, saying that this is not unique to Albania, it being a small country with small communities.

¹⁵³ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

¹⁵⁴ GRETA report 2016, adopted on 11 March 2016, published 2016, [url](#)

¹⁵⁵ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraphs 5.1.3 to 5.1.4, [url](#)

She also commented that there has to be a willingness from the person to cooperate:

'We try to accommodate people. We try to assist them to find a job or with vocational training. Since 2015, we have increased support. Then we funded 16 employees to the shelters; in 2016, this went up to 30. We also supplied money for food.

'If the person does not want to go into a shelter, they could live in the community. Some women did not want to, for various reasons.

'Additional funding had been supplied through money confiscated from seized criminal assets. Aiming for this to continue. It is only a small amount, but it goes direct to the shelters. The money doesn't have to come direct from crimes related to trafficking; it can be any illicit criminal behaviour.'¹⁵⁶

10.1.5 The Albanian Red Cross (ARC) told the HO FFT that they work with former VoT to integrate them into the labour market. They also work to try to reconnect returned VoT with their families¹⁵⁷.

10.1.6 The University of Bedfordshire and IOM reported on a shared learning event held in Tirana in 2017 at which it was noted that, 'For those from rural areas, access to social assistance, health and educational services was considered to be particularly poor.'¹⁵⁸

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10.2 Social housing

10.2.1 Speaking to a variety of sources the HO FFT was told:

'In some cases, as a result of social stigma, victims may be reluctant to return to their home community, or may be rejected by their families. If no family support is available to the victim when they leave the shelter, D&E assist with/subsidise payment of rent for their new accommodation, typically for 6-12 months. The Municipality of Tirana also assists with this (this is the only municipality which does). This "Lease Bonus Programme" is paid for a year and if the woman's situation is still the same after a year the Municipality carries on paying it, but they try to empower the woman to become independent. The Municipality of Tirana said that they don't have a minimum level of rent and they have a scoring formula to work out how much help a woman needs... The Ministry for Health and Social Welfare said that the ministry which deals with social housing deals with the payment of rent bonuses.'¹⁵⁹

10.2.2 The University of Bedfordshire and IOM reported on a shared learning event on trafficking held in Tirana in 2017, at which it was noted that 'Access to accommodation for Roma and Egyptian communities was outlined as a difficulty due to low social integration and education levels.'¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁶ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraphs 5.1.8 to 5.1.9, [url](#)

¹⁵⁷ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 5.1.10, [url](#)

¹⁵⁸ Uni of Beds, IOM, 'Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...]', July 2018, page 29, [url](#)

¹⁵⁹ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 5.2.1, [url](#)

¹⁶⁰ Uni of Beds, IOM, 'Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...]', July 2018, page 29, [url](#)

- 10.2.3 In the Albania 2019 Report, the European Commission noted, ‘A new Law on Social Housing was approved by the Parliament in May 2018, which addresses shortcomings in the field of housing and forced eviction. The law requires a quota of 5% of housing to be reserved for the most vulnerable members of the Roma and Egyptian communities. The related sub-legal acts still need to be enacted.’¹⁶¹

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10.3 Other economic help

- 10.3.1 The Municipality of Tirana told the HO FFT that it offers support to daily centres which provide lunch for women and their children. A food package for use at home can be provided for women who do not want to be identified¹⁶².
- 10.3.2 The Ministry of Interior also told the HO FFT that the state can and does support women with children. For example, there is financial support to pay for kindergarten; they can also support paying for food/meals. Although acknowledged as not perfect, the basic needs are met. A single mother can send a child to nursery for free¹⁶³.
- 10.3.3 The Director of Social Services in Kukes noted that the Municipality of Kukes is one of the poorest in Albania, with extreme poverty and crime. More than 50% – 10,000 out of 18,000 families – that make up the population in Kukes are supported by social welfare. The social welfare element is around 35 EUR per month¹⁶⁴.
- 10.3.4 The Albanian Ombudsman commented to the HO FFT that ‘One of the recommendations of the Ombudsman is that there is not a legally recognised living standard as a benchmark. Based on our knowledge, it has become understood it is more a political will.
- ‘Most of the claims are by economic reasons. The women don’t define themselves as suffering because of being a woman but as the head of a large family with husband outside of Albania, or as single mothers.’¹⁶⁵
- 10.3.5 The GRETA report 2016 stated:
- ‘Under Law No. 2039 of 17 March 2011, every victim leaving a shelter must in principle receive [a certain amount of money, now updated]. [...] However, the authorities acknowledge that this amount is not enough to enable victims to lead independent lives. Only victims who have been accommodated in the shelters receive such benefits and according to NGOs, victims are reluctant to collect the benefits from the relevant local authorities departments because of the stigma attached to victims of THB.’¹⁶⁶
- 10.3.6 The collaborative report from the University of Bedfordshire and IOM published in July 2018 stated that there was insufficient financial support for

¹⁶¹ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, [url](#)

¹⁶² Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 5.3.1, [url](#)

¹⁶³ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 5.3.2, [url](#)

¹⁶⁴ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 5.3.3, [url](#)

¹⁶⁵ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 5.3.4, [url](#)

¹⁶⁶ GRETA report 2016, adopted on 11 March 2016, published 2016, [url](#)

trafficking victims¹⁶⁷ and that ‘The provision of low levels of financial aid to assist “victims” was outlined as an issue, with individuals receiving 3,000 Lek per month (approximately £20) following lengthy bureaucratic processes.’¹⁶⁸

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10.4 Monitoring

- 10.4.1 The HO FFT was told that the government tries to build up women leaving the shelters to become independent, although that is sometimes difficult especially when there are children involved. However government focus is in this area and they are monitored for two years after they leave the shelters to check on the re-integration process with the social services operating as a watchdog on the services that are provided once the woman starts the process of re-integration¹⁶⁹.
- 10.4.2 The Social Services Department at the Municipality of Tirana said that they monitor all the adult cases they manage every six to twelve months, and this currently continues for two years. They are going to move to monitoring for as long as people need them¹⁷⁰.

