Country Gender Equality Profile

ALBANIA

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UNITED NATIONS ALBANIA

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COUNTRY GENDER EQUALITY PROFILE FOR ALBANIA

Tirana, September 2025

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AFMIS	Albanian Financial Management Information System
AICS	Italian Agency for Cooperation and Development
AWEN	Albanian Women Empowerment Network
BDPfA	Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action
CEC	Central Election Commission
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CGEP	Country Gender Equality Profile
CJEU	Court of Justice of the European Union
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCM	Decision of the Council of Ministers
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
DV	Domestic Violence
EA	Economic Aid
EADRCC	Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre
EEA	European Environment Agency
EIGE	European Institute for Gender Equality
EU	European Union
EU GAP III	EU Gender Action Plan III (2021-2025/2027)
EU-SILC	EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
EU4GE	EU for Gender Equality
FLA	Free Legal Aid
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GDC	Gender Data Compass
GDI	Gender Development Index
GPG	Gender Pay Gap
GRB	Gender-responsive Budgeting
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence
HDR	Human Development Report
IC	Istanbul Convention (Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence)
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
ILO	International Labour Organization
ILO C.190	International Labour Organization Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work
INSTAT	Institute of Statistics of Albania
IPA III	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance III
IPARD III	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development III
IPSIS	Integrated Planning System Information System
LGBTIQ+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer, and other gender identities

LGAP	Local Gender Action Plan
LYC	Local Youth Council
MoHSW	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare[1]
MoIE	Ministry of Infrastructure and Energy
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MTBP	Medium-Term Budget Programme
NARC	National Agenda for the Rights of the Child
NDRRS	National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSDEI	National Strategy for Development and European Integration
NSGE	National Strategy for Gender Equality
NSSP	National Strategy on Social Protection
NSS	National Statistical System
OP-CRPD	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PA	The Institution of the People's Advocate
Paris Agreement	UN Framework Convention on Climate Change Agreement
SARDF	Strategy for Agriculture, Rural Development, and Fisheries
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFDRR	Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction
SLSSI	State Labour and Social Services Inspectorate
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
TEU	Treaty of the European Union
TFEU	Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union
UDHR	Universal Declaration of Human Rights
UNCT	United Nations Country Team
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDRR	United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UN ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
UNSCR 1325	United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls
YGP	Youth Guarantee Program

1. As per the Presidential Decree number 333, date 15.09.2025, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection was renamed to Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. See: https://president.al/presidenti-begaj-dekretoi-perberjen-e-keshillit-te-ministrave/?lang=en

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Albania's Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) 2025 aims to provide an updated snapshot of key gender equality issues in Albania. It identifies the main remaining challenges that women and girls face in the country, highlights progress made since the last edition and provides recommendations for improvements. The report builds on prior editions (2016[2] and 2020[3]) and, where data was available, presents the most recent sex-disaggregated and intersectional data by disability, age, geographical location and more. The CGEP explores in detail the progress made and remaining challenges ahead for women and girls in Albania and provides a set of thematic recommendations for consideration by policymakers and the international community. A notable innovation in the 2025 CGEP is the integration of European Union (EU) policy frameworks across thematic areas, which highlight the relevance of EU directives to Albania's reform agenda; each chapter also reflects key recommendations from recent human rights mechanisms, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)[4] and the Universal Periodic Review (2024).[5] EU accession has gained renewed momentum, becoming a stronger catalyst for reforms in Albania, with three negotiation clusters opened as of May 2025. Alignment with the EU gender equality *acquis* is a prerequisite for the successful accession process. Key advances thus far include the adoption of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030[6] and its Action Plan, which provides a roadmap for progress for women and girls in Albania in line with the Sustainable Development Goals. Albania has continuously increased its ambition when it comes to gender-responsive budgeting, which in 2024 accounted for 10 per cent of the total budget. The country has also started to respond to key CEDAW Recommendations (2024), notably the revision of the Gender Equality Law. The new law (currently being approved by the government[7], pending approval by the Parliament, as of September 2025[8]) includes provisions to strengthen the national gender equality machinery and encompasses more aspects of the gender equality agenda, including addressing care work, and facilitates increased ambition around quotas for women's political participation. The adoption of the second National Action Plan for the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security[9] also signals Albania's strong commitment to promoting the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the country. A Femicide Watch was launched in 2024 by the Ombudsperson's office to monitor femicide cases in the country, in line with the most up-to-date international methodology developed by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UN Women.

Despite Albania's strong progress and evident commitment to promoting gender equality and women's empowerment, the CGEP reveals that significant challenges remain for achieving full and meaningful gender equality for women and girls across all areas of life. Implementation of existing policies and laws is often lacking; violence against women persists in all its forms, and national data about prevalence of violence dates back to 2018[10], hindering the development of updated evidence-based policies and programmes; women remain underrepresented in local politics, face ongoing violence and intimidation in political life, and risk setbacks in representation at the central level; and women continue to be overrepresented in low-paid sectors and part-time employment, reflecting structural barriers to full economic participation. A significant factor contributing to this disparity is the disproportionate burden of unpaid domestic and care work, which remains largely shouldered by women. This highlights the need for policies that recognize, reduce and redistribute unpaid care work to enable women's economic empowerment. Across all issues, women experiencing multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination continue to be further left behind and at higher risk of inequality.

Overall, the CGEP paints a mixed picture of gender equality in Albania: while strong progress has been made since 2020 in developing legislation and policies, persistent challenges in implementing these frameworks continue to result in enduring inequalities that affect Albanian women.

2. UN Women (2016). Albania Gender Brief.
3. UN Women (2020). Country Gender Equality Brief, Albania 2020.
4. UN Women. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.
5. United Nations Human Rights Council (2024). Universal Periodic Review – Albania.
6. UN Women (2021). National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021 – 2030
7. Decision no. 432 dated 31.7.2025
8. Draft sent to Parliament available at https://www.parlament.al/dokumentacioni/aktet/c94610c7-8f7f-4274-a3a7-bdf6ff2459f6
9. UN Women (2023). National Action Plan on the Implementation of the UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security
10. Please note that this data point refers to prevalence of violence across the whole population, as measured through the international methodology available here: https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2019/05/violence-against-women-and-girls-in-albania-0#:~:text=Following%20the%20first%20and%20second,a%20primary%20education%20or%20less.

INTRODUCTION

The Country Gender Equality Profile (CGEP) 2025 provides a comprehensive, data-driven assessment of gender equality and women's empowerment in Albania. It evaluates legal and policy frameworks, identifies gender disparities across key sectors, and presents targeted recommendations to strengthen institutional reforms and gender-responsive policymaking.

The report examines progress made, persistent challenges, and key opportunities in advancing gender equality within the EU accession process and Albania's international commitments. By addressing gender inequalities across political, economic and social domains, it serves as a strategic tool for policymakers, international organizations and civil society, reinforcing gender equality as a cornerstone of Albania's sustainable development and European integration agenda.

Gender equality remains a fundamental priority in Albania's economic, political and social development. While the country has made notable legislative advancements, persistent challenges continue to hinder progress, particularly in women's economic participation, political representation, access to justice, protection from gender-based violence (GBV), participation in climate decision-making, and digital literacy, among other areas. Strengthening institutional coordination, enforcement mechanisms, and resource allocation is critical for ensuring that Albania's policies and legal frameworks result in tangible improvements for women and girls.

Purpose and objectives

The CGEP serves as a strategic tool for national government, EU institutions, international organizations and civil society actors in monitoring gender equality trends and shaping future policies. The report aims to:

- Assess Albania's progress in achieving gender equality and women's empowerment during the period 2020-2025.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of national policies, legislation, and institutional mechanisms in advancing gender equality.
- Identify key gender-based barriers to economic participation, political leadership, and social inclusion.
- Analyse Albania's implementation of key international frameworks, including the Convention for Elimination of all Forms of Violence Against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and the Council of Europe Convention of Combatting Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).
- Provide an overview of key EU gender equality legislation relevant to different areas.
- Provide policy and operational recommendations, ensuring alignment with international gender equality objectives and thematic priorities in the 2025 UN system Common Country Analysis and the new Government of Albania UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF).
- Inform the mid-term review of the implementation of the National Strategy on Gender Equality (2021-2030) and Action Plan, including through assessing data gaps.
- Support the Government of Albania and independent institutions and complement monitoring of and reporting on global and regional normative frameworks by providing a comprehensive analysis of the impact of normative and legislative frameworks on women's empowerment and gender equality.
- By adopting an intersectional and rights-based approach, ensure that policy recommendations are inclusive, data-driven, and actionable, supporting Albania's EU integration process and contributing to achieving targets under the SDGs.

Context and alignment with international commitments

Albania has demonstrated a strong commitment to gender equality through its obligations under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These commitments are further reflected in national priorities under the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022-2026, which integrates gender equality across governance, economic and social development policies.

Additionally, Albania's EU accession process provides an opportunity to advance gender equality by aligning national policies with the EU Gender Action Plan III (EU GAP III) 2021-2025/2027,[11] the EU *acquis* on gender equality, and the new EU Roadmap for Women's Rights (2025). However, full alignment requires sustained political commitment, institutional capacity-building, and financial investment to mainstream gender equality across laws, policies and reforms.

Scope and methodology

The CGEP adopts a multi-dimensional methodology, combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis. The assessment is based on a detailed review of national legal and policy frameworks, EU accession requirements, and global commitments. It draws on data from national and international sources, including the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), the World Bank, and the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). Additionally, it incorporates insights from government institutions, EU representatives, United Nations agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs). During its preparation, consultation meetings were organized with the UN Gender Thematic Results Group, the EU Delegation and active CSOs as part of the internal quality assurance process, while external quality was assured by the Technical Advisory Group established to guide the development, clearance and launch of the CGEP. This Advisory Group is chaired by UN Women Albania and involves all key stakeholders relevant to the production and use of the CGEP.[12]

A key component of this methodology is its intersectional approach, ensuring that gender disparities are analyzed in relation to multiple and overlapping factors, such as age, ethnicity, disability, rural status and socio-economic conditions. Special attention is given to marginalized groups, including Roma and Egyptian women, women with disabilities, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, Queer and other gender identities (LGBTIQ+) individuals, and women in rural areas, who often experience intersectional discrimination.

Structure of the report

The CGEP is structured in four chapters, each analyzing a specific dimension of gender equality in Albania:

Chapter 1: Overview of the Country Context examines the political, economic, and demographic factors shaping gender equality in Albania. It provides a broader context for policy reforms and implementation, assessing governance structures, socio-economic trends, and regional dynamics. The chapter also evaluates Albania's progress towards EU integration, considering urbanization, migration, and population aging as key influences on gender dynamics.

Chapter 2: Specific Gender Equality Context assesses Albania's legal and institutional frameworks for gender equality, evaluating the effectiveness of laws, policies and gender data systems in advancing women's rights. It highlights the role of civil society in advocacy, service provision and policy influence, emphasizing the need for multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Chapter 3: Key Gender Equality Issues, Barriers and Challenges contains five key thematic subchapters:

- *Sub-chapter 3.1. Ensuring Freedom from All Forms of Gender-Based Violence*
- *Sub-chapter 3.2. Women, Poverty and Social Protection*
- *Sub-chapter 3.3. Women's Economic Empowerment*
- *Sub-chapter 3.4. Equal Participation, Leadership and Decision-Making*
- *Sub-chapter 3.5. Gender, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction*

Chapter 4: General and Sector-Specific Entry Points for EU Political and Operational Support and Dialogue provides information on linking the EU GAP III and the EU Roadmap for Women's Rights with Albania's gender equality objectives.

11. European Commission (2023). EU extends the duration of the Gender Action Plan from 2025 until 2027 in external action to build on its achievements towards a gender-equal world.

12. Such as the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, INSTAT, the EU Delegation to Albania, People's Advocate, Commissioner for the Protection Against Discrimination, Albanian Women's Empowerment Network, Monitoring Network Against Gender-Based Violence, and representatives from academia.

1

OVERVIEW OF THE COUNTRY CONTEXT

This chapter serves to provide a foundational understanding of the broader sociopolitical, economic and demographic backdrop against which gender equality and women's empowerment efforts in Albania unfold.

1.1 POLITICAL CONTEXT

Albania is a Parliamentary Republic with a multi-party system, consisting of three branches: the legislative, the executive, and the judiciary. The President is the Head of State, elected by the Parliament for a maximum of two five-year terms; the office does not hold executive power, but the president has some authority over the armed forces and the judiciary. The Prime Minister, as head of government, wields significant executive authority and is responsible for policy setting, managing the executive, and overseeing daily administration.

Albania has a unicameral parliament (Assembly), with 140 members elected for four-year terms. The country's political scene continues to be marked by polarization and frequent political tensions between rival parties that impact the efficiency of the parliamentary work, including its oversight of the executive's activity, which remains weak.[13]

Since the organization of democratic elections in 1991, Albania has implemented several electoral systems (majority, proportional, and a mix of the two). The current system, in place since 2008, is a regional proportional system based on multi-name electoral zones. The latest amendments of the Electoral Code, in July 2024, introduced two methods for ballot structure: a) a multi-name list with a fixed order of candidates; and b) multi-name list of candidates, subject to preferential voting.[14] In addition, the voting of Albanian citizens living abroad was ensured, which is considered a great achievement for the country's democratic system. The amendments also introduced specific provisions to maintain and guarantee the 30 per cent gender quota on both forms of the ballot structure (the open and closed list of candidates).[15] Albania has continuously made efforts to improve its electoral legislation in the context of gender equality through gender quotas and other guarantees. However, this applies only to elections of members of parliament and local councils and not to mayoral candidates.

1.2 JUSTICE SYSTEM

Albania continues to implement the justice reform initiated in 2016 with a focus on strengthening the rule of law, judicial independence, access to justice for all citizens, and addressing corruption, with important improvements in the functioning of the judiciary.[16] From 2021 onward, a Cross-Cutting Justice Strategy (2021-2025) was implemented together with the Legal Education Strategy (2019-2023). While the quality of the strategy and its monitoring were generally satisfactory according to the EU Commission, the implementation rate and reporting capacity of the competent judicial institutions are still low, and the quality of statistical data remains poor.[17] Other important documents adopted in the context of the justice reform include the Justice for Children Strategy (2022-2026) and the Intersectoral Strategy for the Protection of the Victims of Crime (2024-2030).

A new Intersectoral Strategy of the Justice System has been adopted for the period 2025-2030 and covers aspects related to the legal education of the public. However, the Strategy remains largely gender-blind and does not recognize or address the myriad challenges that women face while accessing the justice system.[18] These have been documented in many reports over the years,

13. European Commission (2024). Albania Report 2024.
14. This is a departure from the previous system of preferential voting, whereby voters not only chose their preferred party or coalition but also their preferred candidate, allowing voters to potentially influence the ranking of all candidates.
15. UN Women (2024). Women in Politics in Albania: Background Information for the Training of Trainers to Build Capacities of women political candidates and local women councilors**,** Women in Leadership Programme UN Women Albania, September 2024.
16. European Commission (2024).
17. Ibid.
18. UN Women reviewed the new draft strategy published for public consultations in September-October 2024 and noted concerns that the set of comprehensive recommendations provided to the Ministry of Justice to mainstream gender in the new strategy – aligned with Albanian legislation on gender mainstreaming in sectoral policies – they were not considered.

including those of international organizations, CSOs and the People's Advocate, and feature among the main recommendations of international human rights mechanisms to Albania.[19]

Albania continues to make progress on strengthening the free legal aid (FLA) system based on the Law on State Legal Aid, which provides primary and secondary legal aid services to persons with low income and other vulnerable individuals.[20] The number of beneficiaries of primary legal aid is increasing, thanks to the expansion of FLA centres.[21] However, the specific demands of women with multiple vulnerabilities, including women victims of violence and children, have yet to be met.

