COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN ALBANIA

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The Children’s Human Rights Centre of Albania / Defence for Children International – Albanian Section (CRCA / DCI Albania) is a major child rights organisation speaking for and on behalf of children in Albania. Since 2007 CRCA / DCI Albania established a new office in Kosovo and is aiming to open regional offices in other South Eastern European countries. CRCA/DCI Albania aims to increase and strengthen Governmental and societal actions towards the protection of children's rights, while acting as a watchdog whenever children’s rights are violated. CRCA lobbies and advocates for the respect of children's rights in Albania and South Eastern Europe region. We work to build and strengthen the capacities of Governments and civil society to protect children from violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation. We build partnership for the advancement of children’s rights, while focusing on improving policies and legislation for children. Finally we want the welfare of the child to be the core of all the interventions of the Government. For this we build upon our expertise to implement new models of child care and protection services for children and families.

Coalition against Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children in Albania (ACTSEC) is a network of several major national NGO’s from children and women rights spectrum. ACTSEC is an ECPAT International affiliate. In 2007 ACTSEC established the Youth Group and together have carried out several national campaigns against child sexual exploitation. ACTSEC is leaded by the CRCA/DCI Albania and works for the elimination of child trafficking and any forms of exploitation of children. Among the major activities of the Coalition are: data collection and analysis on child labour and child sexual exploitation in Albania; campaigns against economical and sexual exploitation of children; coordination of efforts of civil society in Albania against sexual exploitation of children and improvement of policies and legislation related to exploitation of children.

ECPAT International is a global network of organisations and individuals working together for the elimination of child prostitution, child pornography and the trafficking of children for sexual purposes. It seeks to encourage the world community to ensure that children everywhere enjoy their fundamental rights free and secure from all forms of commercial sexual exploitation. The ECPAT network is composed of ECPAT groups based all over the world. In 2007, there were over 80 groups in more than 70 countries. ECPAT works to build collaboration among local civil society actors and the broader child rights community to form a global social movement for protection of children from sexual exploitation. Its membership reflects the richness and diversity of experience, knowledge and perspectives that raise form working in widely different contexts.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

- **ACEP** Electronic and Postal Communication Authority
- **ACTSEC** Albanian Coalition Against Trafficking and the Sexual Exploitation of children
- **AISEG** Albanian National Agency of Information Society and Electronic
- **CAAHT** Coordinated Action Against Human Trafficking
- **CNS** Children National Strategy
- **CRC** Convention on the Rights of the Child
- **CRCA** Children’s Human Rights Centre of Albania
- **CSEC** Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children
- **CST** Child Sex Tourism
- **CTS** Children’s Technical Secretariat
- **DCI** Defence of Children International
- **D&E** “Different & Equal” Organization
- **ECPAT** End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes
- **GASS** General Administration of Social Services
- **GoA** Government of Albania
- **IRCCRA** Information and Research Centre for Children’s Rights in Albania
- **INSTAT** Institute of Statistics of Albania
- **IOM** International Organization of Migration
- **MoLSAEO** Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
- **MoTCYS** Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports
- **NRCVT** National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking
- **NSS** National Social Services
- **NACVT** National Accommodation Centre for Victims of Trafficking
• **NPO**  Non-Profit Organization  
• **NGO**  Non-governmental organisation  
• **OSCE**  Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe  
• **SEE**  South East Europe  
• **TaCT**  Albania Coalition Together against Child Trafficking  
• **TdH**  Terre des Hommes  
• **UN**  United Nations  
• **UNICEF**  United Nations Children’s Fund  
• **UNODC**  United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Research “Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children in Albania” (CSEC) is a rapid assessment on the different forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Albania. The assessment was carried out within the framework of the Programme “Stop Child Labour and Child Trafficking in Albania”, implemented by the CRCA / DCI Albania in cooperation with ECPAT International and the Albanian Coalition against Child Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ACTSEC).

The objective of this research is to review and present the main manifestations of the child sexual exploitation in Albania. A working group was set up from January 2008 to January 2009 in order to achieve the goals and objectives of this report.

The study presents an overview of the most common forms of child sexual exploitation in Albania, focusing in particular on the analysis of the new trends and the factors contributing to the latest developments. The report also provides a review of the legislation and policies relating to commercial sexual exploitation of children and looks at the role of government institutions, international organisations, non-governmental agencies and the media in addressing the problem. A list of recommendations summarising some of the main priority actions required to effectively tackle and prevent CSEC in Albania concludes the assessment.

Some of the major findings of this research are as follows:

- **The Albanian Government, at both local and national level, has failed to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation.** Albania continues to be a country where children are prostituted, trafficked, used for the making of pornography and for child sex tourism. Although the Government at local and national level has been taking serious measures to fight and eliminate child trafficking, CSEC still thrives because of organised crime networks, corruption of police and lack of child care and protection. Poverty, lack of respect for particularly vulnerable human beings and insufficient and inadequate governmental social support structures for children at local level continuously put children at risk of being exploited.

- **The fight against child trafficking has had some positive effects on protecting children from cross-border trafficking, but the same cannot be said about internal trafficking.** The combat against this crime shall start from within the country, where internally trafficked children end up being used for prostitution, begging or other forms of exploitation.

- **Children who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation are turning into recruiters or pimps for exploiting younger children.** Most of the sexually exploited children consider it very hard to get out of the exploitative circle, part of which they have become. This factor, combined with others, forces them to remain within this circle and even to become involved in the recruitment of other children.

- **The Government of Albania, especially at local level, has not taken any measures to protect children from entering into child sex tourism,** at a time when tourism in Albania is increasing considerably. Furthermore, law enforcement agencies and tourism operators have very limited information on child sex tourism and on how to protect children from being exploited. Without appropriate policies and mechanisms in place, Albania risks to become a relatively “safe” destination in Europe for sexual exploitation of children in tourism.

- **Child pornography remains a limited phenomenon.** However, the increase in internet use throughout the country combined with the Governmental policy to make internet available at every school of Albania could pose a serious threat to children. This threat is further increased by the lack of laws that make it obligatory for Internet Service Providers to provide safe internet to children. Finally, the new amendments of the Criminal Code did not make the...
possession of child pornography a criminal offence. This increases the risks for child abuse images being used by offenders without being criminalised for their actions.

- **The improvement of economy and changes in the social structure of Albania did not yield the expected positive impacts on child protection.** Although children and young people constitute one of the largest groups of society, public attention and adequate funding have not focused enough on their care, protection, education and related issues. This in itself shows that Albania lacks child-programming and as a consequence children services are poorly funded or rather non-existent.

- The fight against child sexual exploitation requires coordination among all the structures of the Government at local and national level. However, Albania **lacks a National Agency of Child Protection**, able to coordinate the governmental responses for children and promote public policy implementation throughout the country. This decreases the opportunities of the Government to successfully fight sexual exploitation of children. The gap in coordination provides less possibility for children to be protected and more opportunities to organised crime networks to exploit children.

- **The changes in the Criminal Code of Albania have not achieved their expected outcomes.** Although under the new criminal provisions child exploitation, child pornography, child abuse and sale of children are punishable, the public institutions and justice system have so far failed to hold responsible or punish those who sexually or economically exploit children.

- **Although Albania has approved several public policies, so far only few of them have been fully implemented.** The National Strategy for Children, the Anti-trafficking Strategy and relevant Action Plans remain more a wish-list of the Governmental institutions rather than a set of measures to eliminate sexual exploitation of children. None of the above-mentioned policies have a budget, while the national implementation mechanisms consist of few offices or few people without any power to implement the policies and action plans.
I. INTRODUCTION

Albania is still thriving to achieve a stable democracy. The new reform programme, which commenced in mid 2005, lead to a comprehensive redefinition of central and local government institutions and represents one of the most important institutional reforms of the transition period. This restructuring has resulted in a rise in the level of democracy, a more efficient government and a reduction in corruption.

Albania counted 3.3 million inhabitants in 2003, with one third or approximately 1.024 million of them being children. From 1944 to 1991, Albania was under a totalitarian communist rule that isolated the country from the rest of the world. After 1990, Albanians have been exposed to new phenomena such as immigration and internal migration that have affected the re-distribution of the population in the regions and prefectures. A free and uncontrolled movement of the population brought about a change in the ratio between rural and urban populations within the country.

An Albanian family has approximately 4.2 members (in 2005). Regardless from the economic growth of the last decade, poverty remains widespread, with 18.6 percent of 700,000 Albanian families living in poverty and 3.3 percent of the population living in extreme poverty. According to the World Bank, the price increase of 2007 brought also an increase of poverty in Albania. Children are among the most vulnerable groups suffering the consequences of poverty, be they part of poor families or not.

Albania lacks centralised legislation for children. Most of the legal norms are found as part of other non-child related ones. Although the Albanian Constitution places an important emphasis on the protection of children and their rights, this was materialised in laws or policies quite late.

In recent years the development of new legislation has started to emphasise the importance of protecting children from abuse and exploitation, thanks to several joint-initiatives of NGOs with public institutions. In the area of public policy there have been some achievements. Several national strategies and action plans are in place, such as the National Strategy for Children, the National Youth Strategy, and the National Strategy for Protection of Children from Trafficking etc., which constitute the main focus of the work of the Albanian Government in the next forthcoming years.

However, most of the national strategies remain more as a gesture of good will of the Government rather than an action plan for the improvement of the concrete children’s situation in the country. Public institutions often lack financial and human resources to implement these programmes as the national budget over the years hasn’t foreseen any expenditure related to their realisation.

Albania ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) through a Presidential Decree on February 1992. The CRC entered into force on March of the same year, but a semi-official translation of the Convention was made available to Government institutions only on June 2001.

Albania presented its report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child thirteen years after the ratification of CRC. Despite the Committee recognised the efforts of Albania, it criticised the Government in several areas of child protection such as trafficking, juvenile justice and commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC).

