1. Please list existing national laws, regulations and policies establishing norms and standards for quality of education in your country. Please also include any guidelines on the quality of education.

- Law on Pre-University Education in the Republic of Albania (Law nr. 7952)
- Law on Vocational Education and Training in the Republic of Albania (Law nr 8872 amended on 23.6.2011)
- Albanian Qualification Framework (AQF), Council of Ministers Decree nr. 351, dated 21.4.2011
- Law on Higher Education in the Republic of Albania (law nr. 9741, amended)
- Law on Regulated Professions in the Republic of Albania, Law nr. 10171, dated 22.10.2009, amended
- Ministerial Order 82, dated 22.2.2011 on regulating and organizing state exams for regulated professions in the Republic of Albania
- Ministerial Order 126 dated 17.3.2011 of the Minister of Education and Science on the formal approval of state standards on the quality of evaluation and accreditation of higher education institutions
- Ministerial Orders 134/135/136 dated 21.3.2011 of the Minister of Education and Science on the formal approval of state standards on the quality of first (Bachelor) second (Master) and third cycle of studies (PhD) respectively
- Ministerial Order Nr. 110, on the Regulation for the Accreditation System of Training Programs
- Ministerial Order Nr. 7170/1 on the Qualification of School Principals and directors of education institutes

2. Please describe briefly applicable norms and standards and minimal requirements, especially with regard to following:

**School infrastructure**

Infrastructural standards on school facilities across Albania have been devised by the Austrian consulting company, IC Consulting. We are currently reviewing these standards in order to upgrade them and approximate the technical specifications to EU standards.

Data and specifications:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nr. of residents in the vicinity of schools</th>
<th>School categories</th>
<th>Age of pupils</th>
<th>Class grades</th>
<th>Nr of students per school</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Approx 2000-10000</td>
<td>Basic and Primary schools¹</td>
<td>6-11 12-15</td>
<td>1-5 6-9</td>
<td>250-500 max.600-850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx 10000-120000</td>
<td>Basic, Primary and Secondary schools</td>
<td>6-11 12-15 16-18</td>
<td>1-5 6-9 10-12</td>
<td>1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approx 60000-120000</td>
<td>Secondary schools (high schools)</td>
<td>16-18</td>
<td>10-12</td>
<td>Max. 1500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

¹ Basic education includes ages 6-15, and consists of elementary education (6-11 years of age) and upper elementary education (12-15 years of age)
In terms of class size, every pupil of the group-age between 6-10 years of age enjoys a space of 1.4 m²; every pupil of the group age between of 10-14 years of age enjoys a space of 1.5 m² and every pupil of the group age between 14-18 years of age enjoys a space of 1.6 m² in the classroom.

**Class size and pupil-teacher ratio**

During the school year 2011-2012, official records and statistics show the following structure:

**Basic education**, public and private schools considered
- Number of pupils per class: 23.17
- Pupil-teacher ratio: 16.28 pupils per 1 teacher

**Secondary education** (high schools) public and private schools considered:
- Number of pupils per class: 29.3
- Pupil-teacher ratio: 16 pupils per 1 teacher

**Teacher Qualification**

Teaching is a regulated profession in Albania. In order to qualify as a teacher, a candidate must first complete successfully higher education at the second level (Master in Education), must complete 1 mandatory year of professional training (internship) and pass the State Exam for Teachers. Once all of these requirement are met, then the candidate can qualify and ready to teach.

Teachers with 5, 10 or 20 years of experience undergo continuous training and retraining in order to upgrade their quality of teaching and to consequently qualify for higher salaries. Young and professional teachers have to constantly build their portfolio, upgrade their knowledge in their teaching subject and expand their own individual set of skills, as an added value to their profession and as a incentive for receiving rewards and bonuses at work.

Periodic qualification of teachers is necessary in order to preserve quality in education and to retain qualified teachers in the education system.

**Working conditions for Teachers and their Professional development**

Teachers have been provided with frequent opportunities to develop professionally through certified training by certified agencies that have expertise in different areas of training of teachers (per subject area, etc). The Ministry of Education and Science and the Institute of Educational Development have established the Accreditation Committee in charge of evaluating programs of training and training agencies.

With each training session, teacher accumulate training credits; at the end of the training period teachers undergo external evaluation; once they pass this test they receive a training certificate, which is added to their individual portfolio.

Certified training agencies develop training manuals according to the needs of teachers and school principals as laid out by schools, regional education directorates and education offices across the country, and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science.
School principals will also undergo certified training and qualification through programs of training conceptualized appropriately for school principals. The rules and regulations applicable to the exam for certification of trained school principles is also under way.

**School curricula content and pedagogical materials**

Starting with the academic year 2009-2010, a new school curricula for high schools (secondary education) in Albania was applied. The new curricula has been designed in consultation with key stakeholders at the central level, local level and school level. The Institute for Educational Development (IED) and the National Agency for Vocational Education, Training and Qualifications (NAVETQ) are in charge of drafting new school programs for pre-university education in consultation with key players, respectively for general schools and vocational education and training schools; the new school programs are subject to evaluating committees.

The improved curricula reflects new developments in technology and labour market trends; the new school programs are pupil-driven and pupil-centered.