1.3 ECONOMIC CONTEXT

Albania is an upper middle-income country. Following the recession caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, a robust recovery took place in 2021 with a real GDP increase of 8.5 per cent due to policy stimulus and a resurgence of travel, construction and extractive activity.[22] The economic growth returned to pre-pandemic levels with 4.9 per cent of GDP in 2022 and 3.5 per cent in 2023, which, although a decrease, was higher than the 3 per cent projection.[23] Economic growth is expected to moderately accelerate to 3.4 per cent in 2025. This growth is attributed to resilient private consumption, tourism and construction activity.[24] Nevertheless, increases in food and energy prices may impact further economic growth, as they could affect real disposable income, slow poverty reduction and constrain the fiscal space.[25] The EU's assessment of the last years on economic criteria notes the stability of the financial sector but points out the persisting large informal economy that impedes the business environment and competition.[26] Women are particularly affected as they are largely involved in unpaid family labour, agriculture and domestic work, which remain largely informal sectors.

The EU is the main supporter of socio-economic development and reforms in Albania, with financial and technical assistance provided through the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA). The IPA III funding for national programmes amounted to nearly €250 million for 2021-2023.[27] In this context, support has been provided to gender equality and women's empowerment through several EU-funded projects, including direct funds to CSOs, and through the UN Joint Programme 'EU for Gender Equality in Albania - Implementation of the EU Gender Equality *acquis*,' implemented by UN Women and United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and funded by the EU through the UN Albania SDG Acceleration Fund (phase I, 2021-2023), as well as the EU for Gender Equality phase II—Gender Equality Facility in Albania (2024-2027), implemented by UN Women.

1.4 ALBANIA'S EU ACCESSION PROCESS

EU integration and progress on accession negotiations remain the country's key priorities and impetus for the implementation of several reforms, many of which are directly related to gender equality (economic, justice, social protection and social inclusion). The following is a summary of key milestones in Albania's negotiation, which are helping the country prepare to fulfil the obligations of EU membership.

- The accession negotiations opened in July **2022**. They were based on a negotiation framework and followed an analytical examination, or the "screening process," which is organized around six clusters.[28] These clusters consist of the EU *acquis,* composed

19. CEDAW Concluding Observations, 2023; GREVIO assessment report 2024; UPR draft recommendations to Albania, 2024 and others.
20. Children, persons with disabilities, victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking, those who are subjected to discrimination, etc.
21. As of December 2023, there are 20 Free Legal Aid Centres managed by the Department of Free Legal Aid, 12 of which are supported by the State budget and eight by UNDP and the Austrian Development Agency. See: https://ndihmajuridike.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/12.-Analiza-Statistikore-Dhjetor-2023..pdf
22. World Bank (2022). https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/daee74fc-66e7-5e3f-84de-3cfdb30259e3.
23. International Monetary Fund, Albania: 2024 Staff Visit Press Release, 15 July 2024.
24. World Bank, Albania (2024). Economic Outlook, last updated October 2024.
25. World Bank (2024). Western Balkans Regular Economic Report.
26. European Commission (2024).
27. EU Data (2023). Albania on its European path.
28. Fundamentals, Internal Market, Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity, Agriculture and Cohesion; and External Relations. Negotiations on each cluster open as a whole after the country fulfils the opening benchmarks. Each chapter will be dealt with individually with respect to its provisional closure.

of chapters, each covering a specific policy area and broader principles and standards.

- The screening process of Albania concluded in November **2023** for all six clusters. This was followed by preparation for the formal opening of negotiations on Cluster 1—Fundamentals, or the common principles and values in the EU related to: (i) functioning of democratic institutions and public administration reform; (ii) rule of law;[29] and (iii) economic criteria.[30]

- In November **2024**, negotiations on Fundamentals were formally opened after Albania submitted the three required roadmaps that will guide its negotiations and reforms.[31] Negotiations on this cluster open first and close last, and their progress will determine the overall pace of negotiations. If there is sufficient progress on reform priorities, it should bring Albania closer to integration with the EU through accelerated integration and increased investments and funding.[32]

While advancing in the EU accession process, Albania should prioritize gender equality and adequate protection and promotion of women's rights in accordance with the EU's comprehensive relevant policy and legal framework. Achieving gender equality within the EU and beyond is a priority of the Union based on the **EU Gender Strategy (2020-2025)**.[33] The Strategy has a dual approach of gender mainstreaming combined with targeted actions, and intersectionality is a horizontal principle for its implementation. In March 2025, **an EU Roadmap for Women's Rights** was adopted, whereby the European Commission reinforced its commitment to gender equality with a long-term vision for progress. The Roadmap builds on the significant progress achieved under the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and aims to further pave the way towards eight key objectives: freedom from gender-based violence; the highest standards of health; equal pay and economic empowerment; work-life balance and care; equal employment opportunities and adequate working conditions; quality and inclusive education; political participation and equal representation; and institutional mechanisms that deliver on women's rights.[34]

In October 2023, the EU Commission approved the new **Growth Plan for the Western Balkans**. The Plan builds on the existing EU enlargement methodology and aims to bring the Western Balkan partners closer to the EU through offering some of the benefits of the EU membership to the region in advance of accession, boosting economic growth and accelerating socio-economic convergence.[35] Moreover, a **Reform and Growth Facility**[36] was established, which serves as the centrepiece of the Growth Plan, increasing financial assistance based on a reform agenda focused on socio-economic reforms coupled with other fundamental reforms. It introduces conditionality by establishing a payment mechanism based on the achievements of these reforms. The Facility complements the already existing IPA III by focusing on specific determinants for social and economic growth.[37]

As one of the beneficiaries of this new programme, Albania is required to prepare a Reform Agenda outlining key measures to be implemented by 2027 to accelerate socio-economic convergence with the EU. In this context, a key requirement is that the implementation of the Growth Facility and the Growth Plan must actively promote and advance gender equality and mainstreaming, ensure the meaningful participation of women in decision-making processes, and support the empowerment of women and girls. Moreover, it should aim to protect and promote the rights of women and girls, and to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and domestic violence, in line with the EU Gender Action Plan, relevant Council conclusions, and applicable international conventions.[38]

29. Chapter 23: Judiciary and fundamental rights; and Chapter 24: Justice, freedom and security.
30. The existence of the functioning market economy; the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the EU; Chapter 5: Public procurement; Chapter 18: Statistics and Chapter 32: Financial control.
31. Roadmap for public administration reform, roadmap for the rule of law chapters, and roadmap for the functioning of democratic institutions.
32. European Commission (2024). EU Accession Process Step by Step.
33. The key objectives are: ending gender-based violence; challenging gender stereotypes; closing gender gaps in the labour market; achieving equal participation across different sectors of the economy; addressing the gender pay and pension gaps; closing the gender care gap and achieving gender balance in decision-making and in politics.
34. European Commission (2025). The EU Roadmap for Women's Rights: a renewed push for gender equality.
35. European Commission (2023). Communication new Growth Plan for the Western Balkans.
36. Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans – Reform Agenda of Albania
37. Regulation (EU) 2024/1449, adopted by the co-legislators on 14 May 2024. Establishing the *Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans*.
38. Ibid.

Following the requirements, the *Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans Reform Agenda of Albania*[39] has been approved by the European Commission, along with those of other Western Balkan countries.[40] In the narrative part of the Plan, gender mainstreaming is extensively outlined across all policy areas, particularly under Chapter 5, which highlights its integration in the Human Capital, Business Climate, Digital and Green Transition, and Fundamentals and Rule of Law pillars, as well as during the implementation of the Reform Agenda. However, the budget section does not include detailed provisions for gender mainstreaming, either as a separate sub-area or as a specific line of activities. This gap underscores the need to address gender mainstreaming more explicitly, through close coordination and cooperation with decision makers and public institutions of Albania during the implementation of the Plan.

In addition, Albania is required to fully align its legislation and implementation practices with the EU legislation on equal treatment and elimination of discrimination between men and women, which, among others, stems from the:

- Treaty of the European Union (TEU): Articles 2-3 and 6.[41]
- Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU): Articles 8-10, 18-19 and 157.[42]
- Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union: Chapters III and IV (Articles 20-38).[43]
- Directives of the European Parliament and Council related to equal treatment between men and women within different areas of competence of the three pillars of the EU.[44] These include directives on equality in matters of employment and occupation,[45] payment (equal pay),[46] social security, self-employment,[47] and access to and supply of goods and services.[48] In addition, directives have been adopted on work-life balance[49] and pregnant workers' safety and health at work;[50] standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation;[51] and most recently, in May 2024, the first directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence (DV).[52] In addition, numerous legal acts under the EU *acquis* address gender equality requirements.
- Relevant jurisprudence of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), which ensures that EU law is interpreted and applied the same in every EU

39. Reform And Growth Facility For The Western Balkans Reform Agenda Of Albania, European Commission, see: 3.0. ANNEX III - Reform Agenda Albania (2).pdf
40. Commission Implementing Decision approving the Reform Agendas and the multiannual work programme under the Reform and Growth Facility for the Western Balkans, European Commission, 2024, see: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/commission-implementing-decision-approving-reform-agendas-and-multiannual-work-programme-under_en
41. European Union (2012). Consolidated version of the Treaty of the European Union.
42. European Union (2012). Consolidated version of the Treaty of the Functioning of the European Union.
43. Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union: Chapters III and IV (Articles 20-38). See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex%3A12012M%2FTXT
44. European Union, 2018 The Pillars of Europe. The legacy of the Maastricht Treaty after 25 years. See https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/38778/expo_maastricht-brochure_en.pdf
45. Directive (EU) 2024/1500 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation, and amending Directives 2006/54/EC and 2010/41/EU. Retrieved from: http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1500/oj
46. Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms.
47. Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC. Retrieved from http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2010/41/oj
48. Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.
49. Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU. Retrieved from http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj
50. Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding (tenth individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16 (1) of Directive 89/391/EEC). Retrieved from http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/1992/85/oj
51. *Ibid*, Directive (EU) 2024/1500.
52. Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence. Retrieved from http://data.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1385/oj

country and guarantees that countries and EU institutions abide by EU law. Over the years, the CJEU has delivered many cases related to discrimination between women and men in EU Member States based on the previously mentioned EU Treaties and Directives (*EU acquis*).[53]

Finally, the EU also adopted the EU Gender Action Plan III (2021-2025/2027) to promote gender equality and women's empowerment through all EU external actions (foreign and security policy).[54]

1.5 POVERTY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION AND PROTECTION REFORMS

Albania has made progress in addressing poverty over the years, including through economic development and reforms in social protection and inclusion. The at-risk-of-poverty rate has gradually decreased, from 23 per cent in 2019 to 19.7 per cent in 2023. Yet, many people remain vulnerable to social exclusion and are unable to fully participate in society, having limited access to the resources, rights and services available to the majority population. Women and girls are particularly affected: the at-risk-of-poverty rate is higher among women (20.2 per cent) than men (19.3 per cent). The rate is particularly high for children 0–17 years old (26.5 per cent, as opposed to 19.2 per cent for the adult population, 18–64 years old).[55] Albania has embarked on a social protection reform, based on a robust legal and policy framework including the 2016 Law on Social Care Services, the National Strategy on Social Protection 2015-2020 (extended until 2023) and the current National Strategy on Social Protection (NSSP) 2024 - 2030, adopted in January 2024. The strategy focuses on social protection of low-income and disadvantaged populations through cash assistance[56] and social care services.[57] These are part of the overall social protection scheme, which also includes social insurance[58] and employment and labour market programmes.[59] Several policy documents have been developed on social protection and the inclusion of specific disadvantaged groups.[60]

Despite these improvements, concerns have been increasingly raised about the adequacy of social assistance benefits, availability of social services and the role of the programme in lifting people out of poverty, as acknowledged also in the NSSP 2024-2030.[61]

1.6 DEMOGRAPHICS

In June 2024, Albania published the results of the Population and Housing Census 2023,[62] which is the main statistical activity conducted by the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) every decade. The total resident population of Albania is 2,402,113, a decrease of around 420,000 since the 2011 Census, when Albania had a population of 2,821,977. This confirmed concerns raised over the last decade by the public over the rapid decline of the Albanian population, which is attributed mainly to migration and lower fertility rates.

53. https://curia.europa.eu/jcms/jcms/j_6/en/
54. Joint Communication of the European Parliament and the Council: EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III—An ambitious agenda for gender equality and women's empowerment in EU external action. See: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join-2020-17-final_en.pdf; EU GAP III is fully aligned with international instruments such as: the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW); the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA); and UN Council Resolution 1325 'Women Peace and Security' (UNSCR 1325). This plan was extended until 2027. See: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/%20en/ip_23_5858
55. INSTAT. Income and Living Conditions Survey in Albania (EU-SILC) 2023, published in December 2024. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/14638/income-and-living-onditions-survey-2023_1312.pdf
56. Economic Aid / (Ndihma Ekonomike - NE) and different subsidies for NE beneficiaries, disability allowance, social pension.
57. Social and family services.
58. Contributory and Non-contributory Pensions.
59. Vocational training, Wage subsidies, On-the-job training and internships, Entrepreneurship support, Unemployment Benefits, Maternity Benefits, etc.
60. National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025, the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2021-2025, the National Agenda on Children's Rights 2021-2025, the Deinstitutionalization Action Plan 2020-2022, the Strategy on Social Housing 2016-2025 updated in 2021, the National Action Plan on LGBTI+ persons 2021-2027, and the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons 2021-2023.
61. Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 152 dated 13.3.2024 "On the adoption of the National Social Protection Strategy 2024 - 2030 and the relevant action plan pursuant thereto". See: https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/alb230041.pdf
62. INSTAT (2024). Population and Housing Census 2023. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2024/albanian-population-and-housing-census-2023/

Of the current population, 49.6 per cent are men and 50.4 per cent are women. The overall sex ratio is 98.2, or 98.2 men per 100 women in the population. In the young and young-adult age groups, there are mostly more young men than young women, with a sex ratio of more than 108 boys in the age group 0 -10. This reverses around age 40, and the sex ratio significantly drops after age 80 due to women's higher life expectancy. The sex ratio in the population aged 80 and over is 82.1, and five out of six centenarians in Albania are women.

In terms of *marital status*, 54.9 per cent of the population was married, 36.6 per cent never married, 7 per cent of the population was widowed, and 1.4 per cent was divorced or separated. In the widowed population, 82.3 per cent are women. Among those who are divorced or separated, women also represent the majority at 58.9 per cent. However, in the never-married population, men make up 55.7 per cent due to their later average age of marriage. An inspection of the age-specific sex distribution of the married population shows much higher shares of girls and women in the younger age groups, due to their earlier age at marriage. For example, among 15- to 19-year-olds, there are 1,713 married girls/young women versus 215 married boys/young men, and among 20- to 24-year-olds, there are 14,398 married young women versus 2,239 married young men.[63]

On *education,* the adult literacy rate for the population aged 15 and above is 97.7 per cent. Of those aged 15 and over, 96.8 per cent have either completed some level of education or are currently attending school. The adult literacy rate is higher among men (98.1 per cent) compared to women (97.2 per cent). The youth literacy rate for the population aged 15-24 years is 99.1 per cent, (98.9 per cent for women and 99.2 per cent for men).

Of the population aged 15 and over, 38.8 per cent have completed lower secondary education. Another 34.8 per cent have completed upper secondary education. This is considered the minimum level that helps individuals to be equipped for full participation in society and to live a fulfilling life. Around 0.6 per cent of the population has not completed any level of education. Out of the total population with a tertiary education, 55.7 per cent are women and 44.3 per cent are men. The proportion of women with a tertiary education continuously increased from 41.1 per cent in the 2001 Census to 51 per cent in the 2011 Census and 55.7 per cent in the 2023 Census.

The prevalence of *disability* in the population aged five years and over is 6.5 per cent. Among individuals with at least one disability, the majority were women (56 per cent) compared to men (44 per cent), highlighting the need for targeted policies that address the unique challenges faced by women with disabilities. Out of the total disabled population aged five years and over, 59.5 per cent are 65 years of age or over. The analysis by age group shows that the disability prevalence of men and boys aged 5 to 49 slightly exceeds that of women and girls (2 per cent for men and boys and 1.6 per cent for women and girls, respectively). However, for the population aged 50 and over, the ratio is reversed. This pattern likely reflects the higher female life expectancy and the larger number of women in the elderly population, where people are more vulnerable to disability.