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10.5 Education and training

- 10.5.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted that ‘Local Employment Offices collaborated with private businesses and NGOs to provide access to training and employment for trafficking victims.’¹⁷¹
- 10.5.2 The same report noted:
‘[...] access to education for child victims was inadequate. For example, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection did not approve funds for the government-run shelter to hire a part-time teacher for victims unable to attend school. Similarly, the government provided free textbooks to children in “social economic difficulties,” which did not explicitly include trafficking victims, and some regional directorates of the Ministry of Education used that omission to exclude child victims from receiving free textbooks.’¹⁷²
- 10.5.3 In June 2019, Albania provided a response to a questionnaire from GRETA which stated: ‘All VoT/PVoTs who have received integration services attend various professional courses for their free qualification at the Tirana Vocational Training Centers, which is a state institution.’¹⁷³
- 10.5.4 When the Ministry of Education spoke to the HO FFT they said that because they are part of the NRM, they have been involved in raising awareness – in conjunction with the Ministry of Interior – about trafficking, particularly with those who have returned.

¹⁶⁷ Uni of Beds, IOM, ‘Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...]’, July 2018, page 8, [url](#)

¹⁶⁸ Uni of Beds, IOM, ‘Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...]’, July 2018, page 29, [url](#)

¹⁶⁹ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 5.5.1, [url](#)

¹⁷⁰ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 5.5.2, [url](#)

¹⁷¹ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

¹⁷² USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

¹⁷³ CoE, GRETA, Reply from Albania to the Questionnaire [...], 20 June 2019, page 45, [url](#)

In addition, there is a directive from the Ministry of Education which requires that all educational facilities have to accept people back into schools who have returned from the diaspora abroad – whether a VoT or just as a migrant.

The Ministry of Education said they also support returning migrants by providing special help with teachers or free books to help them get back into education. This might include women who left school or are older than schooling age – but it is also done alongside working: they can do both half-and-half.

The Ministry of Education told the HO FFT that it works with the shelters; ‘it’s a full-scale collaboration. The Ministry gets constant requests from the shelters from women who want to go to school. The same level of collaboration exists with the VoT shelters.’¹⁷⁴

- 10.5.5 See [Life in Albania](#) for information about educational attainment by the population as a whole.

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10.6 Employment

- 10.6.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated: ‘Local Employment Offices collaborated with private businesses and NGOs to provide access to training and employment for trafficking victims.’¹⁷⁵

- 10.6.2 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:

‘The government [labour market] program has focused on the employment and quality development of the workforce, in line with the vision of the European Employment Strategy 2020, as well as the requirements for Albania’s European integration. Vulnerable groups are among the priorities of the Ministry of Finance and Economy to be included in active employment programs, such as employment promotion programs and vocational training programs that are implemented and have different forms of support for target groups: [...]

‘Under the employment promotion law “vulnerable groups” are considered jobseekers, such as: mothers with children, persons over 50, youth under 18, long-term unemployed, persons below the poverty line, victims of trafficking, persons benefiting from the income support programs, unemployed mothers, divorced women with social problems, persons returning from emigration with economic problems, newly graduated, disoriented persons in the labor market, persons serving prison sentences, persons with disabilities; from Roma and Egyptian community, orphans, etc.’¹⁷⁶

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¹⁷⁴ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraphs 5.6.1 to 5.6.4, [url](#)

¹⁷⁵ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

¹⁷⁶ Govt of Albania, ‘11th National Report on the implementation of [...],’ 6 March 2020, page 6, [url](#)

10.7 Stigma attached to victims of trafficking

10.7.1 The report on the University of Bedfordshire/IOM shared learning event held in October 2017 stated:

‘Social stigma and discrimination as a direct result of human trafficking was discussed at length and considered to be a key issues in support. These discussions centred around those who had been identified as trafficked as well as those who worked with them and access to accommodation and health services. 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.’¹⁷⁷

10.7.2 The same report 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 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.’¹⁷⁸

10.7.3 Many sources told the HO FFT that Albania is a patriarchal society and victims of gender-based violence are often blamed for what happened to them; communities are small and people don’t want to become subject of gossip with an accompanying sense of dishonour by leaving their family¹⁷⁹.

10.7.4 The French police attache said that when VoT have been housed in a shelter in France, they don’t want to return to Albania – and the families don’t want them to come back either. He said it was matter of honour, but it was not linked to Kanun¹⁸⁰.

10.7.5 D&E told the HO FFT that they are working to counter stigma particularly in cases of VoT. They have produced a photo novella showing how a young girl could easily become an unwitting VoT. They shared a hard copy with the Fact Finding Team. It can be found here: <http://differentandequal.org/en/fotonovela-kjo-ishte-historia/>. They have also shown it as film at various places across the country and they said it had a very positive impact, with one man approaching them to say he had rejected

¹⁷⁷ Uni of Beds, IOM, ‘Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...]’, July 2018, page 8, [url](#)

¹⁷⁸ Uni of Beds, IOM, ‘Vulnerability to Human Trafficking: [...]’, July 2018, page 29, [url](#)

¹⁷⁹ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 9.1.1, [url](#)

¹⁸⁰ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraph 9.1.2, [url](#)

his daughter but having seen the film felt guilty. The Ministry of Interior also said that some families do welcome their daughters back¹⁸¹.

- 10.7.6 The Director of the NRCVHT said that prejudice against people who have been in shelters has decreased a lot due to a change in mentality and it is now a very manageable issue. There are no problems for people who want to reintegrate and work – the only thing that could hold people back are medical issues. However for trafficking victims leaving a shelter, because this situation is confidential, potential employers would not be told that the woman has been a victim¹⁸².
- 10.7.7 See [Social housing](#), [Women living alone](#) and [Healthcare](#) for further information on these subjects.

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10.8 Women living alone

- 10.8.1 Several sources told the HO FFT that women can live alone in Tirana and women can internally relocate to Tirana and that social media is allowing more women to realise that they can live alone in Tirana, working and paying rent. The Municipality of Tirana said they see about 67 people a day coming to Tirana from all over the country looking for a job. It is easier for young women to live alone than older women.

It was acknowledged, though, that in rural areas it was more difficult for women to live alone without family or social support, although there are some women who do live alone successfully¹⁸³.