Child sexual exploitation is not a new issue in Albania. Although during recent years the Government at central and local level has been improving their policies concerning children, child abuse and neglect, child trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC), violence against children in public and private institutions are some of the major violations that hinder the respect of children’s rights in the country.

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1 Albania in Figures, INASTAT 2005
2 Albania in Figures, INASTAT 2005
3 INSTAT, 2005
II. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Objectives

The following are the objectives to be achieved by this study:

- Gather and analyse qualitative and quantitative data related to CSEC in Albania;
- Undertake a rapid assessment of the main children’s groups vulnerable to commercial sexual exploitation;
- Define and situate the various forms of CSEC in Albania and identify their latest trends;
- Develop a critical review of the Albanian national policies and legislation in the area of CSEC;
- Describe the role and actions being promoted by the main agencies (government bodies, international organisations, NGOs etc.) involved in addressing and preventing CSEC as well as in providing assistance to victims;
- Elaborate a list of recommendations aiming to improve the situation of children exposed or being victimized by the commercial sexual exploitation in Albania.

2.2 Methodology and encountered difficulties

Experts working on the compilation of this research have used the cross-examination method between primary and secondary sources. In order to secure primary information, interviews with representatives of state institutions and non-government agencies working with/for children victims of sexual exploitation have been organized. Focus groups and interviews with children and young people have also taken place. The Annex 2 of this study provides a list of institutions visited and people interviewed by the research team.

Another method used was the review of secondary resources, including desk-research of reports and materials on CSEC in Albania and abroad. An analysis of the existing statistics has been undertaken. Policies and legislation on commercial sexual exploitation in Albania has also been reviewed, comparing national legal measures with international legislation and standards on the same subject.

A number of difficulties and obstacles have been encountered by the researchers during the drafting of this report. In the majority of cases, such issues have been overcome by using secondary sources or through double-checking techniques.

The researchers had to face a situation of lack of studies specifically about CSEC. Although not a determinant factor, the existence of such pre-existing knowledge base would have helped the researchers in their efforts for a comparative data analysis and identification of trends. The majority of studies available tackle the issue of child trafficking only, being this phenomenon very widespread in Albania since years.

Another difficulty was the lack of specific data/statistics on other forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children such as child pornography and sexual exploitation of children in tourism. These CSEC manifestations have emerged in Albania only recently and therefore limited attention has been devoted to analysing them from both a quantitative and qualitative point of view.

2.3 Definitions used in this research

Commercial sexual exploitation of children refers to a serious children’s rights violation and to those criminal practices that demean and threaten the physical and psychosocial integrity of children. ECPAT International defines CSEC as “the sexual abuse by the adult and remuneration in cash or kind to the child or a third person or persons.” The child is treated as a sexual and commercial object.\(^4\)

Commercial sexual exploitation of children is also one of the most hazardous forms of child labour\(^5\).

The primary, interrelated forms of CSEC are prostitution of children, child pornography and trafficking of children for sexual purposes. Other


\(^5\) ILO Convention No 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour.
forms include child sex tourism, and in some cases, child marriage. Children can also be commercially sexually exploited in other, less obvious ways, such as through domestic servitude or bonded labour. In these cases, a child is contracted to provide work but the employer believes that the child can also be used for sexual purposes.\(^6\)

For the purposes of this study, the definitions of the main manifestations of commercial sexual exploitation of children are based on the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of children, Child prostitution and Child pornography (Optional Protocol), on the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (the UN Trafficking Protocol), and on the definitions elaborated by ECPAT International. Below are the definitions of the main forms of child sexual exploitation:

**Child Prostitution:** “The use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration”, (Art. 2. b, Optional Protocol).

**Child pornography:** “Child pornography means any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes”, (Art. 2. c, Optional Protocol).

**Child Sex Tourism:** “is the commercial sexual exploitation of children by people who travel from one location to another and there engage in sexual acts with minors”.\(^7\)

**Child trafficking as defined in the UN Trafficking Protocol:** trafficking in persons is the “recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or similar practices, servitude or the removal of organs. [...] The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered trafficking in persons even if this does not involve any of the means” mentioned above.”\(^8\)


\(^8\) Article 3 of the UN Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.
III. IDENTIFYING PUSH FACTORS AND CHILDREN’S GROUPS VULNERABLE TO SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

Sexual exploitation of children constitutes sexual abuse from an adult, or from someone having the same age of the victim who exercises some form of manipulation, threat or power over the victim. It involves financial or in-kind benefits for the child, a family member, a third person etc. The child is considered as a sexual and commercial object. He or she is used in prostitution or any other form of CSEC. Commercial sexual exploitation of children represents a form of coercion and violence against the child and is equal to forced labour and modern slavery.

3.1 Commercial sexual exploitation of children – demand, supply and push factors

The child exploiters (a typical profile is described in table 1) act in circumstances where a great number of people are desperately searching for a better life due to poverty, lack of job opportunities, or due to personal difficulties. On the other side there is a demand for their labour or services in another part of Albania or to another country.

The largest portion of the “demand” relates to sexual services. However, the victims are not always aware of the fact that they are going to be sexually exploited; quite often they believe that they will engage in a respectable job. In other words, exploitation can start off as an exploitation of someone’s labour and it can end up being an exploitation of a sexual nature.

There are different categories of factors pushing children into commercial sexual exploitation. They are quite complex and include the socio-economic and family-related backgrounds. A list of factors making children vulnerable is outlined in the box.

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**TABLE 1 - The profile of a Child Exploiter**

- Usually adult male;
- Between 19-40 years old;
- Has a sexual relationship, friendship or a family connection with the victim;
- Comes from urban areas and in few cases from rural ones;
- Is single;
- Is involved or has connections with organised local and regional criminal groups or networks;
- Has a past history of criminal or anti-social behaviour.

**TABLE 2 - Profile of a Child Victim**

- Between 13-18 years old;
- Single;
- Poor and socially excluded;
- Comes from a family with broken relationship or in crisis;
- Have a history of abuse and neglect from early childhood;
- Often is looking for a better life or trying to escape the reality they live in;
- In many cases they have not followed the obligatory education or have attended few classes.

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9 The Fight against Commercial Sexual Exploitation: Trainers Guide for Various Groups of Decision-Makers such as Law Enforcement Authorities, Social Workers and Caretakers.
3.2 Children living on the streets

Children living or spending a long time on the streets represent the most exploited, most vulnerable and less protected group of children. They are exposed to several risks, including maltreatment, insecurity, violence, and malnutrition. In Tirana only, there are more than 800 children that make a leaving out of begging, selling items, shoe-polishing etc.  

According to the UNICEF and Terre des Hommes, there have been several reports showing an increase in the numbers of children being trafficked within Albania for begging on the streets from 2005.  

Apart from being vulnerable to economic exploitation, street children are also at risk of being exploited for sexual purposes. Since they try to make money for their families or their tutors, street children are easily deceived by promises for a better job with a higher income. It is therefore very easy for traffickers to recruit and involve them in the networks of commercial sexual exploitation and organized crime.

3.3 Early and false marriages/promises of marriage

There are several stories in Albania which illustrate how young girls have become sexually exploited after being married or being promised in marriage at a young age (see the case study illustrated in table 5).

--- Table 4 ---

**GETS FIANCÉ WITH A 17 YEARS OLD GIRL IN ORDER TO “SELL” HER IN KOSOVO**

Tirana, 14 June 2007 - A girl, only 17 years old, was trafficked and sexually exploited in Kosovo by a 33 years old man (named Kera) from Tirana, who had tricked her parents. The man got engaged to the girl only for actually sexually exploiting her. Officially the two were fiancé and had also exchanged rings. It seems that everything was going fine, till sometime in October 2005 Kera said that he had a new

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10 National Strategy on Children, Republic of Albania, Committee on Equal Opportunities.


employment opportunity in Kosovo. Together with the girl they moved to Kosovo but as soon as they got there, he forced his young fiancé into prostitution. The parents allowed him to take her in Kosovo, without knowing what job was waiting for him or her.

The 17 years old girl was caught and rescued by the UNMIK Police. Before being sent back to Albania, she was hosted for several months by IOM in Kosovo.

Meanwhile, an international search warrant was issued by the Albanian Police, towards Kera.

The Prosecutor’s Office of Tirana said the man was charged with organizing prostitution and trafficking of minors, and his case was sent for trial to the Court of Tirana. Since the investigation started A.T., the victim, is in hiding.

This is only one of the dozen stories where “the potential husbands” come to the family to ask “officially” to get fiancé with young girls. As soon as this happens, these men find a reason to get away from Albania to another country, where the girls instead of a family life are exploited in the sex industry.

The method of false or early marriages has been widespread especially since early 90’s and still continues to thrive.

Recent data on child sexual exploitation shows that girls as young as 14 are being deceived and used for prostitution by their boyfriends within Albania. The victims come from smaller towns and cities across the country, while being exploited mainly in Tirana. In the opinion of experts, early and false marriages (or fake promises of marriage) are some of the methods to recruit young girls in order to sexually exploit them for profit-making13.

The analysis of the interviews conducted for this research confirms that many young girls are attracted into love relationships or promises for marriage by young Albanian men living abroad or in larger cities. Some of the child exploiters marry their young victims in order to camouflage their illicit activities of sexual exploitation. This is a new trend and during 2006-2007 several motels in Tirana were raided by the Police Authority. In more than one case the Police found that young girls were used for prostitution within the premises by the clients of the hotels.

3.4 Children exploited for labour

Child labour is not a hidden phenomenon. It is one of the major forms of commercial exploitation of children in Albania. Often it is combined with other child rights violations such as trafficking, sexual abuse and exploitation and in fewer cases with the use of children for distribution of drugs.