The total number of *households* is 755,950, which is an increase of 4.7 per cent from the 2011 Census. The average household size is 3.2 members, compared to 3.9 members in the 2011 Census. Around one in four households (24.3 per cent) has a woman head of household, who generally makes the main decisions in the household and is recognized as head by all other household members. This represents a significant increase from 14 per cent reported in the 2011 Census. A majority (82.5 per cent) of households own the dwelling where they live.

1.7 EMPLOYMENT

Recently, Albania has decreased the unemployment rate, which was 10.7 per cent in 2023, 0.2 percentage points lower than in 2022.[64] Some progress has also been made on labour rights, including an increase in the minimum wage to 40,000 ALL/month (equivalent to 466 USD or 406 EUR[65]), ratification of ILO Convention No. 190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, etc.

Yet, the inclusion of women, as well as youth and disadvantaged communities in the labour market is problem-

63. Table 3, Resident population by sex, age group and marital status. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13626/cens-2023-census-botim.pdf
64. INSTAT (2024). Labor Market in Albania, 2023. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13552/tregu-i-punes-2023.pdf
65. The exchange rate of the Bank of Albanian on 05.06.2025 was USD: 85.87 and EUR: 98.05. All converts in this report are made based on this exchange rate. See: https://www.bankofalbania.org/Markets/Official_exchange_rate/

atic. In 2023, women's labour participation was 12.4 per cent lower than men's.[66] The gender pay gap in 2023 was 6.2 per cent, which remains the same as 2022 but is an increase of 1.7 percentage points compared to 2021.[67] It is important to note that this does not account for women involved in informal work or unpaid work. Women continue to exhibit a higher rate of inactivity compared to men: 30.4 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively, in 2023. Informality remains a concern, with a considerable part of the working population that tends to be invisible—not captured by statistics—with women being particularly affected. In 2023, the share of informal employment in the non-agriculture sector was 26.2 per cent, decreasing two percentage points from 2022.[68] In rural areas, women do not receive a monthly salary from their work on family farms, but they are identified as self-employed.[69]

1.8 HOUSING

Albania is one of the fastest urbanizing countries in Europe, but it faces many challenges, including a lack of affordable housing in high-growth areas and widespread deprivation in declining areas. While Albania features some of the highest housing vacancy rates in Europe, the overcrowding rate for the population exceeds 58 per cent—the highest in Europe except for Montenegro.[70] The earthquake in November 2019 had a significant impact on the country's financial resources, with the disaster affecting more than 200,000 people directly or indirectly and necessitating the reconstruction of 11,490 housing units.[71]

The 2023 Census data reveal a total of 726,325 conventional dwellings, largely constructed between 1981 and 2010. Of these, 18 per cent have a useful floor area of less than 40 m², nearly half are between 40-69 m², a quarter have a surface area of 70-99 m², and only three per cent exceed 130 m². One in three conventional dwellings with a useful floor area of up to 40 m² accommodates four or more inhabitants.

Census data show that household sizes are shrinking, with one-person households now making up 13.7 per cent of the total. Most households (two to four members) account for two-thirds, with two-member households being the most common. Larger households, with five or more members, are more rare (19.5 per cent) but still represent a significant share of the population (35.8 per cent). About one in four of these households is composed of a married or cohabiting couple, with or without children, and other family members.

The country has adopted and is implementing a comprehensive reform package in the housing, planning, regional development and land management sectors to align with relevant international standards.[72] This includes social housing programmes to address challenges related to housing affordability through social rental housing, low-cost housing and land development for housing. The Law on Social Housing (2018) has expanded the scope for addressing the housing needs of the most disadvantaged groups in society, including women who are heads of family units, women victims of violence, and Roma and Egyptian minority families.

According to data from the Ministry of Finance and Economy for the year 2021, out of 2,700 beneficiaries of the Housing Program, 302 or 11.2 per cent were women heads of households and victims of DV. For 2022, at the end of August, it appears that out of approximately 2,400 beneficiaries, 174 or 7.2 per cent were women heads of households and victims of DV. However, the budget allocated for the implementation of housing programmes is divided according to program categories, and there is no dedicated fund specifically for women beneficiaries.[73]

66. INSTAT, Labor Force Survey, Unemployment rate, Q1 2019 - Q1 2023. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/labour-market-and-education/employment-and-unemployment-from-lfs/#tab2
67. *Ibid.*
68. INSTAT, Labor market in 2023. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/14273/tregu-i-punes-2023.pdf
69. INSTAT. Labor Market 2021. See: http://www.instat.gov.al/media/10066/tregu-i-punes-2021.pdf
70. UNECE, Country Profiles on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management ALBANIA. See: https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-05/ECE%20HBP%20226_CPAlbania_E.pdf
71. *Ibid.*
72. The Social Housing Strategy (2016-2025), the 2018 Law on Social Housing, the 2014 Law on Territorial Planning and Development, the General National Spatial Plan for 2015-2030, the 2020 Law on Regional Development and Cohesion, among others.
73. Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 152 dated 13.3.2024 "On the adoption of the National Social Protection Strategy 2024 - 2030 and the relevant action plan pursuant thereto". See: https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/alb230041.pdf

2

SPECIFIC GENDER EQUALITY CONTEXT

Achieving gender equality is one of the pillars of democratic governance and sustainable development. Albania is taking important actions towards harmonization with European and international standards and with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations.

As a candidate country for European Union integration, Albania is committed to harmonizing its legal and policy framework on gender equality with relevant EU frameworks and safeguarding and strengthening equal rights in all sectors. As presented in the previous Country Gender Equality Brief 2020,[74] Albania has signed important international conventions and has adopted proactive policies to bridge gender gaps, consolidate institutionalism, and create equal opportunities.

Albania's strong dedication to gender equality is evident even across a number of global and regional indexes, including the in the World Economic Forum's **Global Gender Gap (GGG) Reports,** the **Global Database of the SDGs,** the **Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Index** 2023/2024, the **Human Development Report (HDR)** 2023/2024, and the **Gender Data Compass 2023.** In 2020, Albania launched its first **Gender Equality Index (GEI)**,[75] developed by INSTAT in collaboration with the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, with support from the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and the World Bank. Based on data from 2017, Albania scored 60.4 out of 100 in a structured assessment of gender equality across six core domains: work, money, knowledge, time, power and health. The country performed strongest in the health domain, while also showing notable results in power, where it outperformed the EU average due to increased women's participation in political and economic decision-making. The 2020 Index did not include the two satellite domains, violence against women and intersecting inequalities, which, while important, do not affect the overall score and are intended for analytical use only. Despite these limitations, the first edition of Albania's Gender Equality Index marked a critical step forward. The Index provided a nationally owned, EU-compatible tool to monitor gender equality and inform public policy. The future edition of the index is expected to incorporate the two satellite domains, thereby offering a more comprehensive picture of gender inequalities in Albania. This expansion will enhance the country's capacity to address not only gender gaps but also the structural and intersectional inequalities that affect different groups of women and men across society.

Over the years, and especially in the recent five-year period 2020-2024, Albania has made significant progress in establishing a legislative and policy framework aimed at eliminating gender-based discrimination and promoting women's empowerment. Civil society organizations (CSOs) and international organizations have played a key role in driving this development, particularly through their focus on marginalized groups, provision of critical services for abuse survivors, and mobilization at a grassroots level. They have also helped drive reform by monitoring the government's actions and increasing accountability. However, challenges such as deep-rooted patriarchy, underfunded programmes, and unequal application of legal protections have yet to be addressed through such actions, and continued coordination between government institutions, CSOs, and international organizations is therefore critical in driving concrete, equitable and all-inclusive development.

2.1 LEGISLATIVE AND POLICY FRAMEWORK FOR GENDER EQUALITY, INCLUDING ENFORCEMENT OF LEGISLATION

In recent years, Albania accelerated its efforts towards harmonization with international gender equality standards. The application of international conventions, development of progressive legislation, and the creation of focused strategies and action plans have been the core of this drive. Nevertheless, overcoming systemic gender gaps requires systemic interventions, including legislative, policy, awareness-raising, and institution-related actions. Gaps in compliance, funding and coordination between and among different stakeholders can hinder acceleration efforts towards gender equality compliance.

74. https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/12/country-gender-equality-brief-albania-2020-0
75. https://www.instat.gov.al/media/6657/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_albania_2020_alb.pdf

Albania's legal framework for gender equality is firmly rooted in international human rights standards, with its constitution and national laws reflecting key global commitments, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Political Rights of Women, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to name a few. In addition, Albania has ratified key international human rights instruments on gender equality such as the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol alongside other key treaties such as the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), the ILO Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, as well important political comitments, such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA), to name a few**. A full overview of the international legal frameworks guiding Albania's national policies is available in Annex I.**

Albania's legal framework promotes gender equality and women's rights, reflecting international commitments and EU norms for an inclusive society. These include the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, the law "On Gender Equality in Society", the Law on "On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations", the Law "On the Protection from Discrimination" to name a few, which position gender equality as a fundamental principle for Albania's political and social life, as well as prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender. Over the past five years, Albania has further strengthened its legal framework to improve protection from gender-based discrimination and GBV as well as the promotion of women's rights, including through criminal code amendments and constitutional and electoral code amendments. The country's **National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021 - 2030**[76] (NSGE 2021 - 2030), approved in June 2021, is a key instrument for promoting women's rights and combating GBV. It has a strong link to **the Sustainable Development Goals** (in particular SDGs 1, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16 and 17) and is aligned with key international and regional frameworks, including CEDAW, BDPfA, the Istanbul Convention, and the EU Gender Action Plan III (2021-2025/2027). **Its vision** is gender equality and justice as a prerequisite for the sustainable development of Albania, with zero tolerance for violence and harmful practices. The Strategy strongly emphasizes **empowering all women, young women and girls,** especially those from vulnerable and marginalized groups, including women, young women and girls from rural areas, ethnic minorities, with disabilities, LBTIQ+, single mothers, victims of rape, victims of trafficking, elderly, asylum seekers, etc., in all their diversities.

While the NSGE 2021–2030 was developed with a comprehensive monitoring and mid-term evaluation framework, and three monitoring reports have been produced to date,[77] its implementation during 2021–2023 has progressed unevenly, as identified in the summary of implementation rates for the 2021–2023 period is presented in Table 1.[78]

The NSGE 2021–2030 will undergo a Mid-Term Review in 2025, with the objective of assessing the progress achieved, identifying emerging priorities, and informing institutional budget planning for the period 2026–2028).[79] While coordination mechanisms, institutional capacities, and data collection efforts have been gradually strengthened, monitoring reports indicate that sustained efforts are needed to further reinforce inter-institutional coordination channels, allocate adequate financial resources, and enhance the consistency and standardization of data and reporting. Addressing these areas is essential to accelerate implementation. Building on ongoing efforts, it is important to strengthen institutional accountability, clarify reporting obligations, and establish a single, user-friendly, consolidated monitoring mechanism at both central and local levels. Sustained financial allocations, continued capacity-building efforts, and the active engagement of civil society in monitoring processes—combined with regular expenditure tracking

76. Council of Ministers Decision No.400, dated 30.06.2021. See: https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/02/national-strategy-for-gender-equality-2021-2030
77. The reports are prepared from Ministry of Health and Social Welfare with the technical support of UN Women Albania.
78. "Monitoring report: Implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality and its Action Plan 2021-2030" for 2021, page 6. See: https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Raport-Monitorimi-per-vitin-2021-SKBGJ.pdf; "Monitoring report: Implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality and its Action Plan 2021-2030" for 2022, page 5-6. See: https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/Raporti-i-Monitorimit-SKBGJ-2022-.pdf; Monitoring report: Implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality and its Action Plan 2021-2030" for 2023, page 5-6, (unpublished).
79. NSGE 2021-2030, page 45.

Table 1

Summary of implementation of activities based on monitoring reports of NSGE for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023

Strategic Goals	% of activities fully implemented			% of activities partially implemented			% of the activities in the process of being implemented			% of activities not yet implemented			% of activities with no information on the status of their implementation		
	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023	2021	2022	2023
1. Fulfillment of economic and social rights	22	31	31	-	12	12	22	13	13	12	21	21	44	23	23
2. Ensuring the equal participation, representation and leadership rights	-	25	11	67	62	45	-	-	11	-	-		33	13	33
3. Reduction of all forms of harmful practices, gender-based violence	61	57	67	33	15	12	-	12	12	6	3	3	-	13	6
4. Application of gender mainstreaming	-	37	54	25	16	7	50	47	31	25	-	-	-	-	8

Source: Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Monitoring Reports for the implementation of NSGE 2021 – 2030" for the years 2021, 2022 and 2023

per measure—will also be critical to assessing progress and impact effectively. In addition to the NSGE 2021–2030, Albania has adopted several national strategies and action plans in the past five years that address gender equality and women's empowerment. A comprehensive list is available in **Annex I.**

Mainstreaming gender equality into all newly drafted and adopted policies, which is also a key measure under NSGE 2021–2030, is progressing gradually. While several legal frameworks and strategies now reference gender equality and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare continues to provide input and advocate for the integration of NSGE objectives across sectoral and cross-cutting strategies, systematic gender mainstreaming is still evolving and requires further consolidation across each of these thematic areas. The Law on Gender Equality provides for gender mainstreaming across law and policymaking, planning, budgeting and implementation processes, and established the National Council on Gender Equality to monitor its effective application in these areas. It also requires that every draft law be accompanied by an analysis of its effects on women and men (ex-ante Gender Impact Assessment). However, following the approval of the gender equality law, it is required to address existing legal gaps through secondary legislation on gender mainstreaming as per the EU Acquis and ensure related enforcement mechanisms. Currently, these provisions are not always applied in practice, resulting in gender-blind strategies.[80] Addressing these gaps is a priority in the revision of the Law on Gender Equality.

80. United Nations Albania (2023). Accelerating progress on gender equality in Albania. A UN perspective on the revision of the Law on Gender Equality in Society. See: https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/accelerating-progress-on-gender-equality-in-albania-a-un-perspective-on-the-revision-of-the-law-on-gender-equality-in-society

To address these gaps, inclusive and gender-sensitive language and concrete actions for women, men, young women, young men, girls, and boys, in all their diversities, must be mainstreamed throughout all policy documents. In this context, it is especially important that human resources and technical skills for gender mainstreaming are in place. This includes ensuring that Gender Equality Officers and focal points at the central and local levels are part of all working groups established for the preparation of strategic and planning documents, and that they have sufficient capacities to meaningfully contribute to these processes. CSOs and international partners are important resources and should be effectively engaged in drafting and consultation processes beyond and in addition to submitting comments during the regular 21-day period when draft documents are posted online.