- 10.8.2 The Director of Curriculum in Kukes said that if a woman wanted to become independent, there are ways to achieve it. For example, there are women who work on carpets or as seamstresses or in other similar small entrepreneurship which can be done at home. They also work in a family business or elsewhere¹⁸⁴.

- 10.8.3 The Director of the Women's Counselling and Social Services Centre commented that Kukes is in the poorest region in the country with unemployment officially at 36%, although in reality much higher, with half of families on social welfare of 50EUR per month per family.

She said that even if a woman had the economic means, it would be 'very scary' to live alone; she wouldn't be subject to physical violence, but the psychological pressure would be there¹⁸⁵.

- 10.8.4 Several sources also told the HO FFT that although in some parts of Albania there may be a stigma to living alone, this is not true of Tirana¹⁸⁶. The Ministry for Health and Social Welfare also said there is no prejudice in Albania against women from different areas¹⁸⁷.

¹⁸¹ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 9.1.3, [url](#)

¹⁸² Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 9.1.4, [url](#)

¹⁸³ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 8.1.1, [url](#)

¹⁸⁴ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 8.1.3, [url](#)

¹⁸⁵ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 8.1.4, [url](#)

¹⁸⁶ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 8.3.2, [url](#)

¹⁸⁷ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 8.3.4, [url](#)

- 10.8.5 The Director of Social Services in Kukes noted that in rural areas there is a stigma for women to get divorced and live alone. He said that sometimes there is reluctance to employ a divorced woman and the social stigma also accompanies the children in their school and neighbourhood. He said the cases of bullying in these cases have increased¹⁸⁸.
- 10.8.6 See the Country Policy and Information Note [Albania: Domestic violence](#) ('Life as a single woman') for further information on the situation for divorced women, women living alone, stigma for single mothers/divorcees, contact with the father of children, support for single female returnees with children, assistance in finding employment, freedom of movement for women and civil registration and data security.

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10.9 Re-trafficking

- 10.9.1 D&E told the HO FFT that they had had a few cases, maybe 4-5% of women, who had ended up being re-trafficked. These were women who willingly left their programme. BIRN (the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network) said that sometimes people are willingly re-trafficked because they know nothing else and see no other way of getting out of the country¹⁸⁹.

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Section 11 updated: 29 April 2020

11. Healthcare

11.1 General

- 11.1.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 stated: 'The government provided free health care.'¹⁹⁰
- 11.1.2 The GRETA report 2016 stated, 'At the end of 2014, Law No. 141/2014 amended Law No. 10383/2001 on Compulsory Health Insurance, entitling victims of THB to free access to health care. Victims must be issued with a card entitling them to free access to medical care provided outside shelters. This will, inter alia, enable victims suffering from psychiatric problems who cannot be cared for by the shelters to receive care and, if necessary, be hospitalised.'¹⁹¹

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11.2 Psychiatrists and psychiatric hospitals

- 11.2.1 The HO FFT noted that there are four psychiatric hospitals in Albania: Tirana, Shkoder, Elbasan and Vlore. Apart from chronic cases stay is limited to three weeks. The two largest in Vlore (St Patrick's) has 180 beds and Elbasan has 310. Around 75% of people in St Patrick's have chronic illnesses and have been there for many years. The other two facilities are

¹⁸⁸ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 8.3.3, [url](#)

¹⁸⁹ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 2.10.1, [url](#)

¹⁹⁰ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

¹⁹¹ GRETA report 2016, adopted on 11 March 2016, published 2016, [url](#)

psychiatric wards of larger hospitals, Tirana has 90 beds (10 for children/adolescents) and Shkoder 35.¹⁹²

11.2.2 The HO FFT was told that there is a ratio of 1.5 psychiatrists per 100,000 of the population.¹⁹³

11.2.3 For further information on this subject, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Albania: Mental healthcare](#).

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11.3 Mental health in the community

11.3.1 The HO FFT were told that Albania's reform of mental health is trying to change the situation to a more community based approach. There are community support clinics which are aimed at rehabilitating and supporting the transision from hospitalisation to home.

D&E commented that the community centres are always full. Some religious organisations also have spaces but these are also always full. There are very few chances for long term support for really serious cases.

There are nine mental health community day centres around the country which offer multi-disciplinary services with a psychologists, psychiatrists, a psychiatric nurse, social workers and occupational therapists.¹⁹⁴

11.3.2 For further information on this subject, see the Country Policy and Information Note on [Albania: Mental healthcare](#).

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11.4 Mental health referrals and access

11.4.1 The HO FFT was told that people who live in remote areas are usually referred to specialist teams by their GPs.

Primary health care is offered for free whether or not the person has insurance. If a person follows the referral system, they can access the secondary health services for free. Mentally ill people have been positively discriminated against so they get access and treated for the associated social issues¹⁹⁵.

11.4.2 For further information on this subject, see the Country Policy and Information Notes on [Albania: Mental healthcare](#) and [Albania: Domestic violence](#).

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11.5 Mental healthcare in shelters

11.5.1 The USSD TiP Report 2019 noted that the government provided free healthcare to the residents of shelters¹⁹⁶.

11.5.2 The Directors of the NRCVHT told the HO FFT that as in line with Albanian legislation, every person who approaches the shelters is subject to a mental

¹⁹² Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 7.1.1, [url](#)

¹⁹³ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 7.2.1, [url](#)

¹⁹⁴ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraph 7.3.1 to 7.3.3, [url](#)

¹⁹⁵ Home Office, 'HO FFM report', February 2018, paragraphs 7.4.1 to 7.4.2, [url](#)

¹⁹⁶ USSD, TiP Report 2019, Albania, 20 June 2019, page 63, [url](#)

health assessment and a report is produced. Depending on the level of treatment required and severity, it can be dealt with in either the shelter or the person can be sent to a specific centre.

The Director of the NRCVHT spoke of a specific example of a person who has mental health issues, and they have been undergoing treatment in the centre for two years now.

Normally, the shelters are equipped with a psychiatrist. The law provides that every person in a shelter has the right to the same level of treatment as any other citizen.