Child labour is widely spread throughout the country and is present in both rural and urban areas. In urban areas child labour is represented mainly in two forms: industrial non-contractual employment and working for the family. The main industries where children are working include: tourism, textile and construction. Meanwhile children working for their families are included in jobs such as street vendors, window cleaning, begging or carrying for younger children. In rural areas children often are expected to provide care for their younger

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siblings or work in family farms\textsuperscript{14}. Although children are being exploited for labour, there are no accurate data available at the national level. Nonetheless it is correct to say that this activity is widespread in Albania\textsuperscript{15}.

The Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) estimates that 9.8 percent of children aged 6-14 years are involved in labour. According to INSTAT, only 0.3 percent of children work in urban areas, while in the rural areas work 16 percent of children aged 6-14. Most of the children attended school, while only 8.9 percent claimed that they dropped out. The data indicates also that 2 percent of child labourers were involved in the services sector, while most of them, about 95.6 percent, were involved in agriculture\textsuperscript{16}.

Working children are at great risk to be sexually exploited. Their difficult situation is exacerbated by poverty and social exclusion. Child labourers usually come from families who have migrated from rural areas to smaller towns or cities. They display signs of neglect from their families and this can be easily used by exploiters to deceive the child. Child labour makes children more vulnerable as it exposes them to exploitative situations within and outside their families.

3.5 Children of Roma and Egyptian communities

Roma children live in extreme poverty conditions and they face many difficulties including social exclusion. A good part of them and their families live by begging in the streets. During the summer season, Roma children, especially those living around the border area with Greece, leave Albania to work in Greece. This makes Roma and Egyptian children more exposed to the risk of being trafficked or sexually exploited\textsuperscript{17}.

3.6 Children with limited or no access to education

Education of children is an important factor that might increase or decrease the vulnerability of a child to commercial sexual exploitation. There is a general consideration that education is a tool towards a more secure environment for the child.

In some remote areas of Albania there is no access to education and children have to travel several hours to attend school. This makes the parents associate school with potential danger. Such beliefs exist due to the social, economic and cultural contexts the families live in.

In rural areas, there is a common belief that if girls don’t attend school they are safer and protected from abuse and exploitation.

There is of course a different, urban mentality of parents living in the cities. They do not think that school keeps children away from troubles. However, although these parents want their kids to go to school, their economic conditions force the children to work and take on the responsibility to contribute to the revenues of the families. Marginalized families face economic hardship. They seek for different ways to cope with life, to improve their living standard and adapt to an urban lifestyle.

It must be said that there are many factors that influence the life experience of a child and his/her approach towards school. Children actually have quite different school experiences, many of them being negative experiences. This means that it is impossible to identify education as a stand-alone factor that increases or decreases the risk for a child to be exploited\textsuperscript{18}.

3.7 Consequences of commercial sexual exploitation of children

The consequences of commercial sexual exploitation are not limited to the victim only.

\textsuperscript{14} “Child Labour and street children in Albania” – A research into economical exploitation and forced child labour in Albania. Published by CRCA, November 2005.


\textsuperscript{17} Children Speak Out: Trafficking Risk and Resilience in Southeast Europe, Save the Children Albania, July 2007.

\textsuperscript{18} Idem.
They go further, involving the child’s social circle, the community level and the country level. In light of this, three levels of consequences can be identified: macro, micro and interpersonal.

a) Consequences at the macro level

These consequences affect the country, the state and the people living in it as follows:

i. On the national economy. If a country has a large number of sexually exploited children, substantial financial means have to be allocated from the state budget in order to ensure care, protection and rehabilitation victims.

ii. On the image of the country. A country that is known for being affected by commercial sexual exploitation projects a negative image of itself.

iii. Increase in corruption. Corruption is used by child exploiters, traffickers and tutors alike to make their activities easier to handle. They practice corruption at all levels, from the police officers to the prosecutors or the judges. Corruption is also one of the reasons why children do not denounce their exploiters or the reason why they often withdraw their cases.

iv. Increased levels of organized crime. Commercial sexual exploitation of children is closely linked to organized crime and, as such, its increase usually results in a rise of criminal networks. To fight the organised crime there is always a need for more financial and human resources to be made available. In the case of Albania, this is a strain for public finances.

b) Consequences at the micro level

Consequences at the micro level are those that make children loose their independence and their capacity to manage their life in an appropriate manner. They suffer from long-term negative effects related to their health and their lifestyle. They can be faced with stigma in their families or their communities once they come back or are reintegrated in such contexts. Some of them will be involved in criminal activities. Other consequences include: loss in family values; forwarding a negative model to other children and the society at large; causing family problems; self-isolation and lack of socialisation.

c) Consequences at the interpersonal level

Interpersonal consequences are very deep and they put a psychological and emotional burden on the child. Children that are subjected to commercial sexual exploitation go through physical and/or sexual abuse, very often of an extreme nature. Children are beaten, raped, tortured and sometimes killed. They undergo such treatment at a young age, at a time when they should be learning at school, playing and socialising. The consequences are thus devastating and they impair every aspect of the child’s life.

The most common consequences at the interpersonal level which can be found among sexually exploited children include: impairment of a child’s future; psychological disorders; poor mental and physical health; representing a negative model for other children; impeding children to enjoy their childhood; preventing children from attending school and get an education; positioning of children as potential sex workers or recruiters.
IV. THE MAIN FORMS OF COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN ALBANIA

Commercial sexual exploitation of children in Albania became apparent after 1990 as a result of political, economic and social changes occurred over the same period in the country. Despite child trafficking for sexual purposes and child prostitution remain the two main manifestations of commercial sexual exploitation, the production of child abuse images and the sexual exploitation of children in tourism have also emerged in recent years, posing new challenges to child protection agencies.

The following is a rapid analysis of the most common forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Albania, based on data and interviews made available from the Ministry of Interior, other relevant public institutions, NGOs and media in Albania.

4.1 Child Prostitution

Statistics on the number of children involved in prostitution in Albania are difficult to provide.

According to the data of the National Police Authority and those of Tirana Magistrate Court, during the first five months of 2008 there was an increase of 50 percent of the criminal proceedings for prostitution related offences, compared with the previous year\(^{19}\). To note that under the *Criminal Code*, the exercise of prostitution is a crime punishable by a fine or up to three years of imprisonment; as such, number of prosecutions started by authorities also include this offence.

Table 5 shows court data on sentencing of people charged on running prostitution rings during the period 2005-2008. However, the court data on article 114/a does not show specifically mention how many of these sentences were for exploitation of children for prostitution.

On the other hand, according to the Ministry of Interior, during the period 2006-07 twenty two cases of "sexual exploitation" following article 114/a of the Penal Code of Albania have been identified, with only one of them involving a minor\(^{20}\).

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\(^{19}\) Newspaper “Korrieri”, 1 June 2008.

\(^{20}\) Information provided by the National Directorate of Severe Crimes of the Department of Investigation of Severe Crimes, at the General Directorate of Albanian Police.
by stigma and prejudices attached to prostitution\textsuperscript{21}.

Although there is a lack of data on number of children exploited for prostitution, there is a general belief among the experts that this form of child sexual exploitation has been significant during the pick of child trafficking.

Several interviews with NGO representatives and young girls victims of trafficking have also revealed that children involved in prostitution are continuously in danger of being re-victimised, even when rescued from the sex market. Some of the victims may continue to exercise abortion also when they are freed from their pimps or may even turn into recruiters or pimps (see table 6). This may happen for a number of reasons. Often these children feel hopeless and are under the impression that prostitution is the only form of survival. Combined with a lack of social and psychological support, this may lead the victims to fall in prostitution again or even to start exploiting other children.

\begin{table}[h]
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\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
\textbf{GIRL ARRESTED FOR EXPLOITING A CHILD FOR PROSTITUTION\textsuperscript{22}}
\hline
\textbf{18-years old girl, born in Korça and living in Tirana, arrested by Police}
\hline
\textbf{Durrës, January 2007 – J. Caka, a 18-year old girl, born in Korça and living in Tirana, was arrested in January 2007 by the Police Authority. The police sources of Police Directorate said that they had arrested J.C. because she had exploited for prostitution another young girl. The victim is E.S., a 14-year old girl from Durrës.}
\hline
The young exploiter had tricked the 14-year old girl by promising to find her a job in Tirana that would change the victim’s life and that of her family. The young girl believed in this promise and followed J.C to Tirana, who arranged a hotel room for the victim. Later on the exploiter presented E.S. to several guys, who exploited the girl sexually. The 18-years old girl had also found a job as a waitress for the victim, who was working there while also being sexually exploited. Being worried for their daughter, the parents of the victim called the police, which after few days of searching found the young victim in a pub in Tirana.
\hline
The Police interviewed the girl and it was her who told the police the name of her exploiter and of other people involved in this criminal activity. After the arrest of the 18-years old J. Caka, the police started further investigation to discover any prostitution networks that use motels and hotels between Tirana and Durrës for illicit activities.
\hline
\end{tabular}
\caption{GIRL ARRESTED FOR EXPLOITING A CHILD FOR PROSTITUTION\textsuperscript{22}}
\end{table}

There is no information or data on boys involved in prostitution in Albania. However, contrary to the general opinion stating that boys are not commercially sexually exploited, many child rights experts believe that boys prostitution is yet a hidden phenomenon and some anecdotes tend to raise some doubts on the existence of boys’ prostitution.

"I was driving one day and I was right in the Centre of Tirana, where the Boulevard "Deshmoret e Kombit", the main bridge and Boulevard "Bajram Curri” cross with each other. The place is like 100 meters from the Prime-ministers and Parliament offices. It is a known place for very young children, their siblings and parents to stay and beg there all year around.

It was about 8-9 o’clock at night and the traffic lights were red. I was watching a crowd of 4-5 young children begging to all the cars that had stopped. One of the boys knocked on my window and since I didn’t give any coins, he moved to the car beside me. It was a Porsche Cayen, a fancy new black car. The driver was no older than 25 and he smiled to the young beggar. They started to talk about something and then within few seconds the boy went inside the car on the passenger seat. He looked so happy and so did the driver. As soon as the traffic lights turned green, the car went on with the young boy on it. I really don’t know what happened with the child, as things happened very fast, but I suspected..."