Local gender equality and social planning

As part of the implementation of the NSGE 2021–2030, several local self-government units have signed the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life[81] committing to develop and implement ***Local Gender Equality Action Plans (LGAPs).*** Both the signing of the Charter and the development of LGAPs are identified in the NSGE 2021–2030 as measures to be undertaken by local governments. As of July 2025, 25 municipalities (more than 41 per cent of the total municipalities in the country) have signed the Charter.[82]

Among them, 18 municipalities completed the process of preparing the LGAPs at least once, and 12 have officially approved LGAPs by their Municipal Councils. These LGAPs are harmonized with national and international frameworks like the NSGE 2021–2030, EU GAP III, CEDAW, the SDGs and the Istanbul Convention.[83]

As of July 2025, 15 Charter signatory municipalities[84] developing new LGAPs (2025–2027/2030), while four are engaged monitoring the implementation of their LGAPs (2022–2024) – of which one has completed the process and three are actively conducting it.[85]

At the same time, **Local Social Plans (LSPs)** are a statutory obligation of municipalities for planning social services for vulnerable groups. By October 2021, 60 municipalities had concluded LSPs, 50 of which extended their validity beyond 2022.[86] This enabled access to the national Social Fund.[87] Although LSPs support the decentralization of social care and aim to align service delivery with EU standards, most still face challenges in ensuring adequate budgeting and diversifying funding sources. The concept and criteria of the Social Fund in Albania are evolving towards a more needs-based, transparent and sustainable model of financing local social services. Future reforms aim to prioritize municipalities with higher social needs, enhance co-financing responsibilities, and promote innovative, community-based services through public–nonprofit partnerships. Gradual state subsidy reduction over three years is intended to foster local ownership, while performance indicators and reporting requirements will ensure accountability. These changes further support the decentralization of social care and alignment with EU social policy standards.[88]

2.2 ENFORCEMENT OF LEGISLATION, KEY HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES, INCLUDING REDRESS

Albania has strong gender equality legislation and high levels of compliance with international standards. How-

81. A document prepared by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), since 2006 and revised in 2022. See: https://ccre-cemr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Charter_2022_EN.pdf
82. The municipalities: Gjirokastër, Korçë, Elbasan, Shkodër, Tiranë, Durrës, Përmet, Bulqizë, Librazhd, Cërrik, Dibër, Pogradec, Kamëz, Gramsh, Lushnjë, Kavajë, Lezhë, Vau i Dejës, Roskovec, Vlorë, Maliq, Dropull, Divjakë, Mat and Klos.
83. The process of signing the European Charter for Equality and preparing the Local Gender Action Plan is led by UN Women with the support of the European Union (only 6 municipalities are supported through USAID/PLGP project in 2020).
84. Respectively: Municipalities of Bulqizë, Dibër and Shkodër, with technical support of UN Women and AICS Tirana, Municipalities of Pogradec, Korçë, Roskovec, Lezhë, Lushnjë, Elbasan, Maliq, Divjakë, Kamëz with technical support of UN Women and European Union; Municipalities of Klos, Mat and Dropull with their own initiative (but Dropull is guided from UN Women).
85. Municipalities of Elbasan (which has completed the process), Tirana, Gramsh and Gjirokastra, with technical support of UN Women and European Union.
86. HDPC and UNICEF, 2022. Report Social Funda reality between local challenges (Fondi Social një realitet mes sfidash lokale), pg. 18-20. See: https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/5716/file/Fondi%20Social%20%E2%80%93%20nj%C3%AB%20realitet%20mes%20sfidash%20lokale.pdf
87. The Social Fund is an instrument, which allocates funds from the central budget to municipalities with approved social care plans.
88. Ibid, pg.21-23.

ever, gaps in consistency with evolving EU commitments and implementation challenges continue. Critical legislative reforms are needed for the Law on Gender Equality, Criminal Code (femicide, sexual and cyber violence), Family Code, Civil Procedures Code (child marriage), and the Law on Reproductive Health, as underlined by CEDAW (2023), GREVIO (2024) and the UPR (2025). Gaps in implementation are due to:

(i) Limited capacity and coordination among stakeholders. While there have been ongoing efforts to continuously strengthen inter institutional coordination for gender equality, such coordination would benefit from stronger mandates and increased resources.[89]

(ii) Challenges in the functioning the National Gender Machinery. There have been important recent institutional improvements and the strengthening of the gender equality department within the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. However, the overall institutional framework governing gender equality would benefit from stronger strategic coherence, operational clarity and adequate resourcing. Coordination between central and local government actors has to be prioritized to ensure effective policy implementation. Continuous systematic monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are necessary for the enforcement of gender-related laws and policies.

(iii) Low public awareness and limited access to remedies. Many women, especially those from rural areas, ethnic minorities, women with disabilities, and/or LBTIQ+, have limited knowledge of their rights and available redress mechanisms in case of human rights violations.[90] In addition to the government's role, civil society, especially women's rights organizations, also have a vital role to play. In Albania, these organizations have been very active in advocacy, monitoring of human rights obligations, and service provision to women in need, including legal aid for women victims of violence. However, they have been less involved in increasing awareness among women about legal remedies (at the national and international levels) available in cases of discrimination and human rights violations, and in representation of cases on behalf of victims, including through strategic litigation.[91] CSOs' limited involvement in raising awareness and providing case support results from notable capacity disparities among implementing partners. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) assessments under the EU4Culture grants[92] show that while some partners have frameworks and trained staff in place, others lack basic gender-related policies or knowledge. This inconsistency undermines the effectiveness of gender equality efforts. Human and financial constraints—especially among smaller CSOs—further limit their ability to engage in training, safeguarding and program implementation. Many lack dedicated focal points for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and gender, hindering oversight and follow-up.

(iv) Persisting challenges that limit women's access to justice. Despite judicial reforms underway since 2016, women in Albania continue to face challenges in accessing justice. The CEDAW Committee has expressed concern about insufficient resources allocated to the implementation of Law No. 111/2017 on legal aid guaranteed by the State, particularly for victims of GBV. Challenges include poor investigation procedures, inadequate forensic capacities, legal illiteracy, and gender bias among law enforcement and judicial stakeholders, leading to revictimization and reluctance to report abuse.[93]

Additionally, despite the fact that Albania has made efforts to ensure access to justice, recent international human rights assessments—CEDAW (2022-2023), GREVIO (2023-2024), and UPR (2024-2025)—have identified several gaps in: (i) Protection from GBV and femicide; (ii) Access to the justice system and services, particularly for rural and disadvantaged groups of women; (iii) Economic empowerment and discrimination in the labour market; (iv) Women's political engagement at the local level (only 17 per cent of mayors are women) and electoral violence; and (v) Human trafficking and migrants' rights, with poor protection for victims and unfair asylum rejections.

89. UN Albania (2021), Advancing gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls in Albania, A Position Paper by UN Albania. See: https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2021/06/advancing-gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-all-women-and-girls-in-albania#view
90. CEDAW 2023
91. Strategic litigation aims to influence societal changes beyond the scope of individual cases, using legal means to tackle injustices that have not been adequately addressed in law or politics.
92. https://eu4culture.al
93. CEDAW (2023). Concluding Observations on Albania. See: https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5

Institutional redress mechanisms

The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD)[94] is an independent institution that ensures effective protection from discrimination and any form of behaviour that promotes discrimination on different grounds, including gender.[95] The 2020 amendments to the Law for Protection against Discrimination aimed to strengthen the role of the CPD, *inter alia,* extending its mandate to monitor the implementation of the Law on Gender Equality. However, the Law does not detail how this monitoring is conducted or resourced. The revision of the Law on Gender Equality is an opportunity to clarify and ensure that this responsibility of the CPD is implemented in practice.

According to the EU's latest report on Albania, the CPD continued to exercise its mandate satisfactorily, but staffing levels remain insufficient and must be rectified.[96] This is particularly important for cases of gender-based discrimination, which, as previously mentioned, remain very low, and should prompt the Commissioner to more actively exercise its mandate in initiating *ex officio* investigation of these cases.

The Institution of the People's Advocate (PA) is the highest-level National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) in Albania and is accredited with Status "A" by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). The PA has been very active in promoting women's rights in recent years, and with the support of UN agencies, has developed several monitoring reports on the Government's measures around the implementation of the relevant Albanian legislation and international obligations. Among these are an alternative report submitted to the CEDAW Committee in view of Albania's fourth review by the Committee (2020), a report on gender-responsive budgeting with regard to services for women victims of violence (2020), a report on central and local government measures to address DV (2021), and a report on violence against women in politics (2021).[97] More recently, the PA has established the Observatory for Femicide, which serves as a vital monitoring mechanism for collecting data about the killing of women and girls classified as femicide and issue-specific recommendations for prevention.[98]

In addition, the PA has issued important recommendations for the improvement and implementation of the gender equality and GBV legislation including recommendations on measures related to property rights; prevention of sexism in media, which was reflected both in the amendments to the Law on Audiovisual Media[99] and the Audiovisual Media Broadcasting Code[100] (2023); equal gender representation on local government administration (2023 in collaboration with CPD); amendments of the Criminal Code with regards to the definition of femicide (2024); improvement of the forensic regulatory framework with regards to sexual violence (2024); and improvement of standards on the operation of emergency shelters for victims of sexual violence.

2.3 FUNDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF GENDER EQUALITY POLICIES

The implementation of gender equality policies in Albania is supported not only by state budget funds, but also by donor funds, which provide direct support to the Government of Albania and CSOs and intervene through their own programmes.

State budget funds. Over the past five years, Albania has made significant progress in gendering the budget plan-

94. Established through Law no. 10221/2010 "For the protection from discrimination".
95. Other grounds for discrimination include race, color, ethnicity, language, gender identity, sexual orientation, political, religious, or philosophical beliefs, economic, education or social status, pregnancy, parental affiliation, parental responsibility, age, family or marital status, civil status, place of residence, health status, genetic predispositions, disability, affiliation to a special group, or for any other reason.
96. European Commission, Albania 2024 Report, pg.39. See: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a8eec3f9-b2ec-4cb1-8748-9058854dbc68_en?filename=Albania%20Report%202024.pdf
97. People's Advocate of Albania (2025), Publications, https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/sq/list/publications/rraporte-speciale-1/
98. People' Advocate of Albania (2024), The killing of women and girls and Femicide in Albania, (2021-2023). See: https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/Raporti%20Vrasjet%20e%20Grave%20dhe%20Vajzave%20dhe%20Femicidi%20ne%20Shqipëri,%202021-2023.pdf
99. Law no. 30/2023 "On some amendments and addenda to Law No. 97/2013, "On audiovisual media in the Republic of Albania", as amended.
100. By decision no. 60, dated 10.07.2023.

ning process. According to the Government's Beijing+30 Review,[101] gender priorities have been increasingly mainstreamed in public finance. The national gender policy priorities now correlate with the Medium-Term Budget Program (MTBP) through the Albanian Financial Management Information System (AFMIS) as well as the Integrated Planning System Information System (IPSIS). Gender targets, key performance indicators, and national plan objectives, such as the National Strategy for Gender Equality are being linked from IPSIS into AFMIS budget templates.

Each budget programme is required to include at least one gender target and indicator, with mandatory gender tagging at the indicator level.[102] Additionally, the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics in policy analysis is compulsory. This integrated framework supports tracking of gender-related objectives, outputs and expenditures throughout all stages of the MTBP and the annual budget cycle. Ministries must input gender performance indicators (via IPSIS), output quantities (via AFMIS), and associated costs (via the Treasury System) for both budget planning and expenditure tracking. This system underpins the calculation of projected and actual spending toward gender objectives and enables the production of key outputs such as the Gender Budget Statement, Gender Responsive Budgeting Annexes and the gender-sensitive Citizens' Budget.[103]

The following table shows a steady increase in the number of Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) programmes in Albania, from 38 in 2019 to 76 in 2024, and a substantial expansion in funds allocated. GRB allocations increased from 38 million ALL (equivalent to 442,000 USD or 385,000 EUR) in 2019 to more than 73.9 billion ALL (equivalent to 885 million USD or 765 million EUR) in 2024, which is 10 per cent of the national budget and 3 per cent of GDP. This reflects Albania's firm commitment to mainstreaming gender priorities in public finance. While the percent- age of GRB as a share of the budget and GDP has remained stable since 2020, the steep increase in absolute terms in the year 2024 reflects wider applicability in the sectors. These data indicate progress in institution-building in gender budgeting and growing recognition of the need for effective implementation, tracking and result-based monitoring for achieving tangible impact towards gender equality. According to the Ministry of Finance[104] the 2025 budget will continue to address issues related to gender equality, mainly in the fields of education, health, social protection, justice and public order.

Table 2

Trends in Gender-Responsive Budgeting in Albania (2019–2024)

Year	No. of GRB programmes	Albanian Lekë (ALL)	% of GRB of total budget	% of GRB of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)
2019	38	38,264,748	7.2	2.3
2020	43	52,630,418,850	9	3
2021	45	50,012,668,836	9	3
2022	48	60,380,387,485	9	3
2023	51	61,592,927,707	9	3
2024	76	73,960,749,397	10	3

Source: Data from the Ministry of Finance

101. See: https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Albania-Report.pdf

102. Based on Law no. 9936 dated 26.06.2008 "On the management of budgetary system in the Republic of Albania", as amended, and Instruction no. 7 of the Minister of Finance, dated 28.02.2018 "On standard procedures for the preparation of the Medium-Term Budget Program".

103. For more, see: https://financa.gov.al/buxheti-i-qytetarit/

104. Ministry of Finance, October 2024 "Budget for Citizens, 2025". See: https://financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Buxheti-per-Qytetaret-Ministria-e-Financave-2025.pdf

International agencies and programmes. In addition to Government funds, support provided from international agencies and programmes is critical for advancing women's empowerment and gender equality.

Under the **Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance** 2021—2027 (IPA III), a fourth financing decision of EUR 67.35 million for the Annual Action Plan 2024 supports local governance and economic development, food safety, forests, employment and social inclusion, and the fight against corruption. In addition, the first financing decision of EUR 130 million for three 2024-2027 operational programmes supports efforts in digitalization, advancing Albania's green agenda, and youth employment. These programmes are complemented by a significant package of EUR 112 million through multi-country programmes and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in Rural Development programme (IPARD III). Albania also participates in five cross-border cooperation programmes, transnational cooperation programmes and EU programmes.[105] This financial support provided to Albania, while not explicitly labelled as gender equality support, has significant potential to advance gender equality objectives. Effective gender mainstreaming across IPA III programmes is essential for ensuring inclusive development and alignment with Albania's EU accession commitments, particularly the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and Gender Action Plan III (2021—2025/2027). Albania's institutions must apply gender-responsive budgeting, disaggregated data collection, and intersectional analysis to ensure that women and men benefit equitably from EU-funded reforms.

United Nations and other international contributing partners, in support of the SDGs 5 (gender equality) in Albania, spent 3.5 million USD or 6.2 per cent of their total budget in 2022 and 3.4 million USD or 5.7 per cent of their total budget in 2023. For the year 2024, they allocated 4.1 million USD available or 6.2 per cent of their total budget.[106]

However, the effectiveness of this support depends on the capacity of national institutions to apply GRB principles and intersectional analysis throughout the program cycle.

BOX 1.
Persistent challenges in tracking gender equality investments

Despite all the above and additional funds invested in Albania over the last five years, tracking the real amount of money spent on gender equality issues remains a challenge, despite improvements in the Albanian Fiscal System. According to recent reports: "[t]he IT system designed for supporting the strategy development process (IPSIS) is not yet operational and no guidance is available on how to prepare the actual content of sector strategies, including situation analyses, objectives and targets."

Furthermore, "the documents usually contain a situation analysis and objectives, but outcome-level indicators and targets for monitoring the implementation of objectives are not consistently in place. The effectiveness of subsequent monitoring is further undermined by the frequent absence of clear deadlines […]".[107] These shortcomings are particularly evident in tracking the implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021–2030. No consolidated data is available on actual expenditures against its planned objectives and activities.

To have concrete impacts, legislative reforms need to be underpinned with committed funding to facilitate gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in all sectors, as well as locally. To this end, the EU Budget Support Program, and in particular, the new Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), present an important opportunity. Integrating employment and social policy into the EPA framework can facilitate the mobilization of additional funds to central and local institutions to advance gender equality. Grants in municipal performance should have intersectional requirements to facilitate equitable service delivery for

105. European Commission. "Albania Report 2024", pg. 96. See: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a8eec3f9-b2ec-4cb1-8748-9058854dbc68_en?filename=Albania%20Report%202024.pdf
106. See: https://albania.un.org/en/sdgs
107. Sigma and OECD PAR Monitoring Report Albania 2024, p.29. See: https://www.sigmaweb.org/en/publications/public-administration-in-albania-2024_5577d117-en.html

women and girls who experience compound or cumulative processes of marginalization. Current measurement systems tend to prioritize administrative efficiency over the inclusivity and availability of services. By including gender-sensitive, equity-focused measures in such systems, public expenditure can be rendered effective, responsive, and accountable to Albania's gender equality strategy and ambitions to integrate into the EU.