The Head of Mental Health and Addictology at the Ministry of Health said psycho-social support is offered to people who come out of shelters, they will get more support than others and there is no time limit on how long they are monitored in the community – it depends on the diagnosis.¹⁹⁷

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Section 12 updated: 14 May 2020

12. Life in Albania

12.1 Introduction

- 12.1.1 This section has been included to provide information about education, employment, wages and benefits, particularly for women in Albania. It also includes geographical and cultural information.

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12.2 Area of origin: determining features

- 12.2.1 Encyclopaedia Britannica provided undated information which noted:

‘Albania has a mountainous geography. About three-fourths of its territory consists of mountains and hills with elevations of more than 650 feet (200 metres) above sea level; the remainder consists of coastal and alluvial lowlands. The North Albanian Alps, an extension of the Dinaric Alps, cover the northern part of the country. With elevations approaching 8,900 feet (2,700 metres), this is the most rugged part of the country. It is heavily forested and sparsely populated.

‘In contrast to the Alps, the central mountain region, which extends north-south from the Drin River to the central Devoll and lower Osum rivers, is more densely populated and has a generally less rugged terrain. In the region’s easternmost portion, the imposing gypsum block of Albania’s highest peak, Mount Korab, rises to 9,030 feet (2,752 metres). [...]

‘Unlike the Alps and the central region, which are covered with dense forests, the mountains of the southern region are either bare or have a thin covering of Mediterranean shrubs, oaks, and pines. They serve essentially as pasture for livestock.’¹⁹⁸

- 12.2.2 Encyclopaedia Britannica further noted: ‘The longest river in Albania is the Drin (about 175 miles [280 km]), which originates in Kosovo. Other main

¹⁹⁷ Home Office, ‘HO FFM report’, February 2018, paragraphs 7.5.1 to 7.5.4, [url](#)

¹⁹⁸ Encyclopaedia Britannica, Albania, Relief, undated, [url](#)

rivers are the Seman, Shkumbin, and Vjosë, all of which drain the central part of the western plains. Albania also has many lakes, the most important of which are Lake Scutari (known in Albania as Lake Shkodër) in the northwest and Lakes Ohrid and Prespa along the eastern border.¹⁹⁹

12.2.3 The CIA Factbook estimated the population of Albania at 2020 to be 3,074,579, with its capital, Tirana at 494,000²⁰⁰. However the Guardian put the population of Tirana in 2018 at 800,000²⁰¹.

12.2.4 The Everyculture website published an undated article which stated:

‘Albania is bordered to the north by the Yugoslav republic of Montenegro, which has an approximate 10 percent Albanian minority living in regions along the Albanian-Montenegrin border. The Montenegrin towns of Ulcinj, Tuz, Plava, and Gucinj were traditionally and are still inhabited by Albanians. To the northeast of the Republic of Albania is Kosovo, still a de jure part of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Kosovo, which the Kosovo Albanians have declared to be a free and sovereign republic and which the Serbs insist must remain an integral part of Serbia, has about 90 percent Albanian speakers [...] To the east of the Republic of Albania is the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, one-third of which, along the Albanian border, has an Albanian majority. The central Macedonian towns of Skopje, Kumanovo, and Bitola have sizable (15 to 50 percent) communities of Albanian speakers, whereas the western Macedonian centers of Tetova (Tetovo), Gostivar, and Dibra (Debar), along with the Struga area, all have an Albanian majority.’²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Encyclopaedia Britannica, Albania, Drainage, undated, [url](#)

²⁰⁰ CIA World Factbook, Albania, Population 2020, [url](#)

²⁰¹ The Guardian, '[...] Tirana's plan for a "kaleidoscope metropolis"', 29 October 2018, [url](#)

²⁰² Everyculture, Albania, Orientation, undated, [url](#)



12.2.5 The same website noted:

‘Albanians can be divided into two cultural groups: the northern Albanians, or Ghegs (sometimes spelled Gegs), and the southern Albanians, or Tosks. The geographic border between the two groups, based on dialect, runs roughly along the Shkumbin River, which flows through the central town of Elbasan to the Adriatic Sea. All Albanians north of the Shkumbin, along with the Albanians of Montenegro, Kosovo, and most of Macedonia (FYROM), speak Gheg dialects with their characteristic nasalization. All Albanians south of the Shkumbin, including the Albanians of Greece, southwestern Macedonia, and southern Italy, speak Tosk dialects with their characteristic rhoticism [inability/difficulty in pronouncing the letter “r” OR having an accent in which an “r” sound is retained before consonants (as in “hard”) and at the end of a word (as in “car”) OR the changing of another sound to “r”]. Although dialect and cultural differences between the Ghegs and Tosks can

be substantial, both sides identify strongly with the common national and ethnic culture.’²⁰³

- 12.2.6 The Everyculture website further stated, ‘Albania is on the border dividing three religions: Roman Catholicism, Greek Orthodoxy, and Islam. [...] One can estimate today that approximately 70 percent of Albanians in the republic are of Muslim, including Bektashi, background; about 20 percent, mostly in the south, are Orthodox; and about 10 percent, mostly in the north, are Catholic.’²⁰⁴

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12.3 Income

- 12.3.1 The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report 2019 for Albania stated that the Gross National Income per capita was \$12,300 (which is approximately £9,901.50)²⁰⁵.
- 12.3.2 The same report provided the following statistics:
- ‘Estimated gross national income per capita, female (2011 PPP \$): 9,780 [approximately £7,872.9]
- ‘Estimated gross national income per capita, male (2011 PPP \$): 14,727 [approximately £11,855.24]’²⁰⁶
- 12.3.3 The European Commission’s Albania 2019 report stated, ‘There were 12, 297 inspections carried out in 2018 showing that 26% of employees are declared as paid at the minimum wage.’²⁰⁷
- 12.3.4 Trading Economics, ‘an online platform that provides historical data, economic forecasts, news, and trading recommendations,’ stated that in 2019, the minimum wage in Albania was 26, 000 ALL per month (approximately £176.00)²⁰⁸.