4.2 Child Abuse Images and Self-Victimization of Children

Based on the data and interviews conducted, it appears that the institutions are not aware of cases of child abuse images in Albania. Statistical data of the Ministry of Interior indicate that there are no child victims of "pornography" as defined in the article 117 of the Penal Code.\(^{24}\)

Nonetheless, this doesn’t mean that this manifestation of CSEC does not exist. Several media sources show that there have been some instances where children have been victimized in the production of pornography. The main tool for distributing child abuse images has been the mobile phone, rather than the internet.

As in many countries of the world children in Albania have in fact their own mobile phones and distribution of pornographic materials through Bluetooth technology has become quite a trend for young people. Cases of self-victimization whereby teenagers engage in the process of both creating and distributing inappropriate materials are increasingly occurring.

Internet is almost new in Albania. Data from International Telecommunication Union (ITU) show that there are 471,200 Internet users as of August 2007, or otherwise 15.3 percent of the population. However, if the data is compared with the previous years, we can see that from 2006 to 2007 the internet usage in Albania increased 6.2 times or otherwise almost 650 percent.

Presently, there is a governmental policy to support the establishment of computer centres and internet in every school of Albania. This large project is making internet available not only to schools in urban centres but also in rural areas. Although this is a positive measure, the lack of safe internet measures could potentially result in offenders getting easily in contact with children.

The Albanian Government has also established the Albanian National Agency of Information Society and Electronic Government (AISEG), whose role is to design public policies for the improvement of public telecommunication in Albania, including the internet.

Alongside with this body, an independent authority for electronic and postal communications – ACEP – has been set up. ACEP is the sole authority and market regulator and the members of its Board are elected by the Parliament. ACEP supervises and provides operating licenses to all the companies or business to work in the Albanian market of telephony, internet and postal communications. According to ACEP, Albania doesn’t have any structure in place that controls or monitors the internet content or access to internet websites from private individuals through Albanian registered ISPs. The ACEP supervises and administers only the technical conditions and specifications for ISPs, but its mandate doesn’t foresee the content checking of internet services providers in Albania.

This means that every person in Albania can easily access child pornography on the internet without fearing any legal prosecution. Despite the criminal law prohibits the distribution of child pornography on the internet, it does not criminalize the downloading or possession of such materials. On the other hand, pornographic website can be easily accessed by every child or young person in Albania, despite their age.

A recent unpublished Report on internet safety and child pornography in Albania has confirmed that “although Albania ratified the Convention on Cyber Crimes (2002), unfortunately it has not yet adopted any laws or normative act by which the ISP are obliged by law to contribute on the prevention of the publishing and expansion of the child pornography materials notwithstanding by blocking them automatically.” This represents a big challenge which requires attention and immediate targeted action.

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\(^{23}\) Interview with a CRCA child-rights activist in Tirana, 2007.

\(^{24}\) Information provided by the National Directorate of Severe Crimes of the Department of Investigation of Severe Crimes, at the General Directorate of Albanian Police.
TABLE 7:

**Ex-boyfriend shares via mobile phone Bluetooth the intimate video of his young girlfriend**

Lushnje, October 2007 – A 16 years old girl from Lushnja has been facing immense trauma because a video of her and her boyfriend engaged in intimate moments has been widely distributed throughout Albania from the ex-boyfriend’s mobile phone.

The sharing of the video appears to be a revenge of the ex-boyfriend, 19 years old, against his girlfriend and her family. It seems that the boyfriend, upset after the break up of the relationship, threatened the girl to take revenge if they didn’t keep their relationship. When the girl didn’t give up to his requests, their intimate video began to be distributed. He first shared the video to his closest friends. Then it was circulated via Bluetooth from one mobile to another and became quickly widely shared among adolescents and adults throughout Albania.

The girl said that she didn’t have any idea of how the video was registered, but most probably it was taken while the boy was pretending he was calling someone.

This is not an isolated case and it is believed that there are at least two other intimate videos of students from high schools that are circulating at the moment in Albania.

4.3 Child Sex Tourism

The Ministry of Tourism, Youth and Sports of Albania reported that more than 1.6 million tourists visited Albania in 2006, with an increase of 22 percent compared to the previous year. Although the data for 2007 are not available yet, it is estimated that some 2 million tourists visited the country, most of them Albanians from Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro.

The sexual exploitation of children in tourism is not yet a very common phenomenon in Albania. Nonetheless several cases have been reported by media and NGO’s, even though very few of them have ended up in investigation and prosecution. The increase of tourism in Albania, whether national or international, and the existence of internal trafficking, increases the risk for children to become victims of child sex tourism.

Also interviews conducted with representatives of public institutions have confirmed that exploitation of children in sex tourism is closely linked to internal child trafficking and is on the rise and spreading in Albania. The towns where the female children are sexually exploited in the tourism industry include Tirana, Durres, Vlore, and Saranda, i.e. the capital, big towns and sea-port towns. This happens especially in the summer during the high tourism season.

An infamous case of child sex tourism occured in May 2007, when the Director of an orphanage in Tirana called “His Children Home” was charged for sexually abusing children and for supplying children to foreign visitors for the purpose of sexual abuse (through advertisements on the Internet). Two Scottish men who were working at the orphanage were later on arrested by British Police Authorities and extradited to Albania in May 2008. The case is still proceeding at the Tirana Magistrates Court. While D.B. was convicted to 20 years jail, decision regarding the other two offenders has not yet been taken (for more details, see table below).

TABLE 8: THE D.B. CASE

**ACCUSED OF PAEDOPHILIA**

**D.B. partners in crime extradited from London to Albania**

Tirana, May 2008 - As a result of cooperation between Interpol Albania and Interpol UK, two British citizens D. C., 45, and J. A., 56, will be tried in Albania for child sexual abuse in the Children’s Home of the Foundation “His Children” managed by D.B.

**D.B. was arrested on 16 May 2006**, after a complaint to the Tirana Prosecutors Office by a Dutch citizen. Based on the information from the

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26 Source Balkanweb:
Prosecutors, D.B. came to Albania on 1999 and was affected by the poverty of Roma children. Two years later he would establish the Foundation “His Children” to assist the Roma children in Tirana. Children were living in the Foundation’s premises, which were then serving as a Home for Children. D.B. knew D.C., and Scottish J.A., because they sponsored the Foundation with large sums of money. They are accused that during their visits in Albania and specifically to the Foundation, they have abused of several children aged between 3-13 years old.

Police Inspectors of Albanian Interpol extradited from London the two partners of D.B. accused of child sexual abuse in “His Children’s Home” Foundation. D.C., 45, is a Greek-British citizen, while J.A., 56, is from Scotland. They landed at Mother Teresa Airport of Tirana accompanied by Albanian police officers. The news was confirmed by State Police that stated that their extradition was based on the Tirana Magistrate Court Order 153 of 13.02.2007. The court had previously decided on 28.06.2007 that if arrested both British citizens were to be placed immediately to a pre-trial detention centre. D.C. and J.A. are accused of “Sexual Relations and homosexual relations with children”, based on Article 100 of the Criminal Code of Albania.

The Lawsuit

D.B., 57, was the only one sitting on the bench of the Tirana Magistrates Court. His case has been divided in three parts. In the first case, one of his staff, the cook, was tried for perversion of course of justice. The cook of the Foundation admitted to the court that he had already known that children were being sexually abused, but he never went to tell about it to the relevant authorities. The second trial is that of D.B. himself [convicted to 20 years in a maximum-security jail in Albania in November 2008] while the third one was suspended because both suspects D.C. and J.A. were absent. Now that they have been extradited from England to Albania, their trial shall start very soon.

Institutions (public and private), while a service licensing process was reinforced and checks were carried out.

Another initiative to prevent and address CST which was recently promoted is the Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (the Code) signed in November 2007 by some 22 tour and hotel operators in Albania. The signing ceremony was jointly organised by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Ministry of Tourism, the Ministry of Interior and the signatory organisations. Follow-up activities have included a national awareness campaign at border-crossings and a campaign targeting tour operators, as well as the preparation of a training manual and a training course for the Code signatories, organised by the OSCE27.

Despite these initial efforts to combat and prevent CST especially at national level, appropriate policies and mechanisms to avoid that Albania becomes a relatively “safe” destination in Europe for sexual exploitation of children in tourism are not yet in place.

The Albanian penal legislation does not have any specific provisions related to child sex tourism, (although most of the criminal offences are covered in other articles related to child abuse, rape, child pornography etc.) and criminal records show very little or nothing if the child was used for child sex tourism. The national policies such as the Anti-trafficking strategy or the National Strategy for Children do not contain provisions for the protection of children from sexual exploitation in tourism. Furthermore law enforcement agencies and tourism operators have very limited information on child sex tourism and on how to protect children from being exploited in this sector, and have therefore not adopted a proactive approach to tackling this specific CSEC manifestation.

4.4 Cross-border child trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation

Child trafficking for sexual exploitation is one of the most common forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children in Albania.

According to the US State Department report of 2008, Albania remains a member of the second group of countries (Tier 2) that continue to be faced with the issue of human trafficking. Albania is a source country for women and girls trafficked for the purpose of commercial sexual exploitation and forced labour; it is no longer considered a major country of transit. Albanian victims are trafficked to Greece, Italy, Macedonia, and Kosovo, with many trafficked onward to Western European countries such as the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Norway, Germany, and the Netherlands. Approximately half of all Albanian trafficking victims are under age 18. Internal sex trafficking of women and children is particularly on the rise (see next paragraph).