2.4 NATIONAL GENDER EQUALITY MECHANISM

According to current legislation,[108] the state authority responsible for gender equality and the fight against DV in Albania is the minister covering issues of gender equality. For the period 2020-2025 these responsibilities continue to be covered by the **Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW).** This role is exercised through the Minister's leadership of the National Council for Gender Equality and, until the end of 2024, through the Directorate of Social Inclusion and Gender Equality Policies, specifically the Sector of Gender Equality Policies. A new institutional structure was introduced by the Prime Minister's Order in October 2024[109] establishing the new Directorate of Gender Equality, composed of a Gender Equality Sector and a Sector for Combating Domestic Violence, each with one manager and two specialists. These structural improvements are a very welcome step to strengthen the overall institutional set up of the gender equality mechanism. However, resources that the MoHSW dedicates to gender equality over the past five years remain limited. This applies both to human resources and the implementation of relevant actions outlined in NSGE 2021-2030, for which the ministry is responsible. International bodies have also highlighted this in recommendations provided to Albania. The 2024 UPR[110] has urged Albania to fully implement the NSGE 2021–2030, revise the Law on Gender Equality, and ensure adequate funding and institutional support. The same concerns were also highlighted by CEDAW Concluding Observations of 2023 and the GREVIO recommendations in their first thematic report in 2024. GREVIO has recommended that the National Council for Gender Equality should be empowered with greater authority and resources, and that policies must address intersectional discrimination against marginalized women and be regularly evaluated with predefined indicators to enhance accountability.[111]

The Network of Gender Equality Officers. State institutions at the central and local level are legally obliged to cooperate with the relevant minister covering gender equality issues to exchange information and facilitate the fulfilment of her/his function. This cooperation and coordination is carried out through the Gender Equality Sector. To address gender equality issues, **a Gender Equality Officer** (GEO) has been appointed in each ministry, along with one or more local GEOs in each municipality. To date, GEOs have been appointed in 11 ministries, one focal point at the State Police, and 61 GEOs have been appointed at the local level. In most cases, these local GEOs also serve as coordinators for managing DV cases. While these provisions aim to effectively support gender equality and gender mainstreaming at central and local level, GEOs are often not full-time employees; they often have multiple roles and limited capacity to effectively engage gender equality issues.

The National Council for Gender Equality (NCGE)[112] is the highest advisory body for issues of gender equality and ensuring gender integration in all areas, especially in political, social, economic and cultural matters. The Council is established by the Order of the Prime Minister and is renewed once every four years. The NCGE is headed by the Minister of Health and Social Welfare and consists of nine representatives of line ministries—at the rank of deputy minister and senior directors—and three representatives of civil society, who are elected based on

108. Law No. 9770, dated 18.12.2008 "On gender equality in society" and Law no. 9669, dated 18.12.2006 "On measures against domestic violence", as amended.
109. Prime Minister's Order No. 205, dated 23.10.2024 "On the approval of the structure and organizational structure of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare"
110. Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review" A/HRC/58/5, issued on 20 December 2024, pg.10—24. See: https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/5
111. See: https://rm.coe.int/grevio-s-first-thematic-evaluation-report-on-albania/1680b1a0ca
112. According to Law no. 9770, dated 18.12.2008 "On gender equality in society ", articles 11 and 12.

their experience and contribution to these issues in an open competition[113]. However, the NCGE's effectiveness could be further strengthened. As noted by the CEDAW Committee (2023), "[…] the National Council on Gender Equality, which acts as the national machinery for the advancement of women, lacks sustainable funding and sufficient human resources to effectively discharge its mandate" (para. 15), indicating the need for ensuring sustainable funding and enhancing the human, technical, and financial resources available to the Council. While the Gender Equality Department, acting as the Secretariat of the Council, has been strengthened and is currently fully staffed and provides ongoing support, additional specialized expertise and resources would help the NCGE to more effectively fulfil its mandate and coordinate national efforts on gender equality. In addition, coordination among the different entities of the national machinery for the advancement of women should be ensured, and the division of tasks, defined priorities and cooperation areas should be clear.[114] In its first thematic evaluation for Albania, GREVIO recommended enhancing the role of the NCGE as the national coordinating body by strengthening its powers and competencies and allocating the necessary human and financial resources to both the NCGE and the MoHSW to ensure the sustainability of their work.[115] The ongoing process of development of the new Law on Gender Equality aims to ensure stronger composition and function of the NCGE, which is a welcome progress and indicates willingness of Albania to reflect and implement the CEDAW Concluding Observations.

At the level of the Assembly, in addition to the (informal) **Alliance of Women MPs**, the issues of gender equality, GBV, and DV are discussed and addressed by the **Committee for Labour, Social Affairs and Health**, **the Subcommittee for Sustainable Development**, **Voluntary Groups,** etc. The Committee for Labour, Social Affairs and Health is responsible for labour relations, social affairs, social security, family, women and health as well as the issues of the sustainable development agenda of the United Nations and the implementation of the commitments arising from it. The Subcommittee on Sustainable Development[116] is responsible for economic and social development, sustainable economic growth, the realization of sustainable development objectives, and the 2030 Agenda of the UN. The Voluntary Group for Population and Development[117] aims to advocate for issues related to population and development and, more specifically, to reproductive health, issues related to demographics, aging, etc.

2.5 SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA AND THE NATIONAL GENDER STATISTICS FRAMEWORK

Legal, institutional framework and coordination of official gender statistics

The national framework for the production and coordination of gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data in Albania is established by Law No. 17/2018 "On Official Statistics,"[118] which designates the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT) as the central institution responsible for leading and coordinating the National Statistical System (NSS). The NSS includes INSTAT, the Bank of Albania, and other government bodies legally mandated to produce official statistics under the Official Statistics Programme 2022–2026,[119] approved by Parliament.

INSTAT oversees statistical activities across the NSS to ensure compliance with Eurostat methodologies, the European Statistics Code of Practice,[120] and international standards set by the United Nations Statistical Commission.[121] As Albania's national data lead, INSTAT is tasked with guaranteeing the quality, comparability, transparency and accessibility of official statistics, including those relevant to gender equality.

To strengthen the institutional coordination of gender statistics, INSTAT and the MoHSW established an Inter-Institutional Working Group on Gender Statistics in

113. Please note that the composition and stricture of the NCGE is under review as part of the ongoing process of development of the new Law on Gender Equality.
114. *Ibid.*
115. GREVIO, September 2024. First thematic evaluation report "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice", pg.12.
116. Established by the Assembly with decision no. 34/2022 dated 14.4.2022.
117. Established by Order of the Speaker of the Assembly No. 43, dated 18.07.2023.
118. https://www.instat.gov.al/media/3972/law-no17-2018-on-official-statistics.pdf
119. https://www.instat.gov.al/media/14365/osp-2022-2026-en.pdf
120. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/quality/european-quality-standards/european-statistics-code-of-practice
121. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/dnss/gp/fundprinciples.aspx

November 2024, in accordance with commitments outlined in the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021–2030. The working group serves as a multi-stakeholder platform for aligning gender indicators with EU requirements, identifying data gaps, and coordinating efforts to monitor progress on gender equality commitments at the national and international levels.

The MoHSW functions as Albania's national gender equality mechanism. As the lead institution for the National Council for Gender Equality, it is responsible for overseeing gender equality policies and coordinating the collection of gender-related indicators from public institutions at both the central and local levels. These indicators are aligned with the Multi-Annual Statistical Programme and are harmonized in close cooperation with INSTAT to ensure methodological consistency and national reporting readiness.

Strengthening the national framework for gender statistics is essential not only for the effective implementation of the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021–2030, but also for supporting the monitoring of other sectoral strategies and Albania's obligations under international frameworks such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, CEDAW, Istanbul Convention and the Beijing Platform for Action. Moreover, enhancing the production, harmonization, and use of gender statistics in line with Eurostat and European Institute for Gender Equality requirements[122] contributes to the country's alignment with EU statistical standards and the broader EU integration process. In this regard, the new Law on Gender Equality (currently under approval) includes a dedicated article on gender statistics, outlining the modalities for their collection and analysis, which is expected to further strengthen the national framework on gender statistics.

Sources and production of gender statistics

Gender statistics in Albania are produced through a combination of administrative data, population censuses, and household surveys, coordinated by INSTAT as part of the NSS. These sources provide the foundation for generating sex-disaggregated data and gender-specific and relevant indicators across multiple policy areas, supporting national and international monitoring frameworks.

Administrative data

Administrative data are produced by line ministries and public institutions as part of their routine operations. INSTAT plays a central role in coordinating and integrating these data for statistical purposes through Memoranda of Understanding that define roles, data flows, and quality requirements. The production of gender statistics from administrative sources depends on the regular and structured exchange of data between INSTAT and sectoral data holders. INSTAT ensures that these data meet the necessary methodological and quality standards for inclusion in official statistical outputs.

With the support of the Interinstitutional Working Group on Gender Statistics, additional gender-specific and gender-relevant indicators will be developed, particularly in the areas of education, social protection, health, employment and decision-making.

Population and Housing Census

The Population and Housing Census, conducted every 10 years, is a comprehensive source of demographic and socio-economic information. The 2023 Census,[123] conducted in partial alignment with EU Regulation 763/2008,[124] provides a critical basis for producing gender indicators across various domains. Importantly, the census enables the generation of sex-disaggregated indicators at the lowest geographical levels, which are not available from household surveys. INSTAT, with the support of UN Women, will undertake an in-depth analysis by end of 2026 to identify gender disparities at the regional and local levels in areas such as migration, education, labour force participation, family structure, housing and access to basic services.

Household surveys

INSTAT conducts several household surveys that serve as key sources of gender statistics.
Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) Survey: Albania has conducted three waves (2007, 2013 and 2018). While the 2018 survey was not aligned with Eurostat's EU-GBV methodology[125] it nonetheless produced sever-

122. https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index and https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/equality-non-discrimination/overview
123. https://www.instat.gov.al/en/census-2023/
124. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32008R0763
125. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/ks-gq-21-009

al of the indicators required by Eurostat. A fully harmonized EU-GBV survey is planned for 2026, aligning with Eurostat's methodology and technical standards.

Time Use Survey (TUS): Last conducted in 2010,[126] the TUS is essential for measuring unpaid care work and gendered patterns in time allocation. As Albania lacks up-to-date data in this domain, a new survey is planned for 2026 in line with updated Eurostat guidelines.[127]

Other Surveys: INSTAT also produces sex-disaggregated data through core surveys such as the Labour Force Survey (LFS), EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC), Household Budget Survey (HBS), Information and Communication Technology (ICT) use in Households, European Health Interview Survey (EHIS), and Adult Education Survey (AES). These surveys are conducted by INSTAT and implemented under the framework of EU Regulation 2019/1700 (IESS).[128] They provide essential data for tracking gender disparities in employment, income, consumption, digital access, education and health.

Moreover, two other key surveys, the Structural Earnings Survey (SES) and the Labour Cost Survey (LCS) are conducted by INSTAT in accordance with Eurostat's methodology. The LCS provides detailed insights into the level, structure, and short-term trends of labour costs, while the SES offers EU-comparable data on the relationship between earnings, employees and their employers. Importantly, SES data are also used to calculate the unadjusted Gender Pay Gap (GPG), which ensures cross-country comparability and is a key measure for monitoring gender equality in the labour market. However, further efforts are required to achieve full alignment with Eurostat regulations and requirements. Notably, the Labour Cost Index has not yet been produced, and the Job Vacancy Survey has not been implemented by INSTAT.

Dissemination and use of gender statistics in Albania

The effective dissemination of gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data is essential for transparency, evidence-based policymaking and public accountability. In Albania, INSTAT plays a central role in publishing gender statistics through dedicated platforms and products in alignment with the Programme of Official Statistics.

INSTAT integrates sex-disaggregated data into several national statistical products, most notably the annual publication *"Women and Men in Albania,"*[129] the Gender Statistics Dashboard[130] and a dedicated section in the Statistical Database.[131] These tools provide accessible, user-friendly data, which are widely used by policymakers, researchers and civil society.

The *Women and Men in Albania* publication was first launched in 2008 and has become an annual publication since 2013, reflecting Albania's growing commitment to consistently reporting on gender equality across sectors. It includes the quantitative indicators of the **UN Minimum Set of Gender Indicators**, endorsed by the United Nations Statistical Commission in 2013.[132] This set comprises 52 quantitative indicators, covering key domains such as education, employment, health, human rights, and women's participation in public life and decision-making. INSTAT produces and publishes most of these indicators annually, dedicating a specific chapter in the *Women and Men* publication. However, seven indicators, including those related to the employment rate of parents with children under three, early childhood education, and land ownership in agriculture, are not currently available. Additionally, more than 10 indicators rely on data from infrequent surveys such as the Population and Housing Census, Demographic and Health Survey, and the TUS, meaning recent data are not yet available for regular reporting.

Albania's commitment to the SDGs includes a strong emphasis on gender equality, particularly SDG 5 and gender-relevant targets embedded across other goals. Gender equality is not only a standalone goal but a cross-cutting priority, with a total of 81[133] gender-specific indicators identified across the 2030 Agenda. Global data is available for 58 gender-specific indicators, while Albania currently produces 22, which are published in the *Women and Men in Albania* publication. These indicators

126. https://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2011/albania-time-use-survey-2010-2011/
127. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/products-manuals-and-guidelines/-/ks-gq-20-011
128. https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32019R1700
129. https://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2023/men-and-women-2023/
130. https://www.instat.gov.al/publikimi-interaktiv-gratë-dhe-burrat-në-shqipëri/
131. https://databaza.instat.gov.al:8083/pxweb/en/DST/
132. https://unstats.un.org/unsd/demographic-social/gender/MinSet_ListIndicator_2023.pdf
133. https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Headquarters/Attachments/Sections/CSW/64/National-reviews/Annex1_English.pdf

are also made available through the SDG Dashboard[134] maintained by INSTAT, providing an accessible platform for users to monitor progress on gender equality and related targets. Continued investment in data harmonization and disaggregation is essential for expanding the availability and quality of gender-related SDG indicators.

Finally, the aforementioned EU Gender Equality Index that Albania launched in 2020 also serves as a useful set of statistics for understanding gender inequalities in Albania, with future editions promising to paint an even more comprehensive picture. In 2020, Albania launched its first EU Gender Equality Index, produced by INSTAT in collaboration with the MoHSW and validated by the European Institute for Gender Equality. Albania scored 60.4 out of 100, performing strongest in the health domain, while also showing notable results in power, where it outperformed the EU average due to increased women's participation in political and economic decision-making. A future edition of the index is expected to incorporate the two satellite domains, thereby offering a more comprehensive picture of gender inequalities in Albania.

Current limitations and recommended actions

Albania has made steady progress in the production and dissemination of gender statistics. However, several limitations hinder the full development of a comprehensive, timely and policy-relevant national gender statistics framework.

Firstly, there remains a major gap in the systematic production of **intersectional** statistics that go beyond sex disaggregation to include age, disability, ethnicity, migration status, family type and geographic location. The absence of such disaggregation limits the ability to understand how gender inequalities manifest across different population groups and constrains the development of inclusive and targeted public policies. In addition, the **limited availability and use of data at the local level** impedes efforts to identify and address regional disparities, particularly those affecting women's access to services and economic opportunities.

Another key challenge is the **limited use of administrative data** for statistical purposes. While INSTAT currently utilizes the administrative records to produce gender statistics, there is significant room for improvement in fully leveraging available data. Gaps are particularly evident in areas such as social protection, pensions, vocational training, and registered job seekers, where disaggregation by key demographic and social characteristics remains insufficient. Similarly, **survey data remain underutilized** in generating gender indicators in critical thematic areas such as unpaid care work, health status, earnings, adult education and employment, including the ability to apply an intersectional lens. Ensuring harmonization with Eurostat standards is essential to bridge these gaps and support Albania's alignment with EU statistical requirements.

Capacity constraints also affect the production, analysis and use of gender statistics. Sustained investment in capacity development and inter-institutional coordination is essential to improve data quality and ensure that gender is mainstreamed across the statistical system.