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12.1 Education: mandatory schooling

- 12.1.1 The European Commission, the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency and Eurydice (an organisation which publishes information related to education) published a document in 2019 which noted that education is compulsory in Albania for 9 years, from the ages of 6 to 15²⁰⁹.

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12.2 Education: investment in schools

- 12.2.1 The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) report noted that

²⁰³ Everyculture, Albania, Orientation, undated, [url](#)

²⁰⁴ Everyculture, Albania, Religion, undated, [url](#)

²⁰⁵ UNDP, Human Development Reports, HDR 2019, Albania, Income/comp. of resources, [url](#)

²⁰⁶ UNDP, Human Development Reports, HDR 2019, Albania, Gender, [url](#)

²⁰⁷ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, page 79, [url](#)

²⁰⁸ Trading Economics, Albania minimum monthly wage, 2019, [url](#)

²⁰⁹ EC/EACEA/Eurydice, Compulsory Education in Europe [...], September 2019, pages 5 to 6, [url](#)

‘School principals in Albania reported less staff shortage and more material shortage than the OECD average; but there was no significant difference in staff shortages between advantaged and disadvantaged schools.’²¹⁰

- 12.2.2 The UNDP Human Development Report 2019 provided the following statistic for Albania: ‘Pupil-teacher ratio, primary school (number of pupils per teacher): 18’²¹¹

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12.3 Education: average attainment

- 12.3.1 In the Albania 2019 Report, published in May 2019, the European Commission provided information about the general standard of education for the country as a whole, and this is included for purposes of comparison:

‘Although education system outcomes have improved, they remained well below EU average and are inadequately tuned to private sector needs. [...]

‘Albania participated in the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) 2018 [...]. Despite constant improvements over the last three testing rounds (2009, 2012 and 2015), Albania continues to perform poorly in PISA tests. Half (50.3%) of the 15-year olds perform poorly in reading and even more (53.3%) perform poorly in mathematics.’²¹²

- 12.3.2 The OECD PISA 2018 results showed:

‘Students in Albania scored lower than the OECD average in reading, mathematics and science.

‘Compared to the OECD average, a smaller proportion of students in Albania performed at the highest levels of proficiency (Level 5 or 6) in at least one subject; at the same time a smaller proportion of students achieved a minimum level of proficiency (Level 2 or higher) in at least one subject.’²¹³

- 12.3.3 The same OECD country note recorded student attainments in reading:

‘In Albania, 48% of students attained at least Level 2 proficiency in reading (OECD average: 77%). At a minimum, these students can identify the main idea in a text of moderate length, find information based on explicit, though sometimes complex criteria, and can reflect on the purpose and form of texts when explicitly directed to do so.

‘Some a negligible percentage of students in Albania were top performers in reading, meaning that they attained Level 5 or 6 in the PISA reading test (OECD average: 9%). At these levels, students can comprehend lengthy texts, deal with concepts that are abstract or counterintuitive, and establish distinctions between fact and opinion, based on implicit cues pertaining to the content or source of the information. In 20 education systems, including those of 15 OECD countries, more than 10% of 15-year-old students were top performers.’²¹⁴

²¹⁰ OECD, Results from PISA 2018, Albania, 2019, page 5, [url](#)

²¹¹ UNDP, HDR 2019, Albania, Education, [url](#)

²¹² European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, page 87, [url](#)

²¹³ OECD, Results from PISA 2018, Albania, 2019, page 1, [url](#)

²¹⁴ OECD, Results from PISA 2018, Albania, 2019, page 2, [url](#)

12.3.4 The report also noted attainment in mathematics:

‘Some 58% of students in Albania attained Level 2 or higher in mathematics (OECD average: 76%). At a minimum, these students can interpret and recognise, without direct instructions, how a (simple) situation can be represented mathematically (e.g. comparing the total distance across two alternative routes, or converting prices into a different currency). [...] On average across OECD countries, 76% of students attained at least Level 2 proficiency in mathematics.

‘In Albania, 2% of students scored at Level 5 or higher in mathematics (OECD average: 11%). [...] These students can model complex situations mathematically, and can select, compare and evaluate appropriate problem-solving strategies for dealing with them.’²¹⁵

12.3.5 The report further noted attainment in science:

‘Some 53% of students in Albania attained Level 2 or higher in science (OECD average: 78%). At a minimum, these students can recognise the correct explanation for familiar scientific phenomena and can use such knowledge to identify, in simple cases, whether a conclusion is valid based on the data provided.

‘In Albania, a negligible percentage of students were top performers in science, meaning that they were proficient at Level 5 or 6 (OECD average: 7%). These students can creatively and autonomously apply their knowledge of and about science to a wide variety of situations, including unfamiliar ones.’²¹⁶

12.3.6 The UNDP Human Development Report 2019 provided the following statistics for Albania:

‘Mean years of schooling (years): 10.1

‘Mean years of schooling, female (years): 9.9

‘Mean years of schooling, male (years): 10.2

‘Population with at least some secondary education (% ages 25 and older): 92.9%

‘Population with at least some secondary education, female (% ages 25 and older): 93.5%

‘Population with at least some secondary education, male (% ages 25 and older): 92.8%.

‘Literacy rate, adult (% ages 15 and over): 97.2%’²¹⁷

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12.4 Education: attainment by gender

12.4.1 The OECD country note of 2019 further noted equity in relation to gender:

²¹⁵ OECD, Results from PISA 2018, Albania, 2019, page 2, [url](#)

²¹⁶ OECD, Results from PISA 2018, Albania, 2019, page 2, [url](#)

²¹⁷ UNDP, HDR 2019, Albania, Education, [url](#)

‘In all countries and economies that participated in PISA 2018, girls significantly outperformed boys in reading – by 30 score points on average across OECD countries. In Albania, the gender gap in reading (38 score points) was higher than the average gap. [...]

‘In Albania, girls scored similar to boys in mathematics. Across OECD countries, boys outperformed girls by five score points. While girls slightly outperformed boys in science (by two score points) on average across OECD countries in PISA 2018, in Albania girls outperformed boys in science by 16 score points.’²¹⁸

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12.5 Education: vocational education and training

12.5.1 The European Commission’s Albania 2019 report further noted the prevalence of vocational education and training (VET):

‘Although VET enrolment as share of upper secondary education increased from 13% in 2013 to over 20% in the school year 2018-2019, only 11% of all youngsters between 15 and 19 years are attending vocational schools.’²¹⁹ [...]