Since 2005, a moratorium was introduced on the use of dinghies and speed boats. However, according to representatives of the Vatra Centre in Vlore, trafficking in persons is still occurring. They admit that girls are trafficked through Karaburuni, Dhërmi and the delta of the Vjosa River on speed-boats. They have also stated that these speed-boats were transporting mainly drugs, especially during late 2004 and during 2005-2006.

However, during the last few years information from countries in South Eastern Europe shows that there is a trend of sub-regional trafficking and smuggling routes of children and young women. Albanian citizens can travel visa free to Montenegro, Kosovo and Macedonia. The UNODC in the “Global Report on trafficking in persons” stated that Kosovo and Macedonia are some of the major trafficking destinations of children and women, including from Albania.

Data from the shelters for victims of trafficking shows that during 2006-2007, there have been 39 young girls hosted at the National Accommodation Centre for Victims of Trafficking, 44 girls at the Vatra (Hearth) Centre in Vlore, and 57 girls at the Re-integration Centre for Albanian Victims of Trafficking run by Centre “All Different - All Equal”.

Child trafficking for sexual purposes continues to exist and often it is run in cooperation with corrupt police officers, who facilitate the process of illegal border crossing or provide protection to the traffickers.

In 2007 The Ministry of Interior referred to the Public Prosecutors Office 157 criminal cases for corruption or trafficking against 219 police officers, while 44 of them were arrested. Out of these cases 4 criminal cases against 12 police officers were referred to the Prosecutors on charges for illegal border crossing.

In June 2007 a structured criminal group of 9 people, 4 of them being police officers, were arrested and charged with trafficking of human beings towards Greece. From the investigation it results that the group involved 35 people, 15 of whom were police officers. Meanwhile in July 2007 another criminal group was uncovered including 11 people, out of whom 6 were police officers. They were charged for organising and supporting human trafficking.

Anti-trafficking police units in the different regions of Albania remained poorly trained and ill-equipped to effectively address human trafficking due to inadequate resources, the influence of corruption, and high turnover of police recruits. The government discontinued anti-trafficking training for new appointed and existing police officers, while training for judges and magistrates was carried out with continuity. More importantly, between June and July 2007, the government fired approximately 20 percent of its specialized and highly trained anti-trafficking police officers as part of an overall police restructuring effort.

US Department of State said that the Government of Albania did not provide convincing evidence of progress in law enforcement efforts to combat human trafficking during 2007. Albania prosecuted 49 alleged traffickers and convicted seven human trafficking offenders. Seven of the prosecutions were for child labour trafficking. It is unknown if the government prosecuted and convicted additional traffickers under other circumstances.

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28 Idem. The report is available at this address: http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2008/105387.htm
29 Idem.
32 Idem.
statutes because the government does not separate crime statistics by trafficking offences\textsuperscript{34}.

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**EX-POLICE OFFICER ARRESTED FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF TWO YOUNG GIRLS\textsuperscript{35}**
\hline
Tirana, 11 February 2008 - An ex-police officer was arrested by his colleagues in the capital city because it is believed that he raped two girls, one 13 and the other one 17-years old, and was also planning to traffic them outside of Albania for prostitution. Haxhi Qelemini, 47-years old, an ex-Police Officer at the Directorate of the Police, born and living in Korça, was arrested late last night. The Police said that they were further investigating on the route that the ex-policeman was going to follow in order to see if other people were implicated in this crime.

J.O, 17-years old girl, an inhabitant of Korça, was used for prostitution in Albania by Haxhi Qelemini. After exploiting her in different areas of the country, but mainly in Tirana and Korça, he was preparing to traffic the girl abroad. It seems the same fate was expecting the other girl, A.J, 13-years old, also an inhabitant of Korça.

Sources from the police said that since January this year, both girls had left Korça and were hosted in Tirana by the 47-years old, Qelemini. The same sources added that the ex-police officer is believed to have had sexual relations with both victims. From the initial investigation it also appears that he was using J.O. as a prostitute since a while. In its statement the Police state that the 47-years old were caught while trying to traffic the girls in a EU country.

The Tirana Prosecutor’s Office stated that they have charged him on three accounts: “Trafficking of Children”, “Sexual relations with minors” and “Exploitation of prostitution.”
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\end{tabular}
\caption{EX-POLICE OFFICER ARRESTED FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF TWO YOUNG GIRLS\textsuperscript{35}}
\end{table}

\textsuperscript{34} Trafficking in Persons Report, US Department of State, June 4, 2008.


\subsection*{4.5 Internal trafficking}

With the closure of most of the international trafficking routes, the trafficking of children for sexual and economic purposes in Albania has taken a new turn. During the last few years child exploiters are using larger and richer cities for internally trafficking children. Most of those children are forced into prostitution, while fewer of them into begging or other forms of economical exploitation.

Traffickers internally traffic children from all regions of the country, and typically to either Tirana (capital city) or Durres (port city). According to Terre des Hommes, the number of internally trafficked children, particularly from the Roma and Balkan-Egyptian community, increased during the 2007. TdH, during this year, identified over 300 children in Albania who were suspected victims of trafficking, many of whom ended up as street beggars\textsuperscript{36}.

There are reasons behind this new trend, including tighter border controls and higher levels of public awareness in the destination countries.\textsuperscript{37}

Data samples from visits and interviews taken in several cities of Albania such as Tirana, Vlore, Fier, Shkodra and Korça, show that, currently, internal trafficking is getting quite widespread in Albania. Traffickers or tutors are forcing mainly female children in daily prostitution in the capital, in bigger cities and/or in tourism destinations.

Meanwhile several shelters in Albania state that the majority of the internally trafficked young girls come from the rural areas, areas where poverty is prevalent and where the families are faced with major socio-economic problems. The prevalence of a patriarchal mentality in these areas is another reason pushing young girls into commercial sexual exploitation through trafficking.

Interviews carried by the Vatra staff over the last years with girls accommodated in the shelter also show that girls enrolled in high schools but also in middle schools, are being exploited by

\textsuperscript{36} Human Rights Practices 2007, US Department of State.

\textsuperscript{37} Children Speak Out: Trafficking Risk and Resilience in Southeast Europe, Save the Children Albania, July 2007.
traffickers in prostitution by having paid sex in hotels and motels around the cities of Albania. While different sources confirm that domestic trafficking of children is on the increase, targeted measures to tackle and prevent this phenomenon have not been identified nor implemented.

Table 10: Interview with a young girl, victim of internal trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation in tourism

...I wanted to have a boyfriend like all my girlfriends did. I thought that he loved me. I was afraid to tell this to my mum as she did not want me to have a boyfriend and she did not like such things. Eventually she found out about this story and there was a big fight at home. My father got very angry and told me that I was not his daughter any longer. I felt very bad and I had quarrels every day with my folks. They would not let me go out of the house.

My boyfriend told me to go together to another town, in Durrës (a sea-port town in Albania). I liked this idea very much. I had never been to Durrës before and I had never seen the sea. I found myself in a hotel room in Durrës, where few days after my boyfriend brought some persons back. They beat me. They threatened me by saying that they would kill my parents and that they would take my little sister away. After some days in the room, my so called boyfriend brought this person, who spoke a foreign language and who was expecting me to have sex with him... 

...I really felt bad about what happened in there. I wish it never took place... 

V. NATIONAL POLICIES AND LEGISLATION REGARDING COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN


Although recently Albania has improved its laws and policies related to children, still commercial sexual exploitation of children remains largely unregulated by public policies. Albania has not yet developed a specific national plan of action against the commercial sexual exploitation of children (CSEC). The Government has focused efforts on combating trafficking, while other forms of commercial sexual exploitation of children remain largely unaddressed.

5.1 National public policies


Prevention was tackled in a comprehensive way and in accordance with the 2003 UNICEF Guidelines for Protection of the Rights of Child Victims of Trafficking in South Eastern Europe. Preventative measures included public awareness in cooperation with the media, governmental and non-governmental bodies; prevention campaigns targeting children in high risk communities and other vulnerable groups; including information about child trafficking and its consequences in school curricula; trainings for the police, border police, education and welfare personnel, prosecutors and NGOs working on child trafficking; tackling education abandonment; and provision of professional or vocational training and job opportunities to vulnerable children.

Also envisaged was the provision of adequate temporary shelter, rehabilitation and integration support, including family support and the development of fostering and adoption services. ECPAT International has not been able to obtain information on whether the strategy and action plan were implemented effectively; they were enhanced and updated for the period 2008-2010. On the same occasion, local anti-trafficking mechanisms were established with the participation of several ministries and NGOs.

The National Strategy for Children (2001-2005), designed on the basis of recommendations made by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), provided for the establishment of municipal and communal structures to assist children in need of treatment or who are vulnerable; the improvement of legislation concerning children; and coordinated action by central and local governments, NGOs and international organisations in preventing and combating child trafficking. However, no budget seems to have been allocated for its implementation, and the strategy made little or no reference to commercial sexual exploitation of children. The new National Strategy for Children (2005-2010) still pays limited attention to the commercial sexual exploitation of children.

5.2 International standards and National legislation

a) International human rights standards

Albania is a signatory party to all the major UN human rights conventions. Albania ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1992 and the first CRC state report was presented to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in January 2005. The next report is expected to be presented to the Committee sometime in 2009. However the country has not yet signed the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (Optional Protocol), ILO Convention No. 182 was ratified in 2001 and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women

### b) National Legislation

The Constitution of the Republic of Albania is the base of Albanian Legislation. Article 54 of Constitution stipulates a specific protection for children. It upholds the right of every child to protection against violence, abuse, exploitation and work that can impair its health or morality and endanger its life or normal development.

The Criminal Code provides unequal protection to children under the age of 14 and those between the ages of 14 and 18. It also differentiates between boys and girls. For example, having sexual relations with a minor is considered an offence but when the victim is a boy, he is protected up to the age of 14. When the victim is a girl, she is protected until the age of 14 or until she has attained ‘sexual maturity’. In its observations on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child made in 2005, the Committee on the Rights of the Child took note of this lack of clarity and recommended that the Albanian Government clarify the definition of a child and that existing legislation be reviewed to ensure that all children under 18 years of age receive the protection they are entitled to.