2.6 ROLE OF CSOs IN PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

Civil Society Organizations (**CSOs**) in Albania have played a **critical role** in promoting **Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment.** They have been instrumental in **advocacy, legal reforms, service provision, and awareness campaigns.** However, these organizations still face **challenges related to funding, government collaboration and enforcement of gender policies.**

The CSO movement in Albania has a long history that began in the 1990s with the establishment of the first women's non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The first NGOs established after the fall of the communist regime focused on addressing key women's rights issues. Inspired by the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA) in 1995, women's NGOs expanded their focus to different critical areas of concern as mentioned in the BDPfA. Women's associations have since carried out a range of activities relating to women's and children's rights, social and health care, economic development (mainly small business) and combating violence against women. A national movement for women's political empowerment began as early as 2000 and gained

134. https://www.instat.gov.al/en/sdgs/

momentum over time, culminating in a media campaign for women's political representation in 2005, featuring extensive TV and radio coverage and public debates. The movement has successfully improved the country's political and social climate in terms of gender balance. After the 2000s, women's NGOs became more proactive in lobbying and advocating for the improvement of women's rights (for example, the Law on Domestic Violence of 2006 was among the first laws created through citizen initiative and supported by women's NGOs). In addition, these organizations contributed their expertise to consultations for drafting the Law on Gender Equality and the first National Strategy for Gender Equality 2007—2010. The period was characterized by the establishment of networks and coalitions, and NGOs had a vital role in service provision during this time.

In the decade 2010–2020, the role of women's NGOs expanded in terms of service provision as well as in lobbying and advocacy for the improvement of legal and policy frameworks for women's empowerment and gender equality. They played a very important role in the preparation of shadow and alternative reports for the implementation of international human rights treaties in Albania. Their contributions were recognized by the state, and they were invited to participate in advisory boards, consultations, and more. In addition to the support provided by the Agency for Supporting the Civil Society, some NGO service providers began receiving direct support from central or local government (providing premises for their activities, supporting services linked with sheltering of survivors of GBV, contributing funds to counselling services, etc.).

CSOs' work on women's empowerment and gender equality has continued over these last five years, although their funding relies on international support. One of the recommendations from GREVIO's first thematic report on Albania in 2024 emphasized the need to ensure a sustainable role for women's rights NGOs through adequate funding. This role includes support services for all victims of violence against women, including legal aid, through long-term grants awarded based on transparent procurement procedures. GREVIO also highlighted the importance of eliminating unnecessary bureaucratic barriers in the funding application process.

Beyond legislative advocacy and service provision, CSOs in Albania have played a crucial role in **shifting societal attitudes around gender equality and women's rights.** Through nationwide awareness campaigns, media engagement and educational programmes, they have helped combat stereotypes and promote a more gender-inclusive society. CSOs have also been instrumental in **enhancing women's participation in political and economic life**, advocating for gender quotas, and supporting women candidates in elections. Their role in **capacity-building programmes** has empowered thousands of women by providing vocational training, financial literacy, and entrepreneurship support, contributing to economic independence. They have also provided capacity-building for state institutions and professionals to help them better respond to gender equality and GBV issues. Additionally, Albanian CSOs have established strong regional and international partnerships, aligning their efforts with global movements and best practices and reinforcing their advocacy power at both the national and international levels.

Despite their important contributions, CSOs continue to **face structural and operational challenges** that constrain their ability to sustain long-term impact. One of the most pressing issues remains their reliance on **international donor funding,** which is often project-based and short-term. While some public funding avenues exists—such as the Agency for the Support of Civil Society and municipal allocations for CSOs providing specific services (i.e., support to victims of trafficking)—these funds are not guaranteed on a regular basis and vary significantly from year to year. This limited predictability, combined with limited institutional and financial capacities, leaves CSOs vulnerable to financial instability and hinders their ability to sustain long-term and impactful gender equality initiatives. Establishing a more institutionalized and predictable funding mechanism would help ensure that essential CSO-led services are consistently supported.

Additionally, **political and institutional barriers** sometimes hinder CSOs' advocacy efforts, particularly when pushing for stronger enforcement of gender-related laws and policies. Engagement and representation of women's (human rights) organizations in EU integration processes and mechanisms, such as in the National Platform for EU Integration, has remained limited. The increasing need for ***specialized support services***, such as psychological counselling, reintegration programmes for

survivors of GBV, and legal aid, requires greater investment in human and financial resources. Moreover, rapid shifts in global and national priorities—such as economic crises or political instability—can divert attention and resources away from gender equality initiatives. Addressing these challenges will require stronger collaboration between CSOs, government bodies and international partners to ensure sustained progress towards gender equality in Albania.

Field observations indicate that CSOs not focused on gender issues often struggle to integrate gender equality into programming, mainly because of a lack of awareness, inadequate training or incomplete institutional commitment. This results in long-lasting service gaps, particularly in psychosocial support, reintegration services and legal aid for GBV victims. To fill these gaps, targeted capacity-building efforts and awareness-raising within the broader civil society sector are needed. Supporting non-gender-focused CSOs in the gender equality mainstreaming process can strengthen the overall environment of service providers. International actors should prioritize inclusive funding and technical support to enable cross-sector coordination and ensure that gender equality is mainstreamed across all activities conducted by CSOs.

BOX 2.
The role of CSOs in Albania

In its 2024 Report for Albania, the European Commission highlights that: "Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Albania operate in a challenging environment, including in relation to registration requirements and limited public funding for CSOs. The role of civil society, including in the EU accession negotiation process, should be further strengthened. The structures in place for consulting civil society need to be reinforced and become fully operational. In addition, the conditions necessary for effective VAT exemption need to be put in place without further delay."[135]

135. European Commission. Albania Report 2024, pg. 4.

2.7 RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy level

1. Mainstream gender into national strategic policy documents to deliver planned measures, improve monitoring and evaluation, and ensure sufficient resource allocation and accountability mechanisms to deliver on planned measures, so as to effectively realize the rights of women and girls
2. Strengthen gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) to ensure consistent integration of gender targets, indicators, and tracking expenditures across all sectors and levels of government, and establish a unified mechanism to capture actual spending on gender equality.
3. Improve monitoring systems by operationalizing IPSIS, standardizing outcome-level indicators, and setting clear deadlines for implementing the NSGE 2021–2030 objectives.
4. Maximize donor funds to mainstream gender equality into EU-supported and other national reforms, apply GRB principles for equitable benefits, align international partners' investments with national priorities, and strengthen joint accountability frameworks.
5. Strengthen the application of Gender-Responsive Budgeting at the local government level by ensuring that municipal Medium-Term Budget Programs (MTBPs) and local strategies integrate gender priorities, are backed with adequate resources, and include gender-disaggregated monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. Build the capacity of municipal staff and councillors to apply GRB tools, and institutionalize participatory mechanisms that engage women and civil society in budget planning and oversight

Legal infrastructure

Legislative reforms to align with EU acquis and international standards, closing gaps and strengthening secondary legislation and enforcement. Update the legal framework, particularly the Law on Gender Equality, Law on Domestic Violence, Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code, Family Code, Civil Code, Civil Procedure Code, and Reproductive Health Law, among others, to address gaps identified by CEDAW, GREVIO, and the UPR.

Institutional Framework

6. Improve institutional coordination to enhance inter-ministerial collaboration, empower gender equality officers and focal points, and consolidate monitoring systems at central and local levels.

7. Strengthen institutional capacity to improve coordination, clarify mandates, and ensure adequate resources for the National Gender Machinery, CPD, and PA, including standards for shelters, property rights, anti-sexism in media, and protection in political participation.

8. Strengthen the capacities of the Gender Equality Machinery (GEM) by ensuring adequate human, professional, and financial resources for institutions at both central and local levels. Guarantee that gender equality mechanisms are properly established and that officers are appointed and functioning across government and municipalities. These measures should also be framed in line with EU requirements, thereby contributing directly to the EU accession process and demonstrating progress toward compliance with EU standards on gender equality and non-discrimination.

9. Enhance institutional capacity by training central and local public institutions to apply GRB, intersectional analysis, and sex-disaggregated data in planning and reporting.

Local Governance

10. Support local governance to standardize the development, monitoring, and evaluation of Local Gender Equality Action Plans (LGAPs) with realistic budgets and accountability measures, as well as increase gender mainstreaming efforts across other local plans.

Parliamentary level

11. Enhance parliamentary engagement by strengthening the role of committees, subcommittees, and voluntary groups in advancing gender equality and monitoring SDG commitments.

Gender Statistics

12. **Invest in continuous capacity-building** for staff of public institutions both at national and local levels, involved in data and statistics, as well as members of the Inter-Institutional Working Group on Gender Statistics, to strengthen their skills in producing, interpreting, using, and communicating gender statistics.

13. **Integrate a gender perspective** into all stages of data collection and analysis, including topic selection, questionnaire design, sampling, fieldwork training, data coding, and interpretation, to ensure the data reflect the lived experiences and needs of all population groups.

14. **Leverage administrative and survey data** to produce additional gender-specific and gender-relevant indicators, applying an intersectional approach that accounts for age, disability, ethnicity, migration status, family type, and geographic location, etc.

15. **Promote institutional collaboration** between INSTAT, line ministries, civil society organizations (CSOs), academia, and research centres to support data sharing, foster evidence-based policymaking, and encourage innovative uses of gender statistics.

16. **Introduce gender statistics modules** in higher education institutions and at the Albanian School of Public Administration, to build a pipeline of professionals with skills in gender data and promote data literacy across public institutions.

Civil Society Organisations

17. Support CSO engagement and build their capacities for advocacy, awareness-raising, service provision, and monitoring.

18. Strengthen partnerships to enhance collaboration between CSOs, government institutions, and international partners to influence policy making and strengthen service delivery.

19. Build capacity to support CSOs not specialized in gender equality to mainstream gender into their programming through training and technical assistance.

20. Empower CSOs to monitor the implementation of the legal framework on gender equality and promote accountability.

Others (Justice, Awareness, GBV)

21. Ensure access to justice for all women by increasing funding for legal aid, improving forensic capacities, addressing gender bias in law enforcement and judiciary, and ensuring victim-sensitive procedures.

22. Combat discrimination and GBV by empowering CPD and the Ombuds person office to proactively investigate gender-based cases and ensure effective follow-up.

23. Enhance monitoring and accountability by establishing systematic mechanisms for tracking enforcement of existing legal framework, improve collection and use of gender statistics, and conduct regular evaluations of implementation of gender-related legal acts.(ex-post).

24. Increase public awareness by expanding outreach on women's rights and inform them about available legal remedies, particularly for marginalized groups.

25. Address systemic barriers by challenging patriarchal norms, expanding awareness-raising, and prioritizing marginalized groups (minorities, women with disabilities, LBTIQ+, single mothers, survivors, rural women, etc.).

3

KEY GENDER EQUALITY ISSUES: PROGRESS, CHALLENGES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Albania has made progress in gender equality through reforms. Still, disparities persist in the political, economic and social spheres, especially in rural areas, which increase the risk of gender-based violence (GBV).

GBV remains a critical concern, with high levels of underreporting due to **stigma, economic dependence and inadequate institutional support**. Social norms continue to reinforce traditional gender roles, restricting women's autonomy and disproportionately burdening them with **unpaid care work**, which in turn limits their access to **formal employment and career progression**. Marginalized groups, including **Roma and Egyptian women, women with disabilities, older women, single mothers, and LGBTIQ+ individuals**, face **multiple forms of discrimination**, including intersectional discrimination, which further deepens socio-economic exclusion. Despite **progressive policy commitments, weak enforcement mechanisms and insufficient financial resources** hinder effective implementation of existing policies and legal frameworks.

3.1 ENSURING FREEDOM FROM ALL FORMS OF GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

GBV remains one of the most pressing human rights challenges in Albania, fueled by structural inequalities, economic vulnerability, and deep-rooted cultural norms. While awareness-raising efforts have increased and preventive measures have been introduced in relevant laws and policies, the prevalence of GBV remains alarmingly high, with many cases going unreported due to fear, stigma and a lack of trust in the support systems. Public perceptions of GBV, often influenced by traditional gender norms, contribute to societal tolerance of certain forms of violence, limiting the effectiveness of protective measures. Additionally, harmful practices such as gender-biased sex selection and early marriages persist, reflecting enduring gender discrimination. Femicide, the most extreme form of GBV, continues to claim the lives of women in Albania, often at the hands of intimate partners or family members, highlighting systemic failures in prevention and protection mechanisms.[136] The GREVIO report (2024) highlights that Albania has taken steps to align its policies and strategies on addressing VAW with EU and international human rights standards. However, the implementation of these frameworks remains limited.[137] Addressing GBV effectively demands a comprehensive and coordinated approach, prioritizing stronger institutional accountability, improved victim protection mechanisms, and broader public engagement to challenge deeply embedded social attitudes.

3.1.1 Legislation and policy response to prevent and address GBV

Albania has made notable progress in strengthening its legal and policy framework to combat GBV, with a focus on DV, through aligning its national law with the EU Directives and international treaties like the Istanbul Convention and CEDAW.

Notable legislative reforms include amendments to the Law on Measures Against Domestic Violence, the Criminal Code, and the Law on Protection from Discrimination, introducing stronger protective measures, expanding victim categories and alignment with EU definitions. In addition, complementary measures like the establishment of a National Registry of Sex Offenders and the ratification of ILO Convention 190 further extend legal safeguards in both the public and private spheres, including in the workplace. NSGE 2021–2030 sets an integrated and intersectional strategy for preventing GBV, protecting victims, and in-

136. UN Women Albania and People's Advocate (2025). Murder of women and girls and femicide in Albania", See: https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/Draft%20Raporti%20per%20Femicidin%2004.12.2024.pdf

137. See page 5 of GREVIO report (2024): "While the authorities have taken significant steps to reform the existing laws and policies and bring them in line with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention, the present report shows significant gaps when it comes to implementation… Significant gaps between the political will to reform, and the implementation of those provisions continue to undermine the trust of victims… the lack of sufficient implementation and enforcement of emergency barring and protection orders…the stigma that surrounds sexual violence and rape… and the existence of only one, insufficiently operational rape crisis centre… An urgent need, therefore, remains to invest in further and more sustainable awareness-raising measures and to roll-out relevant support services …"

creasing accountability, and is highly convergent with the EU Gender Action Plan III (2021-2025/2027). Despite these efforts, implementation challenges persist, and further legal and institutional reforms are necessary to fully align with EU and international human rights standards.

Albania has made important steps under the leadership of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to revise its legislative framework on Domestic Violence to cover all forms of violence, in order to further align the country's legislation and policies to cover all forms of violence against women covered by the Istanbul Convention, including femicide. Mandatory conciliation between victim and perpetrator must be abolished in all criminal cases concerning violence against women, particularly those concerning rape, sexual abuse and forced marriage, as well as in in parental separation proceedings in which there have been incidents of violence.[138] New legal acts and implementing legislation on cybercrime have yet to be adopted, and the criminalization of all forms of online child sexual abuse is pending. The legal framework for trafficking human beings is partially aligned with the EU *acquis*, and will need to be reviewed in line with amendments to Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking human beings and protecting its victims.[139] Female genital mutilation, identified as a type of violence against women in the Istanbul Convention and the 2024 EU Directive 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and DV, is not yet criminalized. All forms of cyber violence (cyberstalking, online harassment, and non-consensual image sharing) also have yet to be criminalized,[140] and legal provisions for prosecuting hate crimes, both physical and online, are also missing. The definition of rape in the Criminal Code must be amended incorporating a definition based on lack of consent, in line with Article 36 of the Istanbul Convention. The legal framework is not yet appropriate and must be reformed to prevent, investigate and sanction political gender violence. The Family Code must also be fully revised to prohibit child, early and forced marriage, ensuring that exceptions to the minimum marriage age of 18 are eliminated.[141]

In 2025, the Albanian government initiated the drafting process of a new law on gender-based violence. This law aims to reflect long-term recommendations of GREVIO and other international human rights mechanisms on Albania's obligations to address comprehensively all forms of gender-based violence, beyond domestic violence. It also aims to ensure alignment with the EU Directive 2024/1385 on Combating violence against women and domestic violence, including provisions related to violence in the digital space, as well as ILO no.190 Convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work.

Provision of specialist support services

Albania is making continued efforts to establish and strengthen specialist support services for survivors of violence against women and DV, as envisaged by the Istanbul Convention (Article 22), with some of these services established and run by NGOs, although further efforts are needed to ensure their full alignment with the Convention's standards. So far, around 82 specialist support services have been established, mainly providing shelter, national telephone helpline, support for victims of sexual violence, free legal aid, and perpetrators' programmes.

