

Information on child, early and forced marriage

The national legislation reflects the commitment at the issues regarding to the protection and rights. **The Law 18/2017 "On the Rights and Protection of Children"** has been approved in the Parliament in February 2017 defines the rights that every child enjoyed and child protection through the implementation of a comprehensive legal framework, the measures to secure the child the exercise of rights based on its highest interest. At the same time in this law were forecasting the efficient mechanisms and well-functioning of responsible institutions laden with concrete measures for promotion of the respect and protection of children rights. The law provides for the first time a comprehensive system for the protection of children being redefined clearly the function of institutional mechanisms and structures of the protection of the children at central and local level, which is coordinated with the new law of social services and the new legal reality and administrative of territorial division of the country.

The principle of this draft law have been reorganized and derived from the Convention on the Rights of the Child in order to adapt them to the latest legislation developments such as social protection co-operation with the protection of the child. The primary obligation of the parents is not only for their protection, but also for the provision of normal living conditions and in the event that the latter are unable to offer such a thing have the obligation to seek assistance from the state, providing individualized, personalized and specialized service to each child, listening and respecting the child's opinion, in accordance with his age and maturity. This measure seeks out the removal of children from the family simply for economic reasons, in order to apply the principle of removing the child from the family as the last resort.

For the first time the Law 18/2017 "On the Rights and Protection of Children" provides the protection measures. Under this law, the Child Protection Units will have the authority to intervene both in emergency situations and also after any signalling that may come of violence against children. The protective measures include emergency measures to relieve the child of an immediate risk, such as a child in a street situation, or a child who is found to be heavily neglected in the apartment. In some other cases, measures may be taken to remove the child from the family and to put it in alternative care when the family can endanger the integrity and safety of the child. These measures can be applied to the children who are in danger of violence, abuse, exploitation, but may also be due to neglect.

National Agenda for the Rights of the Children 2017-2020, has been approved by DCM no. 372, dated 26.4.2017, "On the adoption of the National Agenda for the Rights of the Child 2017-2020". The agenda aims is achieving of the effective protection and promotion of the rights of the children in the Republic of Albania by applying international and national standards in this field, as well promoting an integrated and comprehensive approach to the children's rights. The agenda represents a multi-disciplinary and systematic framework, which should be integrated into all national, local child-related documents, plans and other activities, which are relevant of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The consultations have been done with all line ministries, local actors, civil society organizations,

as well as the children themselves, which has followed the entire process of drafting of this Agenda.

The agenda is guided by the principle of the highest interest of the child. The vision is the creation of a favourable environment for the safe and healthy growth of children, the development of the maximum physical and psychosocial potential of children, social inclusion and active participation in all areas that affect the children lives, as well as guaranteeing the assessment of the progress of the rights of the children in key public policy areas which are related to them.

In the support of the vision of Agenda, the main strategic goals have been formulated with the respective objectives.

The strategic pillars of the Agenda are: (i) A good governance in promoting, respecting and protecting of the rights of the Children; (ii) The elimination of all forms of violence against children; and (iii). The friendly systems and services for children and adolescents: Development and Education, Justice, Health and Nutrition, and Social Protection.

The approach that has been used as an axis for the Agenda is that of children's rights. This approach regards each child as a unique and equally valuable human being, entitled not only to live and survive but also to develop to the fullest possible potential. The children can express their views by helping anyone to better understand the situation in which they can be, they can contribute actively to their experience. The children are deserved to be met their highest interest by allocating resources and implementing the foreseen rights.

Gender equality and domestic violence

The achievement of gender equality and the reduction of violence against women and girls and domestic violence are among the key priority objectives of the Albanian Government.

In cooperation and with the support of civil society and international organizations, especially UN organizations in the framework of "One UN" Programme 2012-2016, there are undertaken a series of initiatives and legal improvements; there are implemented specific policies and programs; the support structures are strengthened; the capacities of the employees engaged with these issues are build or strengthened.

Legislation

- Consistent harmonisation of the domestic legislation with the international standards by drafting Law No. 9970, dated 24.07.2008 on "Gender equality in society", Law No. 9669 dated 18.12.2006 on "Measures against domestic violence " (as amended), Law No.10221 dated 04.02.2010 on "Protection from Discrimination", and several other supportive laws or secondary legislation.
- The amendments to the Criminal Code in 2012 and 2013 came not only as a need to criminally punish domestic violence and follow the recommendations given by the CEDAW Committee in 2010, but also thanks to the joint objective of all actors for zero tolerance to

domestic violence. In addition, the introduction of harsher sanctions against perpetrators, the introduction of marital rape as a criminal offence showed that Albanian society has now changed its perception of such crimes, which only years ago were taboo.

- Amendments have also been made to the Law on Measures against Violence in Family Relations and the respective secondary legislation, enabling the establishment and functioning of specific services and referral mechanisms at the local level to respond in a coordinated manner to cases of domestic violence. The ratification of the Istanbul Convention served to give one more impetus to initiatives like the establishment of a Free Counselling Hotline for women and girls, victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence, which is available by February 2017.

- Amendments to the Law on Social Aid and Services introduced the right of women victims of violence to receive economic aid when they are subject to a protection order, the level of such aid, and the documentation that they have to submit. The improved secondary legislation also aimed at removing some restrictions on the admission criteria for victims of domestic violence in the National Centre for Treatment of Victims of Domestic Violence. Economic aid is now collected by women, which serves for a better administration of this aid to vulnerable families.