### a) Child Prostitution

Under the Criminal Code, the exercise of prostitution is a crime punishable by a fine or up to three years of imprisonment. Although in practice minors are not prosecuted, legally they could be. The Criminal Code further prohibits the exploitation of prostitution by criminalising the acts of soliciting, mediating or gaining from prostitution, and violators are subject to a fine or up to five years’ imprisonment. The exploitation of prostitution offences are subject to stricter punishment when minors are involved, namely seven to 15 years’ imprisonment along with the confiscation of proceeds from the offence. Overall, Albanian law on child prostitution requires strengthening in order to meet international standards. The definition of ‘minor’ is not clear and should be amended to include all children, boys and girls, up of the age of 18. The law could also be strengthened by including a definition of child prostitution as the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration. The clients/offenders of prostituted children should also be subject to criminal penalties. Finally, it is imperative that Albania ratify the Optional Protocol, as urged by the Committee on the Rights of the Child back in 2005.

### b) Child trafficking

In theory, the Criminal Code definition of child trafficking meets the international legal standards as set forth in the Trafficking Protocol. It states that the recruitment, sale, transportation, harbouring or receipt of minors (children under the age of 18) for the purpose of exploitation for prostitution or other forms of sexual exploitation, work or compelled services, slavery or other forms similar to slavery, making use of or transplanting organs, as well as other forms of exploitation, carry penalties of between seven and 15 years’ imprisonment, plus a fine of between 4 and 6 million lek (approximately US$ 52,000 to 78,000). As per the requirement of the Trafficking Protocol, when the victim is a child, the use of fraud or coercive means is not an element of the offence as it is when adults are victims.

The organisation, management and financing of trafficking of minors are punished with 10 to 20 years’ imprisonment, plus a fine of 6 to 8 million lek (approximately US$ 78,000 to 104,000). When this offence is committed in collusion with others, or repeatedly, or accompanied by mistreatment, making the victim commit various actions through the use of physical or psychological force, or causing serious harm to the health of the victim, it is punishable by not less than 15 years’ imprisonment, plus a fine of 6 to 8 million lek. When the offence results in the death of the afflicted person, it is punished by not less than 20 years’ imprisonment or life imprisonment, as well as by a fine ranging from 8 to 10 million lek (US$ 104,000 to 130,000).
c) Child pornography

In January 2008, the Criminal Code provisions were expanded to criminalise the “use of a child for production of pornographic materials and its distribution or publication on the Internet or in any other form”. The applicable penalties range from one to five years’ imprisonment and a fine between 1 and 5 million lek (US$ 13,000 to 65,000). While these changes constitute good progress in strengthening the legal framework, Albanian law still lacks a definition of child pornography as any representation of a child involved in sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for sexual purposes. It also fails to criminalise the possession of child pornography.

The Criminal Code also punishes ‘sexual or homosexual intercourse by force’ with minors between the ages of 14-18 and those who have reached sexual maturity. Sentences range from five to 15 years’ imprisonment. When committed in collusion with others, or repeatedly, or if serious consequences to health have been caused to the injured child, the punishment is 10 to 20 years’ imprisonment. If the offence has caused, as a consequence, the death or suicide of the minor child, it is punishable by not less than 20 years’ imprisonment. The Criminal Code also punishes the commission of ‘obscene acts’ against persons under the age of 14 with five years’ imprisonment.

d) Child abuse and exploitation

In January 2008 the existing Article 124 of the Criminal Code was amended in order to include the criminalisation of child abuse. The new paragraph (b.) of the Article states that “Physical or psychological abuse of the child by the person who by law is obliged to care for him/her it is sentenced from 2 months to 2 years imprisonment”.

Further on the article regulates also for the first time child exploitation for economical activities. The law stipulates that the enforcement of a child to work, to bring income, to beh or carry out actions that can damage his/her development could be sentenced to 4 years of imprisonment and a fine between 50 thousand to 1 million Lek (US$ 500 to 10,000). When this has caused severe damage to the child health or his/her death it is sentenced between 10-20 years of imprisonment.

Under the Criminal Code, sexual or homosexual intercourse with minor children under the age of 14 is punishable by seven to 15 years’ imprisonment. If committed in collusion with others, or repeatedly, or by force, or if serious consequences to health have been caused to the injured child, it is punishable by 15 to 25 years’ imprisonment. If the offence has caused, as a consequence, the death or suicide of the minor child, it is punishable by no less than 20 years’ imprisonment.

VI. ADDRESSING COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN: ROLE AND INITIATIVES OF THE MAIN STAKEHOLDERS

Several agencies have been working on CSEC related issues in the last decade, including government institutions, international organisations and non government agencies. Despite a number of actions in the field of prevention, law enforcement and victims’ assistance and protection have been developed; most of the efforts have focussed on addressing human trafficking across borders. Only limited attention was devoted to the special needs and rights of children being trafficked for sexual purposes as well as to the new emerging issues of internal trafficking, child sex tourism and the production and distribution of child abuse images. While there is a need to enhance protection of children from any forms of sexual exploitation, the lack of a child protection system at national and local level as well as the insufficient specialised assistance available for CSEC victims should be addressed as a priority. In this sense, more funds and targeted measures are required to tackle the paucity of support services for vulnerable children, including street children and orphans, as well as for CSEC survivors.

6.1 Role of the Government of Albania (GoA)

6.1.1 The Central Government

GoA has played a three directional role regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children by developing structures, services and initiatives. However, despite some efforts have been promoted, coordination among all governmental agencies at local and national level is still weak, hindering therefore the effectiveness of responses implemented.

Structures

- National Coordinator of the Fight against Human Trafficking/Deputy Minister of Interior

The office of the National Coordinator of the Fight against Human Trafficking was founded in November 2005. This office is the key point for the coordination of anti-trafficking efforts at the inter-ministerial level, both nationally and internationally. It enjoys a wide political mandate and a high level of independence in undertaking the necessary initiatives in the fight against human trafficking. Its autonomy is mandated through a prime ministerial decree.

- Responsible Authority for the National Referral Mechanism

This authority has been created through a common special order of the Minister of Interior, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities with the purpose of strengthening cooperation and creating a functional and consolidated network of cooperation. This authority coordinates the referral process for initial aid and protection and long-term rehabilitation of the trafficking victims, cooperating closely with the above mentioned ministries and other institutions and shelters for trafficking victims. All the actors included in this Authority play a decisive role and equal responsibilities in the auxiliary functions they provide.

- Regional Committees for Fighting Human Trafficking

At the local level, following an Order of the Prime Minister, Regional Committees for the Fight against Human Trafficking have been created. These bodies are headed by the prefects and include the mayors, directors of the Social Services Units, Employment Office, Police, National Information Service, Education and Public Service. These committees have been created to assist the agencies in implementing laws to identify victims and potential victims of trafficking in order to ensure them protection and immediate support. Besides identification, referral and protection for trafficking victims, the Regional Committees monitor trafficking situation in their region and identify the measures to be taken to fight against this kind of crime.

- National Reception Centre of Victims of Trafficking (NRCVT)

NRCVT is an institution supervised by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities (MoLSAEO). It is the only state sponsored centre for the reception of trafficking
victims. The target group of this center comprises:
- Trafficked women and girls or those at risk of trafficking;
- Unaccompanied children at risk of being trafficked;
- Sexually exploited young women who have returned to Albania.

Services offered in NRCVT are:
- Food and clothing, temporary shelter (covering all the emergency needs of the suffering individual);
- Psycho-social assistance;
- Medical assistance;
- Legal assistance;
- Guaranteed safety and protection as witnesses;
- Occupational activities for social reintegration;
- Integration Referral;
- Follow up assistance to victims after they leave the Center.

All the services in the center are offered by a multi-disciplinary team including professionals specialised in different fields (medical, legal, psycho-social etc.).

NRCVT develops protection, training and reintegration programs, offering counseling, education, health professional training and other services that the victims might need. The center also offers English language courses, tailoring, computer, hair dressing and other quality services which facilitate the reintegration process of trafficking victims.

The center also assists the trafficked people that have testified against their traffickers with services related to their protection in accordance with the Law for the Protection of Witnesses and Justice Collaborators.

**Services**

- **Database**
  A database registering trafficking victims that have been referred and taken under protection by the Responsible Authority for the National Referral Mechanism has been developed and is becoming functional. This database aims to facilitate the job of all the institutions engaged in the anti-trafficking efforts in Albania, including the line ministries and the shelters that offer protection to trafficking victims.

- **Free National Telephone Line on Trafficking of Human Beings**
  The free national telephone line is used to denounce trafficking incidences, provide assistance to victims and inform interested people on the issue of regular and safe migration. This line was established as a result of the cooperation between the Ministry of Integration, IOM and UNODC and was designed as a help line (08001212) active all over the country.

**Initiatives promoted by the Government of Albania**

- **Cooperation Agreement of the Common Technical Group “For Children’s Rights”**
  It was signed on September 20, 2006 between the representatives of the state institutions (Ministry of Interior, MoLSAEO, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, Ombudsperson), non-profit organizations and donors engaged in protecting and respecting the rights of children. This agreement aims to ensure cooperation between all the parties in fulfilling their mission of guaranteeing respect of children’s rights, including the right to be protected from trafficking and sexual exploitation.