Shelters and/or other forms of safe accommodation are currently provided through around **27 services** (of which **21 are dedicated to domestic violence survivors, five to victims of trafficking/potential victims, and one to the LGBTIQ+ community)**. These include **two nation-**

138. GREVIO, 2024. First thematic evaluation report for Albania "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice", Appendix I, pg. 49-55. See: https://rm.coe.int/grevio-s-first-thematic-evaluation-report-on-albania/1680b1a0ca CEDAW 2023. Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania, pg.7. See: https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5

139. European Commission, "Albania Report 2024", pg.42. See: https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a8eec3f9-b2ec-4cb1-8748-9058854dbc68_en?filename=Albania%20Report%202024.pdf

140. EU Directive 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, pg. 73-78. See: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2023-0234-AM-298-298_EN.pdf

141. Human Rights Council. Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review for Albania, 20 December 2024. See: https://docs.un.org/en/A/HRC/58/5

al state shelters (one for victims of DV[142] and one for victims of trafficking/potential victims of trafficking[143]); **four non-public long-term shelters**;[144] **19 emergency shelters (municipality-run, NGO-run, or mixed models)**;[145] and **one long-term shelter for the LGBTIQ+ community**. Other forms of safe accommodation are supported through social housing program and rent bonus schemes. GREVIO has noted that access to the national shelter is contingent on victims reporting the crime and having obtained a court-issued protection order. Victims who have not done so are systematically turned away, despite the shelter rarely being at full capacity. There are notable **geographical disparities** in the availability of shelters, with most services concentrated in urban areas. NGO-run shelters located in three major cities – Tirana, Vlora and Elbasan – contribute to overall capacity and partially address this gap. However, their funding remains fragmented and vulnerable to fluctuations. A cost analysis of three NGO-run shelters shows that state contributions cover on average 68.7 per cent of their budgets[146], complemented by donor support; while the report prepared by the State Supreme Audit Institution (KLSH, 2023) focused on Tirana, Durrës, Gjirokastër, and Kukës found that for 2020 - 2023, 34 per cent of Social Fund allocations went to shelters or multifunctional centers providing DV services.[147] GRETA (2025) reported increased state allocations—over 24 million ALL for the state-run shelter and 9–11.8 million ALL for NGO shelters—yet noted that this funding mainly covers salaries and food, leaving operational costs unmet and long-term sustainability at risk. Authorities reported a 45 per cent increase in state funds to NGO shelters in 2024, while funding for the state-run shelter has also grown, including a 10 per cent rise in staff salaries.[148] The establishment of the emergency shelters closes the identified gap in emergency victim protection and represents a positive development in the ongoing support for women victims. The emergency shelters accept victims and their children; however, boys above the age of 14 are separated from their mothers and placed in separate facilities. GREVIO further notes that after victims leave the shelter, there is a lack of available specialized reintegration services such as transitional apartments.[149]

Two national telephone helplines are providing services for women and children: the National Counselling Line for Women and Girls (NCLWG) 116 117[150] and the helpline for children, ALO 116 111.[151] These are both 24/7 services established by NGOs but supported by the state budget. GREVIO has noted that although the cooperation of the NCLWG 116-117 with the MoHSW was formalized through an agreement, state funding relies on annual project submissions. The capacity of the helpline has increased with the addition of 10 counsellors, and services are now also available in English and Italian. Victims of sexual violence are increasingly using the helpline, highlighting the critical role that it plays within the ecosystem of structures and services.[152]

142. National Center for the Treatment of Domestic Violence, a long-term national shelter, with 32 shelter places, operating with state budget. State Supreme Audit Institution (KLSH). 2023. *Performance Audit Report: Effectiveness of the System for the Protection of Domestic Violence Victims, with a Focus on Abused Women*. See: https://www.sherbimisocial.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/KLSh-2023-Dhuna-ndaj-grave.pdf

143. National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking, a long-term national shelter, with 40 shelter places, accessible also for persons with physical disabilities, operating with state budget. GRETA report for Albania 2025. See: https://rm.coe.int/greta-evaluation-report-on-the-implementation-of-the-council-of-europe/1680b65f41

144. Respectively: SEH and D&E in Tirana, "Vatra" in Vlora, "Other vision" in Elbasan, NGO run services with partial state funds

145. Emergency shelters (municipality/state budget) in Berat, Gjirokastër, Përmet, Pogradec, Roskovec, Sarandë, Urë Vajgurore, Krujë, Kukës, Maliq, Kurbin, Korçë and Lezhë; Emergency shelters (municipality/state budget and donors), in Dibër, Durrës and Shkodër; Emergency Shelters NGO run services with partial state funds: "Women's Forum" in Elbasan, "House of Colors" – ARSIS in Tirana; Emergency shelter in Lezha established and run from the Catholic Community.

146. Data provided from Ministry of Health and Social PWelfare, in the frame of preparation of this report.

147. State Supreme Audit Institution (KLSH). 2023. Performance Audit Report: Effectiveness of the System for the Protection of Domestic Violence Victims, with a Focus on Abused Women. See: https://www.sherbimisocial.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/KLSh-2023-Dhuna-ndaj-grave.pdf

148. GRETA report for Albania 2025. See: https://rm.coe.int/greta-evaluation-report-on-the-implementation-of-the-council-of-europe/1680b65f41

149. GREVIO, 2024. First thematic evaluation report for Albania "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice. See: https://rm.coe.int/grevio-s-first-thematic-evaluation-report-on-albania/1680b1a0ca

150. See: https://hotlinealbania.org/

151. See: https://alo116.al/

152. GREVIO, 2024. First thematic evaluation report for Albania "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice. See: https://rm.coe.int/grevio-s-first-thematic-evaluation-report-on-albania/1680b1a0ca

Support for victims of sexual violence is provided through **three centres** designated for the treatment of such cases.[153] However, despite instructions issued by the MoHSW to the contrary, GREVIO points out that access to these centres is conditional upon the victim reporting the crime to the police. Considering the high prevalence rate of sexual violence in Albania, with 8.6 per cent of women having experienced sexual violence, GREVIO is very concerned about the low number of victims, particularly adult women, who are receiving care at these centres. This may be a direct result of the obligation to report a sexual assault or rape in order to benefit from the services of the sexual violence centre, which is in stark contrast to the purpose and spirit of the Istanbul Convention and expressly prohibited under Article 18, paragraph 4.[154]

Free legal aid is available in three forms: primary legal aid (legal advice), secondary legal aid (representation before judicial bodies), and exemption from court fees and expenses, as well as expenses related to the execution of verdicts. Primary legal aid is offered by **47 providers**[155] and there were 2,916 cases of victims of DV, sexual abuse and trafficking that benefited from primary legal aid during the years 2020-2023. In the same period, there were 995 court decisions for secondary legal aid and/or exemption from process fees and/or execution of the decision issued for victims of DV, beneficiaries of social protection schemes and one victim of trafficking.[156] During 2024, there was an increase in legal aid provided to victims of violence, with 1,136 individuals receiving primary legal aid and 137 receiving secondary legal aid. However, this group remains low compared to the total number of all legal aid beneficiaries (18 percent and 28 percent, respectively).[157]

GREVIO noted that legal counselling services for victims of violence have improved since 2017 when the first baseline evaluation report was issued.[158] However, the number of victims benefiting from legal aid remains low compared to the number of reported cases of violence and the overall number of beneficiaries of legal aid. The numbers should increase over the years, especially if supported by appropriate funding and awareness-raising measures.[159] Furthermore, while welcoming Albania's efforts towards guaranteeing access to free legal aid, human rights mechanisms expressed concerns about the procedure for obtaining secondary legal aid, particularly in DV cases; the insufficient resources allocated to the implementation of the Law on Legal Aid. In addition, despite continuous efforts from institutions and NGOs, recent reports from OHCHR and UNDP highlight the continuous need to increase awareness raising efforts on the availability of free legal aid and application procedure.[160]

These challenges are confirmed in the latest UNDP Survey on Access to Justice in Albania, which also points out that victims of DV are required to obtain a protection order before they can access legal aid—a requirement that poses a barrier, as many victims fear escalating the situation. In addition, there is a need for specialized training for legal aid providers, judges, and other professionals, as many, including lawyers, often lack sufficient expertise in handling complex and sensitive cases involving victims of DV and trafficking.[161]

Perpetrators' programmes are provided **in four cities**: Tirana, through the Counselling Line for Men and Boys;[162]

153. LILIUM Centre in Tirana managed by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and two new integrated services "One stop centre" in the regional hospitals in Fier and Shkodër. Another center similar as LILIUM is under construction in Vlora (information provided from MoHSW)
154. GREVIO, 2024. First thematic evaluation report for Albania "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice. See: https://rm.coe.int/grevio-s-first-thematic-evaluation-report-on-albania/1680b1a0ca
155. 20 Primary Legal Aid Service Centres, 12 Law Clinics at Higher Education Institutions and 15 Non-Profit Organizations authorized to provide this service by the Ministry of Justice.
156. "Comprehensive National Review on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action, in the frame of Beijing+30", prepared by Albania and delivered on June 1st, 2023, p.76. See: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_albania_en.pdf
157. Free Legal Aid Directorate (2025). Annual Performance Analysis 2024. See https://ndihmajuridike.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/Analiza-e-Performancës-Vjetore-2024.pdf
158. GREVIO's (Baseline) Evaluation Report on legislative and other measures giving effect to the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), published on 24 November 2017. See: https://rrjetikunderdhunesgjinore-monitorime.al/en/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/GREVIO-Inf-2017-13_ALB_eng.pdf.compressed.pdf
159. GREVIO, 2024. First thematic evaluation report for Albania "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice. See: https://rm.coe.int/grevio-s-first-thematic-evaluation-report-on-albania/1680b1a0ca
160. UN Human Rights Office contribution to the European Commission's Rule of Law Report 2025, chapter for Albania, pg.4. See: https://europe.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2025-02/ROE_X_Albania.pdf ; CEDAW Concluding Observations on Albania, 2023
161. UNDP Albania 2025, Access to Justice in Albania, 2024, https://www.undp.org/albania/publications/study-access-justice-albania
162. See: https://www.facebook.com/linjakeshillimitperburradhedjem/

Shkodra, through the Office for Men and Boys;[163] Elbasan, as part of the services provided by the Other Vision organization;[164] and Vlora, as part of the services provided by the Vatra centre.[165] GREVIO noted a lack of concrete efforts and sustainable funding to improve perpetrator programmes. The few available perpetrator programmes are still run by several NGOs and focus primarily on convicted perpetrators or perpetrators who have had a protection order issued against them. These programmes effectively operate on a voluntary basis, so if perpetrators do not attend the programme, they are not subject to reporting or any sanctions. There is no established protocol to harmonize the content of the programmes, and they appear to function in group settings and follow an individualized assessment of the needs of each perpetrator. It is important to note that there are no programmes specifically designed for perpetrators of sexual violence in Albania.[166]

Functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanisms

According to the Decision of the Council of Ministers (DCM) 327/2021, the Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) for DV cases is established in each municipality and aims to prevent and treat cases of DV. CRMs consist of a) steering committees for coordinating the activities of the responsible authority institutions at the local level, b) interdisciplinary technical teams, and c) local coordinators. Representatives of the State Police, Education Directorate, Central Directorate of the Health Care Service Operator, State Social Services, Prefecture, Qark, Employment Office, NGOs, shelters for victims of DV, rehabilitation centres for perpetrators; religious institutions, District Bar Association, and the Legal Aid Directorate are all members of the CRMs' steering committees. Representatives from the District Court, District Prosecutor's Office, Bailiff's Office, Sexual Violence Management Centre, Probation Service, Child Protection Unit, Psychologist's Order, Social Worker's Order, the village head, forensic medicine professionals, local media, and other authorities, services and specialists may be invited to participate in the steering committees' meetings.[167]

The coordination and operation of this mechanism is clearly detailed in DCM 327/2021 as well as in protocols and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) mentioned at the beginning of this section. Capacity-building activities are regularly provided to CRM members to increase their effectiveness in case management. Religious institutions officially became members of two CRMs in 2023 by signing the Memorandum of Understanding for the functioning of CRMs.[168] However, the level of functionality of the CRMs varies across municipalities. As noted by GREVIO, CRMs in bigger cities are well organized, meet regularly to discuss individual cases, and foster strong cooperation among their members, but the situation differs in smaller municipalities, where the mechanism was rolled out more recently. A standardized list of services that every municipality should include in the local mechanism is still not available. While the existing protocols for case management prescribe the exact roles of all the structures participating in the CRMs with precise timelines, their proper application is yet to be evaluated. Protocols on the operation of the CRMs should be updated and revised to reflect the new DCM 327/2021, which was approved to improve the functioning of the CRM, among other related legal changes. In addition, there are no protocols or standard operating procedures in place when it comes to forced marriage, forced sterilization or the treatment of women victims of DV suffering from mental disabilities. There have been cases of insufficient coordination among CRMs' members, including NGOs, especially in the recently established municipal mechanisms, and frequent staff turnover was highlighted as a primary reason for these shortcomings. The financing of the CRMs is still in part dependent on outside donors.[169]

163. See: https://gtg.al/zyra-per-djem-dhe-burra/
164. See: https://www.tjetervizion.org/services-3
165. See: https://qendravatra.org.al/sq/rreth-nesh/
166. GREVIO, 2024. First thematic evaluation report for Albania "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice. See: https://rm.coe.int/grevio-s-first-thematic-evaluation-report-on-albania/1680b1a0ca
167. DCM 327/2021, point 6 and 8. See: https://shendetesia.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/VKM-Nr.-327-dat%C3%AB-2.06-00000002.pdf
168. Respectively in Municipalities of Pogradec and Vlora. This was supported through UNFPA in the frame of UN Joined Project on Ending Violence against Women, phase II, implemented by Un Women, UNDP and UNFPA in collaboration with ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the Government of Sweden.
169. GREVIO, 2024. First thematic evaluation report for Albania "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice. See: https://rm.coe.int/grevio-s-first-thematic-evaluation-report-on-albania/1680b1a0ca

Forensic medicine and access to justice for GBV survivors

A critical gap in Albania's response to GBV is the shortage of forensic medical professionals, which significantly impacts the prosecution of sexual violence and DV cases. Forensic medicine plays a key role in collecting medical and forensic evidence, yet the country faces a severe lack of trained specialists, particularly women forensic doctors. The protocol for the treatment of sexual violence victims[170] grants survivors the right to have forensic evidence collected by a woman doctor, but this right is not always upheld due to the limited number of women forensic professionals.

Currently, free forensic medical examinations are only done at the request of law enforcement. If individuals want to obtain the examination independently, they must pay the fee specified by the Institute of Forensic Medicine. Such a policy can hinder reporting as well as the attainment of important evidence, particularly in the case of individuals unsure about taking legal action. As such, victim support services depend on official reporting, creating barriers to survivors and limiting their ability to make informed decisions about whether and how to pursue legal action.

The absence of specialized forensic expertise weakens legal proceedings against perpetrators, leading to delays in trials, difficulties in securing convictions, and barriers to justice for survivors.

Moreover, forensic medical services are not evenly distributed across Albania, forcing many survivors—particularly those in rural areas—to travel long distances for medical examinations, which further discourages reporting of GBV cases. Addressing this gap requires investment in forensic medicine training programmes, increased recruitment of women forensic doctors, and expansion of forensic units across the country. Strengthening forensic services is essential to ensuring timely access to justice for survivors and improving Albania's overall response to GBV.

3.1.2 Prevalence of violence against women and girls in Albania

Violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Albania is not a new phenomenon but rather a deeply entrenched issue influenced by patriarchal traditions and societal norms that have historically shaped gender roles and power dynamics. Cultural factors such as strict gender identities, patriarchal authority, the traditional code of honour and shame, generational control within families, and economic disparities continue to perpetuate GBV. Structural inequalities in education, employment and migration patterns further exacerbate women's vulnerability to violence. Research in Albania confirms that VAWG is a widespread and complex problem, cutting across all regions and social groups. Various national and international studies highlight that DV remains significantly underreported due to survivors' fears around stigma and retaliation, as well as a lack of trust in institutional responses.