‘The secondary legislation of the new VET Law of February 2017 has not yet been adopted. Qualification standards and framework curricula for most VET programmes are being modernised, even though some Albanian schools lack the teaching skills and equipment to put them into practice. Participation in VET is increasing, mainly through promotion of the VET services. The government plans to expand the responsibilities of the National Agency for VET and Qualifications to include VET teacher training and non-formal training. Albania should also make progress in ensuring that VET is inclusive. It can achieve this through targeted measures for rural women, people with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian minorities, and other populations at risk of exclusion, especially in rural and remote areas.’²²⁰

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12.6 Education: disadvantaged students

12.6.1 The OECD country note of 2019 also noted ‘Equity related to socio-economic status:’ ‘In Albania, socio-economically advantaged students outperformed disadvantaged students in reading by 61 score points in PISA 2018. This is smaller than the average difference between the two groups (89 score points) across OECD countries. In PISA 2009, the performance gap related to socioeconomic status was 79 score points in Albania (and 87 score points on average across OECD countries).’²²¹

12.6.2 The report further stated: ‘Many students, especially disadvantaged students, hold lower ambitions than would be expected given their academic achievement. In Albania, about one in four high-achieving disadvantaged

²¹⁸ OECD, Results from PISA 2018, Albania, 2019, page 6, [url](#)

²¹⁹ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, page 50, [url](#)

²²⁰ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, page 87, [url](#)

²²¹ OECD, Results from PISA 2018, Albania, 2019, page 4, [url](#)

students – but 1 in 20 high-achieving advantaged students – do not expect to complete tertiary education.’²²²

- 12.6.3 The European Commission’s Albania 2019 Report noted the position for those who may be disadvantaged, including Roma and Egyptian children and those in rural areas:

‘Although their enrolment rates remain very low overall, the participation of Roma and Egyptians in early childhood education increased by 5% in elementary schools, by 25% in middle school, 27% in high school and in pre university education by 22%. Nevertheless, the gap in access to education between Roma/Egyptian children and non-Roma children living in the same areas remains very large. The measures planned to facilitate access to universities, quota system and university fee waiver, are in general not implemented. [...]

‘Due to resource and capacity limitations quality in education is an issue across the country. Schools in rural, mountainous and isolated areas face additional problems, one of which is that they cannot attract qualified teachers.’²²³

- 12.6.4 See also [Education: vocational education and training](#) for further information about disadvantaged students.

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12.7 Education: truancy

- 12.7.1 The OECD country note of 2019 also noted truancy:

‘On average across OECD countries, 21% of students had skipped a day of school and 48% of students had arrived late for school in the two weeks prior to the PISA test. In Albania, 31% of students had skipped a day of school and 44% of students had arrived late for school during that period. In most countries and economies, frequently bullied students were more likely to have skipped school, whereas students who valued school, enjoyed a better disciplinary climate and received greater emotional support from parents were less likely to have skipped school.’²²⁴

- 12.7.2 The UNDP Human Development Report 2019 provided the following statistic for Albania: ‘Primary school dropout rate (% of primary school cohort): 6.8%’²²⁵

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12.8 Education: adult education

- 12.8.1 The European Commission’s Albania 2019 report also noted the provision of adult education: ‘Adult (25-64) participation in formal or non-formal education and training is extremely low (in 2017 - 0.9% - according to the labour force survey’s methodology, and 9.2% - according to the adult education survey’s

²²² OECD, Results from PISA 2018, Albania, 2019, page 5, [url](#)

²²³ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, page 87, [url](#)

²²⁴ OECD, Results from PISA 2018, Albania, 2019, page 7, [url](#)

²²⁵ UNDP, HDR 2019, Albania, Education, [url](#)

methodology) compared to the EU average (10.9% in 2017, respectively 45.1% in 2016, using the same methodologies).'²²⁶

- 12.8.2 See [Education and training](#) for information about education for victims of trafficking.

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12.9 Employment, underemployment and unemployment

- 12.9.1 In the Albania 2019 Report, published in May 2019, the European Commission stated that there is a high rate of underemployment in Albania and added:

'At the beginning of 2018, job creation has been identified as 1 of 5 major cross-sectoral priorities of the current government. A mid-term review of the national employment and skills strategy (NESS) was completed. The revised action plan of the strategy will cover the period between 2019 and 2022, and has still to be adopted during the first semester 2019. The secondary legislation implementing the Vocational Education and Training (VET) Law has been drafted but is yet to be adopted. No progress was made in extending employment and VET services to rural areas. The revised Albanian Qualification Framework Law was adopted in May 2018, but significant efforts should be made to operationalise it. The Law on employment promotion was adopted in March 2019. The National Agency for Employment and Skills is expected to be set up by June 2019 and secondary legislation still needs to be adopted.'²²⁷

- 12.9.2 The same report stated:

'Public employment services were strengthened and the image and outreach of Labour Offices have improved with the restructuring of 13 additional labour offices throughout the country, during 2018. Further efforts should be made to finalise the reorganisation of the remaining employment offices.