- Other significant amendments have been made to the Law on Legal Aid, which foresees, among others, the conditions, types, approach, criteria and procedures for the legal aid to be given to women victims of violence and women belonging to vulnerable groups.

- Albania signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention, CETS No. 210) on 19 December 2011. The Assembly of Albania ratified it with LawNo.104/8.11.2012 "On Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence". The Convention was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 7 April 2011 and took effect on 1 August 2014. With the ratification of the "Istanbul Convention" Albania has pledged its commitment to cooperate at the regional and international level against gender based violence and domestic violence. This commitment involves its readiness to take legislative, political and executive measures against such phenomena

Policies on gender equality and gender base violence and domestic violence

A series of strategies/action plans in the area of gender equality and fight against domestic violence, health, education, property rights, social protection, protection from discrimination, fight against trafficking in human beings, and protection for vulnerable groups (people with disabilities, Roma, etc.) have also been approved.

With DCM No.733 of 20.10.2016, was adopted the "National Gender Equality Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020". The strategy has four main strategic goals:

- Strategic Goal 1: Economic empowerment of women and men.

- Strategic Goal 2: Guaranteeing factual and equal participation of women in the politic and public decision-making.
- Strategic Goal 3: Reduction of gender-based violence and domestic violence.
- Strategic Goal 4: Empowerment of the coordination and monitoring role of the National Gender Equality Mechanism, as well as awareness-raising of the society on gender equality advancing.

The raising of the capacities for the professionals on gender equality and domestic violence (police, doctors and nurses, judges and prosecutors, forensic doctors, social workers, teachers and local coordinators against domestic violence.) The MSWY has played a special role in cooperating with the line ministries and other institutions at a central and local level, with the support of International organizations and national and local NPOs.

Awareness campaign to reduce gender-based violence and domestic violence

Albanian Government through responsible institutions organize awareness raising campaigns on a yearly basis which have led to greater public awareness of gender issues and observation of rights, as reflected in the changes to traditional attitudes and increased reporting of Violence against Women & Domestic violence (VAW&DV) to law enforcement bodies.

a) In the last years 2013-2015, the Government of Albania has organized the awareness campaign: "Men and Boys, part of the solution - Show you are against violence!" from November 25th till December 10th. In December 2016 the national campaign named "I choose to live without violence". This national campaign is a yearly campaign organized in the frame of the global one for the 16 Days of Activism against VAW&DV. The campaign as always is organized through the governmental responsible institutions in charge for the issues of gender equality and against gender-based and domestic violence, with a strong support of international organizations acting in Albania such as UN Agencies (especially UNDP, UN Women and UNFPA).

b) In July 2014, MSWY joined the UN Women "HeForShe" campaign by encouraged 30 young men and women to contribute to breaking down gender stereotypes. About 65 messages from Albanian men/boys for women/girls empowerment and support in society were posted on the "One Story" webpage".

National Referral Mechanisms

The last two years there is a significant improvement of inter-institutional cooperation and improvement of the efficiency of national referral mechanisms, such as the one on trafficking in human beings as well as the one for the protection and treatment of domestic violence cases. Although positioned at two different levels (National Referral Mechanism against trafficking in central level and NRM against domestic violence at the local level), the philosophy of these mechanisms is based on the coordinated community response and in the same division of duties and responsibility, through the establishment of Steering Committees

and Interdisciplinary Technical Equipes. National Referral Mechanism for cases of domestic violence so far resulted to be established in 31 municipalities of the country.

The National Counselling Line for Victims of Domestic Violence 116 -117 was launched on December 24 in the opening campaign of 16 days of activism against violence against women. On February 2, 2017, a round table was organized for "Presentation of Standards of Counselling Line for Victims of Domestic Violence".

In the Republic of Albania there are shelters for victims of domestic violence.

With full funding from the state budget, since April 2011, functions the National Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence under to the State Social Service, public centre.

There are 6 non-public services providers that offer residential services, two in Tirana, one in Berat, one in Korca, one in Elbasan, one in Vlora.

The Albanian Government in cooperation with UNDP is working on the establishment of emergency centers for women and girls, victims of domestic violence, who need temporary accommodation.

During 2017 have been set up, centres in Pogradec, Saranda and Permet, work is being done to support the municipality of Roskovec for the opening of such a centre.

Data collection on gender equality and domestic violence

Improving the evidence based.

- In the frame of fulfilling the legal obligation for the collection of administrative data, with the support of UNDP, was established in July 2014 a national electronic data system for registration of domestic violence cases handled locally by members of the Referral Mechanism. The system was officially launched on 1 July 2014. It's continuing the capacity building and training of local coordinators for using this system, by focusing not only in municipalities where the Referral Mechanism is already established. There are trained local coordinators for the registration of cases of domestic violence.

- National Studies. Improvement of the evidence basis is reflected also in the improvement of the quality of various important publications, i.e. INSTAT - the annual publication "Women and Men" was recently improved with addition statistical data in accordance with some harmonized gender indicators. Likewise an important study in this field is also the National Survey on "Domestic Violence" (2013), planned to be conducted every 4 years.

- Detailed and reliable data on violence against women and domestic violence are now available in the "Men and Women in Albania" Publication, 2017. <http://www.instat.gov.al/al/publications/librat/2017/burra-dhe-gra-n%C3%ABshqip%C3%ABri,-2017.aspx>