- **Children’s Technical Secretariat**
  It was set up at the MoLSAEO as the monitoring and coordinating institution implementing the Children National Strategy (CNS). The unit has two employees and is placed under the supervision of the Directorate for Equal Opportunities. The Technical Secretariat addresses several children’s issues, including child sexual exploitation and child trafficking, and is responsible for the cooperation among the institutions and actors involved in the process of implementing and protecting children’s rights. It also monitors the implementation of CNS and gathers data and information from the partner ministries in the CNS. To do this, it maintains regular contact with: the Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports, Ministry of Finance, other central institutions, districts, municipalities, and organizations offering services to children. Other activities carried out by this agency include: preparing quarterly and yearly progress reports evaluating the process of implementation of the CNS objectives; organizing meetings of the
Inter-ministerial Committee for Children’s Rights; guiding domestic and international donor community in the process of CNS implementation; and initiating analytical studies over children specific issues.

- **The Inter-ministerial Committee for Children’s Rights**
  It is being created at the Council of Ministers as an advisory organ for children programmes and policies. The deputy Prime Minister has been proposed to be the head of this unit having in its membership the Ministers of the line ministries mentioned above. Two children organizations will also have membership in this unit. The committee will accelerate the process of implementation of the legislative, administrative and executive obligations that result from the CNS. The work of the committee will be supported by the Technical Secretariat that exists in the MoLSAE. A lot of work has been done to build capacities of actors that can deal with children’s issues at all the levels of local government. In the regional offices of General Administration of Social Services (GASS) in the four pilot districts (Tirana, Durrësi, Shkodra, Vlora) a social worker has been assigned to work on children related issues. In all the structures of GASS, both at the central and regional level children specialists have been assigned while their duties are being defined.

To note that children’s issues addressed by this committee at both central and local levels include CSEC.

### 6.1.2 The local Government

- **Tirana Municipality**
  This institution carries on its own children programs. More specifically, it identifies cases of children in need and refers them to institutions or organizations that offer direct services. Day centers have been set up through the social services program that this municipality has developed. The target groups of these centers are the working street children who can easily become the target of trafficking and sexual exploitation. The centers offer services - including prevention, counseling, employment and other educational activities - that directly benefit this particular category of children. The centers also provide community awareness programs in Tirana city, focusing mainly on child labour and violence against children.

### 6.2 The role of international organisations

- **CAAHT**
  The Albanian Initiative - Coordinated Action against Human Trafficking (CAAHT) – works to prevent the trafficking of children and adults since 2004. Their six-year program (2004 to 2009) is made possible by the U.S. Agency for International Development and implemented by Creative Associates International, Inc. CAAHT is galvanizing the efforts of local government and civil society representatives to lead their communities in practical steps to decrease trafficking of Albania’s citizens and provide life-changing opportunities to victims and those at-risk. With the support of more than $2 million in grants dispersed during its first three years, the project has helped open the only transit shelter for victims, provided vocational classes for more than 310 marginalized girls and young women, and raised the awareness of teenagers and adults across the country about the realities of trafficking and the need to care for its victims through cross-sector cooperation.

- **IOM**
  International Organization for Migration (present in Albania for 15 years) supports the Government of Albania in setting and maintaining international standards on protection of victims of trafficking as well as in preventing the problem. In collaboration with governmental and nongovernmental partners, IOM provides direct assistance to child victims of trafficking, while strengthening capacities of these institutions. The counter trafficking programs developed by IOM Tirana include not only awareness raising and victims’ identification and assistance, but also contributing to the development of coordination and collaboration among agencies involved.

- **UNICEF**
  UNICEF has supported the process leading to the signing by the GoA of the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse formulated by the Council of Europe, while making efforts to also convince the GoA to sign the UN Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Pornography and Child Prostitution. UNICEF has taken all the necessary measures to create the Child Protection System and to
strengthen capacities in shaping their response towards child abuse and exploitation. Such response encompasses prevention of trafficking through raising awareness, protection of children who have been trafficked, and assisted voluntary repatriation of children trafficked to other countries who want to return home and reintegration into society.

UNICEF initiated the Children’s Alliance, a network of 150 Albanian civil society groups, to advocate and lobby for children’s and women’s rights. The Alliance now consists of a national secretariat and seven regional branches, which monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and work to publicize and advance children’s rights in Albania. UNICEF brokered the formation of BKTF, a coalition of nine anti-trafficking NGOs, who work collectively on a four-pillar approach to fighting child trafficking.

In addition to this, in Albania UNICEF has done the followings:

1. In cooperation with CRCA it has drafted the law for child protection against all forms of abuse and exploitation and the anti-pornography law.
2. Supported the Ministry of Interior in reviewing the National Strategy and Action Plan against Human Trafficking.
3. Increased the capacities of the border and anti-trafficking police force in dealing with and protecting trafficking victims, while increasing cooperation with the shelters and reception centers.
4. Supported the Albania Coalition “Together against Child Trafficking- TaCT”
5. In cooperation with CRCA, it built the National Telephone Line for Children. The National Child Helpline in Albania covers the issue of CSEC by providing info to at-risk groups or referring survivors to competent structures. The telephone line will be fully operating from April 2009 and will provide a 24 hour / 7 days a week free of charge service to every child in Albania.
6. Created child protection units in municipalities. These units offer services to children in need and in danger.

- **Save the Children – Albania**

Save the Children Albania’s Monitoring and Implementation of Children’s Rights Programme is continually pressing for positive changes where necessary, by lobbying and influencing government policies and practices, strengthening state structures and institutions which monitor and advocate for children's rights and also empowering children to exercise their rights and influence decisions that bring about changes in their future.

Save the Children continues to see child trafficking as a regional priority in South East Europe (SEE). Through this programme, Save the Children aims to increase protection of the rights of trafficked children and children at risk of being trafficked from the six selected countries. These are: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Kosovo, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia. Furthermore this organization is working hard to fight against child sexual exploitation.

Save the children Albania has been working on CSEC issues by: 1) supporting the (TACT), 2) supporting a programme in Cërrik city, Kuçova city and Kinostudio area which are particularly affected by child trafficking; 3) working for child protection. The organisation has also developed programmes for reintegration of the trafficking victims in long term life activities.

### 6.3 The role of civil society organisations

- **Children’s Rights Center Albania – CRCA and the Albanian Coalition Against Trafficking and the Sexual Exploitation of children (ACTSEC)**

Since 1997 the Center has considered the war against all forms of children exploitation its priority. In the course of the years it has also developed several initiatives against children exploitation.

CRCA is also part of the Albanian Coalition against Child Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation of Children (ACTSEC) which has been affiliated with ECPAT International since 2006. The coalition engages in lobbying activities as well as capacity building and awareness raising, especially on the issue of child trafficking, but also on other forms of child sexual exploitation, including exploitation through information technologies. Apart from CRCA, ACTSEC is supported by the Children’s Human Rights Centre of Albania, a major child rights organisation in the country, the Information and Research Centre for Children’s Rights in Albania (IRCCRA) and the Albanian Children’s Rights Network (ACRN). ACTSEC is the only coalition in the country focusing specifically on commercial sexual exploitation of children.
The ACTSEC youth group was established in 2007 by 21 Social Science and Law School students from the University of Tirana. The group provides support and advise ACTSEC on initiatives against CSEC from a youth perspective. They also play an active role in ACTSEC decision-making processes by contributing to the work to strengthen the capacities of young people and have organised lobbying and awareness raising activities on the safe use of new technologies.

- **Coalition against Violence towards Children in Albania**

In 2007, the Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania (CRCA) and ACTSEC in cooperation with other governmental and non-governmental organizations established the first coalition on violence against children. This effort was named "Coalition against Violence towards Children in Albania" and is open to both public institutions and civil society organizations throughout the country. Its main objective is to lobby with government and other institutions to ensure better services and protection of children who survive from violence and abuse. The coalition promotes the improvement of standards of care and protection for children.

- **Vatra (hearth) Center - Vlora**

This center works with trafficked people and provides support services that include: temporary shelter for the trafficking victims and those at risk of being trafficked; psycho-social treatment, and professional training.

- **Terre des hommes**

*Terre des hommes* is actively engaged in the prevention of child trafficking in Albania through prevention campaigns, schooling programs and social support at a municipal level as well as through the repatriation and social or family reinsertion of children. This organization is also giving its contribution in creating mechanisms to identify trafficking victims and in strengthening family ties (social education, schools and community programs). The organization works closely with municipalities, police, courts and other institutions at the local level of governing.

- **Arsis**

Arsis is a Greek organization active also in Albania that offers social support to street children and trafficked children. In cooperation with other institutions, it offers services in the field of prevention as well as treatment and reintegration for children that have been living on the streets or suffered trafficking. Services are provided only when requested by the children and their families. The organization deals with the age group 0 – 18 years old and the range of services covers psycho-social assistance, legal and administrative aid, trainings, game therapy, and employment support.

- **“Different & Equal” (D&E) Organization**

This organization, which was founded in 2004, offers re-integration services to trafficking victims, including quality psycho-social support, a range of professional and vocational trainings and medical services. D&E contributes to the victims’ identification and referral and helps to increase awareness against trafficking. The re-integration services are provided in three separate phases: 1) primary assistance and stabilization, 2) halfway apartment living (semi independent), and 3) fully independent living.

- **Fëmijët e Botës të Drejtat e Njeriut (Children of the World – Human Rights)**

This organization offers social and educational programmes for the children and their families, targeting particularly children in need in one of the poorest Tirana suburbs experiencing large scale social problems. The organization is specialized in anti-trafficking and prevention activities and children reintegration into schools.
7.1 Findings and Conclusions

- The Albanian Government, at both local and national level, has failed to protect children from commercial sexual exploitation. Albania continues to be a country where children are prostituted, trafficked, used for the making of pornography or for child sex tourism. Although the Government at local and national level has been taking serious measures to fight and eliminate child trafficking, CSEC still thrives because of organised crime networks, corruption of police and lack of child care and protection. Poverty, lack of respect for particularly vulnerable human beings and insufficient and inadequate governmental social support structures for children at local level continuously put children at risk of being exploited.

- The fight against child trafficking has had some positive effects on protecting children from cross-border trafficking, but the same cannot be said about internal trafficking. The combat against this crime shall start from within the country, where internally trafficked children end up being used for prostitution, begging or other forms of exploitation.