'In 2018, there were 74 686 unemployed jobseekers (52.4% women) registered in employment offices and 34,669 (51% women) found a job through labour offices (LOs). The number of vacancies announced in LOs reached 61 391 (over 30% more than the previous year), showing an increased dynamism in the offices. The unemployment rate remains high, particularly among women, young people, Roma and Egyptians, and people with disabilities. In 2018, the unemployment rate (15-64) fell to 12.8% (12.3% for women, LFS, INSTAT data 2018), 1.3 percentage points below the level for the same period in 2017. [...] Long-term unemployment remains a challenge to be addressed through more flexible and tailored policy interventions. During 2018, 1 580 undeclared workers have [sic] were identified by the State Labour Inspectorate (out of which 29.6% females) and 855 urgent measures imposed. [...] The Institute of Statistics has sufficient resources to contribute to policies with comprehensive and reliable data, but

²²⁶ European Commission, 'Albania 2019 Report,' 29 May 2019, page 87, [url](#)

²²⁷ European Commission, 'Albania 2019 Report,' 29 May 2019, page 79, [url](#)

the wage gap methodology still needs to be aligned with Eurostat requirements.’²²⁸

- 12.9.3 The UNDP Human Development Report 2019 also provided the following statistic: ‘Vulnerable employment (% of total employment): 54.9%’²²⁹

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12.10 Employment: youth (ages 15-29)

- 12.10.1 The European Commission’s Albania 2019 report stated that ‘The official youth unemployment rate (15-29) is 23.1%. It decreased by 2.8 percentage points as compared to 2017.’²³⁰

- 12.10.2 The UNDP Human Development Report 2019 also provided the following statistics:

‘Unemployment, youth (% ages 15-24): 31%

‘Youth not in school or employment (% ages 15-24): 32.8%’²³¹

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12.11 Employment: women and employment law and strategies

- 12.11.1 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:

‘The Labour Code of the Republic of Albania prohibits any form of discrimination provided on law 10221/2010 “On protection against discrimination” in the exercise of the right to employment and occupation. Article 9/2 defines discrimination as any distinction, exclusion, limitation or preference, based on gender, race, colour, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic, educational or social standing, pregnancy, parental responsibility, age, marital or marital status, civil status, place of residence, health status, genetic predisposition, disability, living with HIV / AIDS, joining or belonging to union organizations, belonging to a specific group, or in any other cause, which has as its purpose or consequence the obstruction or impossibility of exercising the right to employment and occupation, in the same manner as others.’²³²

- 12.11.2 The same report noted that the ‘Commissioner [for Protection from Discrimination] through decisions and recommendation has addressed several times the situation in employment of vulnerable groups on grounds of political belief, gender, disabilities, education status, roma etc., to authorities by ordering to take appropriate measures to regulate the discriminatory situation.’²³³

²²⁸ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, page 79, [url](#)

²²⁹ UNDP, HDR 2019, Albania, Work, employment & vulnerability, [url](#)

²³⁰ European Commission, ‘Albania 2019 Report,’ 29 May 2019, page 79, [url](#)

²³¹ UNDP, HDR 2019, Albania, Work, employment & vulnerability, [url](#)

²³² Govt of Albania, ‘11th National Report on the implementation of [...],’ 6 March 2020, page 9, [url](#)

²³³ Govt of Albania, ‘11th National Report on the implementation of [...],’ 6 March 2020, page 10, [url](#)

12.11.3 The report further welcomed amendments to the Labour Code regarding sexual harassment and added:

‘In addition [...], legislative amendments to the Labor Code, entailed improvements in terms of protection issues of pregnant women from discrimination and protection of motherhood. The law has reflected proposals made by social partners, and aims approximation with the legislation of EU *acquis communautaire*, on occupational safety and health, prohibition of discrimination and special protection of women. Some of the provisions proposed are in line with the recommendations of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts on Social Law, Albania’s national reports on the implementation of the European Social Charter, as revised, and ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations. Concretely, Article 9 of the Labor Code explicitly stipulates that the term "discrimination" means any differences, exclusions, restrictions or preferences based on pregnancy, family situation or marital status. Moreover, the employer is obliged to ensure reasonable adaptation of the workplace for persons under conditions of discrimination. In cases of claimed violation of non-discrimination principle, the Labor Code refers to the appeal procedures laid down in the special law on protection from discrimination. In all cases of the appeal procedures, the employer has the burden of proof to provide evidence that the principle of equal treatment at work, has not been violated.’²³⁴ However, the report also noted that improvements in the way cases of sexual harassment are dealt with are needed²³⁵.

12.11.4 The report further noted, ‘The law obliges also the [State Labour] Inspectorate to particularly ensure respect of the employment rights of minors, pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers.’²³⁶

12.11.5 The OECD Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI) 2019 noted that ‘Women’s employment security is protected when they are on maternity leave (Labour Code, art. 107).’²³⁷

12.11.6 Eurofound, the European Foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions, noted that, ‘In 2015, Article 115 was added to the Labour Code to guarantee equality of pay. An explicit address to the issue of equal pay between male and female workers is outlined in the Law on Gender Equality in Society (Article 21).’²³⁸

12.11.7 In the 11th report on the implementation of the European Social Charter, covering the period 1 January 2015 to 31 December 2018, the government of Albania noted that, under the National Employment Service, seven employment promotion programmes had been implemented, one of which was an employment promotion programme for single mothers with dependent children and child-mothers. The report noted that, following the implementation of these programmes, a total of 5,264 unemployed

²³⁴ Govt of Albania, ‘11th National Report on the implementation of [...],’ 6 March 2020, page 23, [url](#)

²³⁵ Govt of Albania, ‘11th National Report on the implementation of [...],’ 6 March 2020, page 25, [url](#)

²³⁶ Govt of Albania, ‘11th National Report on the implementation of [...],’ 6 March 2020, page 23, [url](#)

²³⁷ OECD, SIGI 2019, Albania, Restricted access to productive and financial resources (S. 3c), [url](#)

²³⁸ Eurofound, Living and working in Albania, 5 June 2018, [url](#)

jobseekers had been employed, 62% of which were women and girls and 51% youth aged up to 29 years; 96 persons were returned migrants, and 3 were victims of human trafficking²³⁹.

- 12.11.8 See [Maternity leave and paid family allowances](#) for further information on this subject.

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12.12 Employment: women, including childcare and bank accounts

- 12.12.1 The OECD SIGI 2019 stated: 'Parental leave of 12 days, with full wages paid by the employer, is available to parents to care for children (Labour Code, art. 132). [...] The law additionally prohibits employers for demanding pregnancy tests before starting employment (Labour Code, art. 105/a). The law does not require women to have permission from their husband or legal guardian to choose a profession or to register a business (Family Code, art. 63).'