With the new curricula instated, in addition to core subjects (80% of school load), high school students can take optional subjects (20% of the school load) as well. Students may take optional (non-compulsory) classes that best respond to their aptitude and preference, thanks to the new curricula designed to fit their needs and their individual appeals. This curricula offers a new range of opportunities to further develop teaching and learning while cultivating creative and critical thinking in the classroom.

Currently, there is under works the new curricula for basic and primary education, which is expected to complete within 2012. The IED has produced guiding principals and manuals with contemporary criteria for each subject taught at school and has established technical groups of experts to review the basic education curricula.

With respect to vocational education and training at the secondary level, the curricula is formatted as core subjects (framecurricula) approved at the central level (Ministry of Education and Science) and additional subjects approved at the school level which encompasses detailed modules for each vocational track, relevant to the local or regional labour market, where the schools are located.

In addition to ongoing reforms with school curricula at all levels, there is also a policy since 2006, with respect to school textbooks, the altertext. Thanks to the altertext policy, each school may select the appropriate and relevant textbook for a given subject, out of 2 to 6 competing textbooks that are offered in the market by certified publishing houses. The Ministry of Education and Science publishes informational packets on alternative textbooks, which are then shared with the recognized publishing houses, which then compete in an open process with their own textbooks. The Altertext as a process helps to increase competitiveness and quality in the content and standards of schools textbooks.

**School management, including student and parents participation**

In Albania, we have adopted decentralized management at the pre-university level whereas we have embraced higher level of autonomy of our universities.

Every educational institution at the pre-university level has its own Board composed of members of the community, parents, teachers, and pupils. The Board is responsible for setting school objectives (annual objectives and midterm objectives), approving the financial budget of the educational institution, and ensuring protection of rights for children (pupils).
At the university level, management is structured through the Council of Administration of the University, in charge of financial matters and budget planning, that includes at least one student with voting power and the Academic Senate that is also diverse in its composition, including students and non-academic staff.

In addition, students have the right to elect and be elected in independent structures such as student associations and Students’ Council. The Student Council promotes student participation in university life and coordinates their representation in governing bodies/structures of the higher education institution, in research centers and service centers. Students can also evaluate their professors based on the quality and performance in teaching the student body.

**Methods to evaluate student performance and assess learning outcomes**

At the pre-university level, pupils undergo external evaluations where they have to pass national exams at the end of 9th grade in order to continue on to secondary education and they have to pass exams at the end of 12th grade (national high school exams or State Matura) in order to continue on to university.

Student performance at the university setting is evaluated through standardized national tests, such as the State Exam for a regulated profession (i.e. Pharmacy); in class assessment through grades; active participation in seminars; preliminary and final course exams; examination for practical modules; grading of course assignments based on their critical thinking input and creativeness; as well as presentations and research papers.

Learning outcomes are assessed often through questionnaires and real input to theory and practice in a given field, such as contribution with a research paper or joint work proposal, participation in regional and international symposiums and seminars.

3. **Institutional mechanisms in Albania used to collect and process information and to assess adherence to norms and standards established to ensure quality of education**

At the pre-university level, information is collected at the local level by regional education directorates and education offices and are processed at the central level by the Statistics Department at the Ministry of Education and Science. In addition there are several subordinate bodies to the Ministry, that monitor standards and quality assurance, including the Institute for Educational Development, the National Inspectorate for Pre-University Education, the Agency for National Exams. At the university level, standards and quality assurance is monitored by the national Agency for Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions and the Ministry of Education and Science.

4. **Information on other relevant initiatives and developments aiming to promote quality in education**

One of the major reform in the education system of Albania, consists of providing for higher access to education, from kindergartens to universities. Currently, 88% of our first-graders have attended at least 1 year in kindergarten; for the second consecutive year, the progression rate from basic to secondary education is above 91%; in higher education, we have a ratio of 40 students per 1000 inhabitants in Albania which is a major achievement. We have increasingly ensured higher access to education, thanks to ongoing investments in infrastructure and human capital (training and retraining of teachers) as well as improvement to the legal framework in education.
The higher education in Albania is fully compatible with the Bologna system; university courses and programs are structured through the European Credit System.

Another equally important reform has been to integrate IT in the education system, under the national campaign of having a Digital Albania. Thus, we have wired all schools across the country with internet access, allowing for alternative teaching and learning.

Education management in our country is informed and oriented by Information Systems; integrated software applications are now used in decision-making at the institution level. We are working with two important modules, the School Infrastructure Management System (SIMS) and the Geographic Information System (GIS). Both tools are increasingly helping us to get an accurate picture of the school system and infrastructure in Albania, and come up with better solutions, while plan investments accordingly.

At the secondary level of education, the high school national exams feature European standards with 4 mandatory tests, including foreign languages. Today, our pupils are expected to speak two (2) or more foreign languages. At the end, our graduates are issued high school and university diplomas which feature an individual bar code, unique to each high school and university student, registered in the national data base of our National Agency of Exams.

In 2009, Albania was ranked five positions higher in the PISA testing, compared to the previous PISA testing, placed among three top listed countries with the highest progress attained.