- Children who have experienced commercial sexual exploitation are turning into recruiters or tutors for exploiting younger children. Most of the sexually exploited children consider it very hard to get out of the exploitative circle, part of which they have become. This factor, combined with others, forces them to remain within this circle and even to become involved in the recruitment of other children.

- The Government of Albania, especially at local level, has not taken any measures to protect children from entering into child sex tourism, at a time when tourism in Albania is increasing considerably. Furthermore law enforcement agencies and tourism operators have very limited information on child sex tourism and on how to protect children from being exploited. Without appropriate policies and mechanisms in place, Albania risks to become a relatively “safe” destination in Europe for sexual exploitation of children in tourism.

- Child pornography remains a limited phenomenon. However, the increase in internet use throughout the country combined with the Governmental policy to make internet available at every school of Albania could pose a serious threat to children. This threat is further increased by the lack of laws that make it obligatory for Internet Service Providers to provide safe internet to children. Finally, the new amendments of the Criminal Code did not make the possession of child pornography a criminal offence. This increases the risks for child abuse images being used by offenders without being criminalised for their actions.

- The improvement of economy and changes in the social structure of Albania did not yield the expected positive impacts on child protection. Although children and young people constitute one of the largest groups of society, public attention and adequate funding have not focused enough on their care, protection, education and related issues. This in itself shows that Albania lacks child-programming and as a consequence children services are poorly funded or rather non-existent.

- The fight against child sexual exploitation requires coordination among all the structures of the Government at local and national level. However, Albania lacks a National Agency of Child Protection, able to coordinate the governmental responses for children and promote public policy implementation throughout the country. This decreases the opportunities of the Government to successfully fight sexual exploitation of children. The gap in coordination
provides less possibilities for children to be protected and more opportunities to organised crime networks to exploit children.

- **The changes in the Criminal Code of Albania have not achieved their expected outcomes.** Although under the new criminal provisions child exploitation, child pornography, child abuse and sale of children are punishable, the public institutions and justice system have so far failed to hold responsible or punish those who sexually or economically exploit children.

- **Although Albania has approved several public policies, so far only few of them have been fully implemented.** The National Strategy for Children, the Anti-trafficking Strategy and relevant Action Plans remain more a wish-list of the Governmental institutions rather than a set of measures to eliminate sexual exploitation of children. None of the above-mentioned policies have a budget, while the national implementation mechanisms consist of few offices or few people without any power to implement the policies and action plans.

### 7.2 Recommendations

1. **The Government of Albania shall take into consideration the revision of the National Strategy for Children and its Action Plan** in order to show that is seriously fighting sexual exploitation of children. The revision of the National Strategy Albania shall take into consideration all the forms of exploitation, budgetary needs and the role of the newly established institutions at national and local level. Priority shall be given to the inclusion of local government structures in the planning and execution of the revised policies.

2. **The preparation and approval of a Children’s Code is a priority for Albania.** In order to achieve such a major objective the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs shall lead an open and participatory process with the final aim to protect children from any forms of exploitation on one hand and to establish a child protection system at national and local level on the other. The need for a Children’s Code is further enhanced by the gaps in legislation and lack of coordination mechanisms in place.

3. **Albania shall improve the national budgetary provisions for children.** The Parliament and civil society could play a major role to lobby and press the Government for the inclusion into the State Budget of a fund specifically designed to fund measures and services for the child care and protection.

4. **The establishment of a National Agency for Child Protection is urgent for Albania.** The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities as the central national institution for child welfare shall seek ways to establish such an Agency within a short period. The Agency shall be responsible for the coordination and provision of social services at national level.

5. **Training and enhancement of capacities of justice and law enforcement agencies shall be a priority for the Government and civil society organisations.** The changes in the Criminal Code or other parts of legislation will never achieve the desirable effects if not accompanied with a programme that takes into consideration the needs for sustainable training of police officers, judges and prosecutors.

6. **Protection of children from sexual exploitation, their rehabilitation and re-integration process shall be the priority of every Governmental agency, especially at local level.** Municipalities in Albania need to seriously revise their social services strategies and budget, in order to increase their efforts to assist children in need or victims or sexual exploitation. Serious efforts shall be taken to tackle the lack of social services provisions for street children, children in conflict with the law,
abandoned children and orphans. The opening of drop-in-centres and Municipal Shelters for children should be a priority at least for the largest cities in Albania.

7. The Ministry of Tourism, Youth and Sports and the Ministry of Interior shall continue their work for the implementation of the Code of Conduct for Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism. The National Directorate of Tourism in cooperation with National Authority of Taxes, travel and tourism operators shall work to increase the awareness of travel and tourism operators for protection of children from child sex tourism. Meanwhile Municipal authorities including Educational Authorities shall implement new policies and carry out information campaigns to raise awareness among children and parents on sexual exploitation of children in tourism.

8. The Ministry of Interior in cooperation with the Ministry of Telecommunications and National Regulatory Commission for Electronic Communications shall seek ways to improve the legislation and procedures for protecting children from pornography, by providing safe internet for children. They shall aim to establish a National Authority for Internet Safety in Albania that shall be responsible for ISP licensing, content checking and implementation of standards of safety for children for harmful content.

9. The establishment of the Ministry for Family Welfare could solve most of the issues and concerns raised in this research. The researchers strongly believe that the establishment of such a national institution would lead to the improvement of Governmental laws and policies, implementation of standards of care and protection and setting up of a National Agency for Child Protection. Only such an institution could build a national network of institutions and agencies able to assist children properly from their birth to their adulthood, at local and national level. Furthermore the Ministry could build upon expertise already available to make children’s rights widely respected and exercisable from every child in Albania.
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ANNEXES
ANNEX I

Children and Young People

Case Studies
Case 1

My name is T. B. and I am 13 years old. I was born in Bajram Curri, Northern Albania, where I have lived together with my parents for 9 years. Later I came to Tirana (the capital of Albania) together with my mother. My father died, he was killed by vendetta committed by the person that was in blood feud with my family. I started to work in a fast food place in Tirana washing dishes and I would get very tired, but I had to work as we did not have money at home even to buy bread. My mother was crippled and stayed on a wheeling chair and as a result I also had to take care of all the house chores.

Our house was nothing else but a room where both of us would eat, drink and sleep. One day at the work, the lady owner of the fast food place said that she wanted to help me so that I could leave for Italy. She told me that she knew someone that would help me go to Italy and also find a job for me there. I would pay for the trip in instalments through the money I would make by working there. Initially I did not want to go as I did not want to leave my mother alone, but then she convinced me to go as I would help her more if I went there and I send her the money . . .

I left for Italy via speed boat from Vlore on a cold January day together with the friend of the fast food owner. After a long and tiring trip through a gray sea with very high tides we managed to reach Italy. We took the train until we reached a house – there were many girls there, generally older then I who smoked a lot. From the first moment I saw those girls I do not know why, but I had a feeling of fear and I did not like the place . . .

The man who accompanied me talked to a heavyweight woman who had a very cruel looking face, and I did not see the man since. Some of the girls started talking to me. The heavyweight woman asked me to make myself up and dress in the strange way the other girls were dressed. I did not like this, but she screamed at me and offended me with a very heavy language, and one day she hit very badly one of the girls, while time after time there would be men there who would beat up the girls that disobeyed. I felt very frightened. I started to go out in the street together with another girl; this happened for about two weeks and it is a period about which I do not want to talk. After all this, police came one day and took all of us at a police station. I stayed there for two days and then I was returned to Tirana via airplane.

Case 2

I am A. T.

........When I started my relationship with him I was 15 years old. He promised to marry me and live happily ever after. He would meet me only during school hours and he would push me to drop classes in order to go out with him. At the beginning he was kind, polite, but this did not last long...

One day, I found myself in a hotel room (close to my school) where I thought I would be with him. What happened is that other people came, one after the other, and they abused me sexually. This continued for a long time. . .
Case 3

She was my friend; at least I knew it so until I found out differently when she told me that she wanted to introduce a guy to me. I would meet with my friend often as she would come to my school, and in the afternoon we would meet at my house. My mother did not like my friendship with her, as in the neighbourhood they did not speak well of her. She was also friend with older guys. One day she told me she wanted to introduce someone to me who was interested in me and wanted to become my boyfriend. She invited me to go at a house in the suburbs. When I met with this guy, she left and I did not see her again. He came close to me and we were talking when he offered me a drink that I had never had before. Then he started to touch and kiss me and I did not feel well and I had not thought things this way. Later he undressed me and . . .

. . . I was horrified, but later some other guys came in and they beat me and did whatever they wanted to me. In the adjacent room I heard the voice of my friend who was talking over money with the guy I met with initially. He told her that she did a good job and that if she kept on like this she would be paid well.
ANNEX II

LIST OF INDIVIDUALS AND INSTITUTIONS CONTACTED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THE STUDY

- Xheladin Qahi – National Reception Centre of Victims of Trafficking (NRCVT)
- Suela Hana – NRCVT
- Floriana Hima – UNICEF Albania
- Alma Gjurgji – General Directorate of the Police Force
- Ilir Zhurka – Police Directorate, Tirana District
- Anduena Shkurti – Save the Children Albania
- Suzana Sakiqi – Every Child
- Gladiola Musabelliu – Municipality of Tirana
- Klara Simoni – Children of the World, Human Rights “Fëmijët e Botës të Drejtat e Njeriut”
- Skënder Veliu – ”Amaro Drom“ Union
- Natassa Arapiodou – ARSIS Association for the social support
- Thierry Agagliate - Terre des homes
- Marjana Misha – Equal & Different Organization
- Selvie Rushiti – For the Future of Roma People (Mother’s Heart)
- Mimoza Çiço –“Palma” Hotel
- Ervin Bytyçi – OAZ Resort
- Zak Topuzi –”Mondial” Hotel