- 12.12.2 The European Commission's Albania 2019 report stated:

'As regards equality between women and men in employment and social policy, according to INSTAT [Albanian Institute of Statistics] data the gender gap in employment stood at 14.3 percentage points and did not show any sign of improvement over the recent years. The 2018 World Economic Forum's gender gap index report showed Albania improved compared to its 2017 (rising from 38 to 34 out of 149 countries).

'However, the country does not have enough kindergarten and early childhood education and care facilities to enable parents, especially women, to work. The changes to the Labour Code introduced more measures to support work-life balance for working parents but there is no monitoring of the implementation of these changes.

'According to INSTAT the 2018 report, 42% of women in the labour force are employed in paid positions while 23.0% of them engage in unpaid work in the family business. For employed men, these figures are 37.0% and 12.0% respectively. 36% of men in the labour force are self-employed, compared to 23.0% of women. In rural areas, in 2016 women were more likely to be contributing family members than men. In the third quarter of 2017, agriculture employed 35% of employed males and 42% of employed females. Concerns remain over the proportion of women in the informal labour market, especially the textile and shoe industries, without appropriate labour and social protection. There are also concerns over the lack of disaggregated data on the number of working women in the informal economy.'

- 12.12.3 The UNDP Human Development Report 2019 provided the following statistics for Albania:

'Female share of employment in senior and middle management (%): 29.3%

²³⁹ Govt of Albania, '11th National Report on the implementation of [...]', 6 March 2020, page 23, [url](#)

²⁴⁰ OECD, SIGI 2019, Albania, Restricted access to productive and financial resources, [url](#)

²⁴¹ European Commission, 'Albania 2019 Report,' 29 May 2019, page 81, [url](#)

‘Share of employment in non-agriculture, female (% of total employment in nonagriculture): 39.4%.’²⁴²

12.12.4 The same report provided the following statistics on the labour force participation rate:

‘Labour force participation rate (% ages 15 and older): 56.1%

‘Labour force participation rate (% ages 15 and older), female: 47.2%

‘Labour force participation rate (% ages 15 and older), male: 64.9%.’²⁴³

12.12.5 The OECD SIGI 2019 noted that, ‘The law provides married women with the same rights as married men to open a bank account at a formal financial institution (Law on Protection from Discrimination, art. 20).’²⁴⁴ The UNDP HDR report also noted that 38.1% of the female population aged 15 or over held an account at a financial institution or with a mobile money service provider [ie a provider which delivers financial services via mobile phones or mobile telephone networks]²⁴⁵.

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12.13 Unemployment: benefits and assistance

12.13.1 The US Social Security website provided the following information about unemployment benefit in 2016:

‘Coverage:

Employed persons.

Voluntary coverage for self-employed persons. [...]

‘Qualifying Conditions:

Must have at least one year of contributions, not be receiving any other benefits (except for partial disability), be registered at an unemployment office, and be willing to undergo training.

‘Unemployment Benefits:

A flat-rate benefit is paid for up to 12 months or for a total of 365 calendar days if the insured has temporary periods of employment.

The unemployment benefit must provide for a minimum standard of living according to law.

Child's supplement: 5% of the unemployment benefit, up to 30%, is paid to each dependent child younger than age 18 (age 25 if a university student or disabled). The supplement is reduced by 50% if one parent is employed or receiving a pension.

Benefit adjustment: Benefits are adjusted annually.’²⁴⁶

12.13.2 The European Commission’s Albania 2019 report stated:

²⁴² UNDP, HDR 2019, Albania, Gender, [url](#)

²⁴³ UNDP, HDR 2019, Albania, Work, employment & vulnerability, [url](#)

²⁴⁴ OECD, SIGI 2019, Albania, Restricted access to productive and financial resources, [url](#)

²⁴⁵ UNDP, HDR 2019, Albania, Gender, [url](#)

²⁴⁶ US Social Security, Albania, 2016, [url](#)

'Little progress was made in linking the reform of social assistance to the employment and skills development programmes available. (Ex)-beneficiaries of economic assistance received more activation support during 2018 through job mediation and attendance in vocational training courses. Attendance in the latter was newly supported through a specific employment promotion programme approved in 2018. Activation support to this category is still low and not well tailored to the particular needs of the target group.'²⁴⁷

12.13.3 The same website provided information about other types of social security payment in Albania²⁴⁸.

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12.14 Maternity leave and paid family allowances

12.14.1 The US Social Security website provided the following data about maternity leave in Albania in 2016: '365 days of maternity leave is paid for at least 35 days before and 63 days after the expected date of childbirth (for multiple births, up to 390 days for at least 60 days before and 63 days after). The monthly benefit is 80% of the insured's average daily wage in the last 12 months for the period of leave before childbirth and for 150 days after; 50% for the remaining period.'²⁴⁹

12.14.2 The UNDP Human Development Report 2019 confirmed that mandatory paid maternity leave was 365 days in 2019²⁵⁰.

12.14.3 In 2016, the US Social Security website noted that family allowances are paid to those who have 'low or inadequate income or a family member with a disability.'²⁵¹

12.14.4 The same website provided information about other types of social security payment in Albania²⁵².

12.14.5 See [Employment: women and employment law](#) for information about the law concerning maternity leave.

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²⁴⁷ European Commission, 'Albania 2019 Report,' 29 May 2019, page 79, [url](#)

²⁴⁸ US Social Security, Albania, 2016, [url](#)

²⁴⁹ US Social Security, Albania, 2016, [url](#)

²⁵⁰ UNDP, HDR 2019, Albania, Gender, [url](#)

²⁵¹ US Social Security, Albania, 2016, [url](#)

²⁵² US Social Security, Albania, 2016, [url](#)

Terms of Reference

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

For this particular CPIN, the following topics were identified prior to drafting as relevant and on which research was undertaken:

- Law on trafficking
- Trafficking
 - 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
 - Shelters
 - Financial assistance
 - Employment
 - Situation for those leaving shelters, including accommodation
- Healthcare for victims of trafficking
 - 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

Clearance

Below is information on when this note was cleared:

- Version **9.0**
- valid from **19 June 2020**

Changes from last version of this note

Both country information and assessment have been updated.

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