The last National Survey on Violence against Women and Girls in Albania was conducted by INSTAT[171] in 2018. The key findings from this survey have been presented in the previous Gender Equality Brief Albania publication. While the 2018 survey on VAWG in Albania did not fully follow Eurostat's EU-GBV methodological framework, it still produced several of the key indicators required by Eurostat using the available data. Recognizing the need for harmonized and comparable data to meet EU standards, Albania has committed to fully aligning its next survey, planned for 2026, with Eurostat's methodology.

This step is an important part of the country's EU integration efforts and will significantly improve the quality and comparability of data. It will also support more effective policy development and implementation to prevent and respond to GBV.

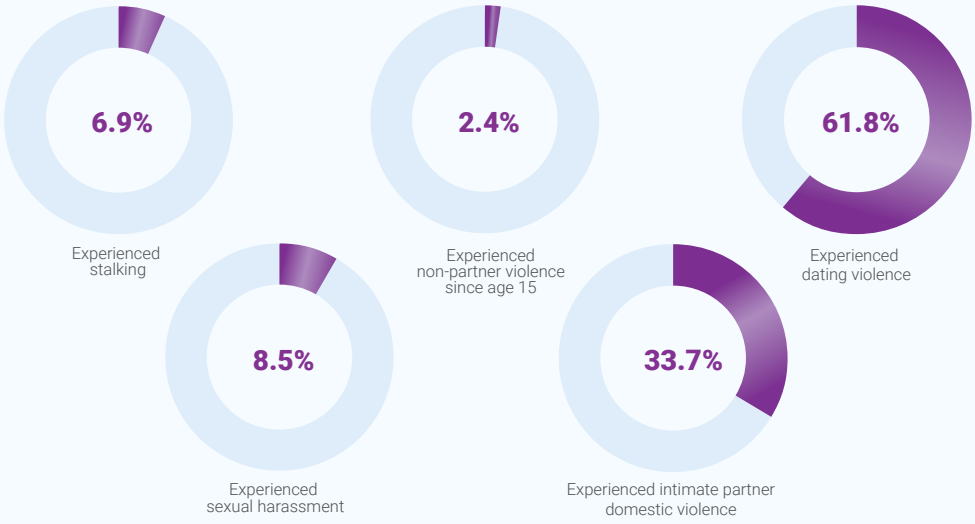
According to the official data, 61.8 per cent of women and girls aged 18 to 74 in Albania have experienced dating violence, 33.7 per cent have experienced intimate partner domestic violence, 8.5 per cent have experienced sexual

170. See: https://www.undp.org/albania/publications/protocol-managing-domestic-sexual-violence-cases-local-level-through-coordinated-referral-mechanism-crm

171. Supported by UNDP and UN Women with financial contribution through the Government of Australia in the framework of the regional gender statistics and SDGs project "Women Count" and the Government of Sweden in the framework of the UN Joint Programme on Ending Violence Against Women in Albania. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/6123/publication-violence-against-women.pdf

Figure 1

Experiences of violence against women and girls in Albania



Source: INSTAT. Violence against Women and Girls, 2018

harassment, 6.9 per cent have experienced stalking and 2.4 per cent have experienced non-partner violence since age 15. (See Figure 1)

Data on intimate partner domestic violence (SDG 5.2.1) shows that 47 per cent of women and girls have *ever* experienced such violence and that 33.7 per cent are currently experiencing it. By type, 41.2 per cent have *ever* experienced coercive control, 31.4 per cent psychological violence, 18 per cent physical violence, 8.6 per cent sexual violence, and 7 per cent economic violence. Current prevalence for each type is respectively 25.2 per cent, 19.7 per cent, 7.2 per cent, 3.6 per cent, and 7 per cent. (See Figure 2 below.)

Public opinions on violence in Albania demonstrate highly ingrained gendered norms, specifically the acceptability of corporal punishment. According to UNICEF's *The Reporting of Violence Against Children in Albania*,[172] men are 25 per cent more inclined than women to consider corporal punishment in the household as acceptable. This general gender gap indicates lingering social norms in support of violence as a means of discipline, particularly among men. Such attitudes help to normalize violence in the domestic environment and detract from non-violent, gender-sensitive parenting efforts. They also speak to wider structural issues, such as low levels of awareness of children's rights and variable application of current legal safeguards. Though Albania has legally committed itself to prohibiting physical punishment—most notably through the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child—dominant attitudes indicate a gap between law and everyday life. Concerted action is necessary to close this gap, including public awareness-raising, school- and community-based parenting programmes, and the promotion of positive discipline methods. Critically, these interventions need to be gender-responsive to men's and women's different roles and influence in transforming parenting norms and acceptance of violence in the home.

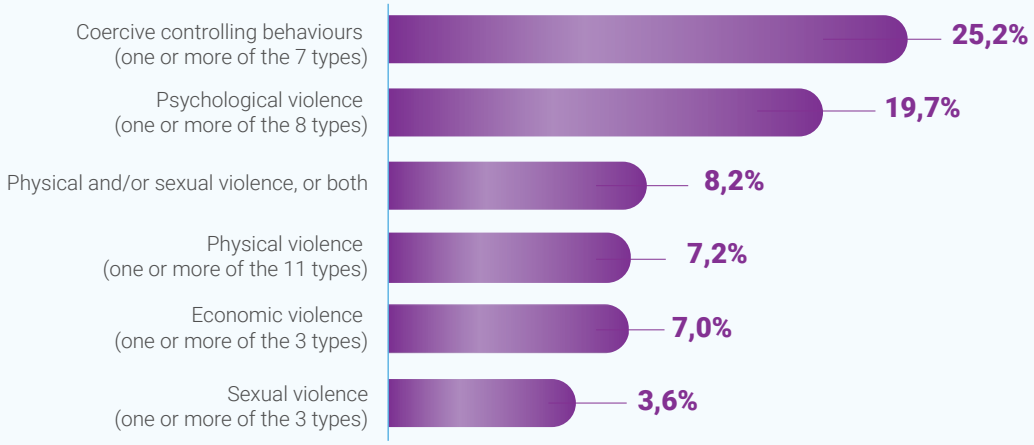
Reporting of domestic violence to the police

In addition to the above data for VAWG survey, Albanian State Police regularly collects data on DV cases, the number of requests for protection orders, the number of women and girls killed as a result of DV, and the number of perpetrators arrested (according to Article 130/a of the Criminal Code). This data indicates an increase in recorded DV cases, with 4,321 cases in 2020 and 5,073

172. See: https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/6601/file/The%20Reporting%20of%20Violence%20Against%20Children%20in%20Albania.pdf

Figure 2

Experience of intimate partner domestic violence (SDG 5.2.1) currently



Source: INSTAT. Violence against Women and Girls, 2018

cases in 2024. However, the number of requests for Emergent Protection Orders / Protection Orders is very low by comparison, with 2,816 requests in 2020 and 2,934 requests in 2024 (see Table 3)

GREVIO observed that police are reluctant to issue the Precautionary Measures of Immediate Protection Order (PMIPO). Additionally, when conducting risk assessments, the police often fail to consider all relevant risk indicators, which leads to the conclusion that a PMIPO is not necessary in a given case. GREVIO also observed challenges in the effective implementation and enforcement of emergency barring orders issued by the courts. Courts do not consistently order the removal of the perpetrator from the family home; they sometimes order the perpetrator to remain in one room while the victim continues to reside in another, or only require the perpetrator to keep a distance of a couple of meters. Similarly, GREVIO received information about mutual orders issued without a proper analysis to identify the primary aggressor. Although in the minority, these types of decisions by courts continue to undermine victims' trust in the system. No information was submitted to GREVIO about sanctions issued regarding agents of any state authority for failure to enforce an emergency barring order.[173]

REVALB system for domestic violence case management

The REVALB system, created as an electronic platform, is a crucial tool for documenting cases of DV recognized and resolved at the community level through the efforts of the CRMs. The system promotes data collection and case oversight through the multi-sectoral framework consisting of the Local Coordinators for Domestic Violence, Multidisciplinary Technical Teams, and the MoHSW, as stipulated under the Council of Ministers' Decision No. 327/2021. Although it is an important administrative data source, issues of inconsistent entry, rural connectivity, and differences in local stakeholders' capacity to effectively implement the system persist. Such limitations impede complete monitoring and the use of data to influence policy formulation, as well as improvement in the provision of services.

173. GREVIO, 2024. First thematic evaluation report for Albania "Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice. See: https://rm.coe.int/grevio-s-first-thematic-evaluation-report-on-albania/1680b1a0ca
174. Law On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations
175. Domestic or family-related homicide

Table 3

Domestic violence cases reported to the police for the period 2020-2024

Year	Cases recorded by the police (130/a + Law 9669[176])	Perpetrators (130/a + Law 9669)	Request for protection order (Law 9669)	Number of victims dead (130/a+79/c)[177]	Perpetrators arrested (Article 130/a)
2020	4321	4443	2816	11	615
2021	4897	5025	3266	17	638
2022	4827	4946	2940	12	682
2023	4641	4790	2730	13	697
2024	5073	5271	2934	10	844

Source: Data from the General Directorate of State Police, INSTAT, May 2025

Femicide

Between 2021 and 2023, 32 women and girls were murdered in Albania, with 27 of these cases involving perpetrators who had a family relationship with the victim. Among the 28 identified perpetrators, 26 were men and boys, while two were women and girls. In 28 cases, the perpetrator was located and apprehended, whereas in two cases, the perpetrator remained unidentified by the authorities. Additionally, six perpetrators lost their lives immediately after the crime, including five who committed suicide and one who died while attempting to evade arrest. Furthermore, two perpetrators died in custody during the investigation process. Of the 32 cases of murdered women and girls, 24 meet the criteria to be classified as femicide, or gender-based killings, committed by 22 perpetrators. In about 90 per cent of cases, the femicide victims had been abused by the perpetrators prior to the crime, but only six of them (25 per cent) had previously reported the violence to the police. Two of these women were equipped with Protection Orders or Emergency Protection Orders at the time of their murder, and none had been issued a PMIPO by the police. Four of the women and girls were killed a few days after the perpetrators were released from prison, having served their sentences for the criminal offence of domestic violence under Article 130/a of the Criminal Code. 55 children were affected by the murder of their mothers, 20 of whom were minors and some of whom were present at the time of the incident. The femicide rate in Albania for the year 2021 was 0.85 per 100,000 women and girls; in 2022, this rate decreased to 0.50, and in 2023, it increased to 0.84.[178]

The above findings are drawn from the first national report on the Killing of Women and Girls—Femicide in Albania,[179] based on the UN Women and UN Office on Drugs and Crime Statistical Framework.[180] This represents an important step towards the systematic and gender-sensitive measurement of femicide, aligned with international standards. However, the application of this framework remains challenging across countries due to differences in legal definitions, penal codes and data recording practices. Eurostat, for instance, reports only in terms of intentional homicides committed by intimate partners or family members, excluding other gender-related motives cases as outlined in the UN statistical framework. Given that all femicides recorded in Albania in 2023 were perpetrated by an intimate partner or family member, a comparison with EU data is possible. In 2023, the EU average rate of intention-

176. Law On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations
177. Domestic or family-related homicide
178. UN Women Albania and People's Advocate (2025). "Murder of women and girls and femicide in Albania", https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/Draft%20Raporti%20per%20Femicidin%2004.12.2024.pdf
179. https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/20250226-Femicide-EN-EDIT-FINAL%20(003)%20(002).pdf
180. https://www.unodc.org/documents/data-and-analysis/statistics/Statistical_framework_femicide_2022.pdf

al homicide perpetrated by an intimate partner or a family member was 0.41 per 100,000 women,[181] while Albania's rate stood at 0.84, more than twice the EU average.

The data on femicide are collected within the framework of the ***Observatory on Femicide in Albania***, established in March 2024 under the People's Advocate, in accordance with the requirements of the CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, etc.[182] The Observatory is a monitoring mechanism created to address cases of murders of women and girls, with the aim of preventing this phenomenon and effectively implementing legislation against GBV. Through this mechanism, data is collected at the national level and analysed in depth to identify problems and gaps in the chain of protection mechanisms for victims of violence.[183]

Technology-facilitated violence

Technology-based violence is an increasingly visible and harmful form of GBV in Albania, targeting women and girls in both public and private digital spaces. Common forms include cyberstalking, online harassment, non-consensual distribution of intimate content, identity theft and hate speech, all of which disproportionately affect women. These violations result in serious psychological, social and economic consequences, often silencing victims and limiting their participation in public and online life.

Despite its growing prevalence, Albania lacks specific legal provisions that define and address digital violence, leaving significant gaps in prevention, protection and prosecution. Moreover, institutional capacities to respond remain weak, and CSOs lack sustained resources to provide specialized support. Urgent action is needed to harmonize legal frameworks, raise public awareness, and equip relevant actors with the tools and training to prevent and respond effectively to technology-facilitated violence.[184]

3.1.3 Public attitudes and knowledge on GBV

Public attitudes and awareness of GBV in Albania have evolved over the years, yet deep-rooted social norms, patriarchal traditions, and cultural perceptions continue to influence how GBV is perceived and addressed. Research indicates that while there is increasing awareness of GBV as a serious human rights violation, many Albanians still view DV as a private family matter rather than a criminal offence. According to the 2018 National Population-Based Survey on Violence Against Women and Girls, 52.2 per cent of women aged 18-74 reported that most or all people in their community believe violence between a husband and wife is a private matter and that others should not intervene. Additionally, 46.5 per cent of women stated that most or all people in their community believe a woman should tolerate some violence to keep her family together.

Regarding social norms related to sexual violence, 26.1 per cent of women indicated that most or all people in their community believe a woman should feel ashamed or embarrassed to speak about rape. Furthermore, 21.2 per cent of women reported that most or all people in their community believe that if a woman is raped, she has probably acted carelessly and put herself in that situation. When asked about the seriousness of violence against women and girls (VAWG) in Albania, as many as three out of four, or 75.4 per cent, of women reported family/marital violence against women is a major problem in Albania, and 70.8 per cent of women felt that sexual violence against women and girls is a major problem. In addition, two out of three or 69.9 per cent of women reported that sexual harassment of women and girls is a major problem, and two out of three or 68.4 per cent reported stalking of women as a major problem. These data demonstrate that women in Albania recognize VAWG as a significant and serious problem, while also revealing the powerful effects of stigma, silence and the normalization of such violence through victim-blaming and reversal of responsibility.[185]

181. See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/crim_hom_vrel__custom_16741113/default/table?lang=en
182. The establishment of the Observatory was supported by the Joint United Nations and Albanian Government Programme "Ending Violence against Women", funded by the Government of Sweden.
183. UN Women Albania and People's Advocate (2025). "Murder of women and girls and femicide in Albania", https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/Draft%20Raporti%20per%20Femicidin%2004.12.2024.pdf
184. UN Women 2024. Study on cybernetic/digital violence and the psychological dimension of this form of violence. The case of Albania (unpublished).
185. INSTAT 2018. National Population-Based Survey on Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG). See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/6123/publication-violence-against-women.pdf

Despite these challenges, public knowledge of GBV has improved through awareness campaigns, education programmes, and increased media coverage. The involvement of CSOs and international partners has helped to shift societal perceptions and encouraged survivors to seek support. However, stigmatization and victim-blaming are still widespread, particularly in rural areas, where traditional gender roles are more strongly upheld. Furthermore, many victims do not report violence due to fear, economic dependence and lack of trust in institutions.

Nationwide awareness campaigns

Albania has conducted extensive nationwide awareness-raising campaigns for a number of years to counter harmful gender stereotypes and promote a policy of zero tolerance for violence against women. These campaigns are run by the MoHSW together with relevant ministries, local authorities, CSOs, and international partners, including United Nations agencies, and have yielded positive results. Notably, Albania actively participates in the global celebration of the 16 Days of Activism and International Women's Day every year. From 2019 to 2021, these campaigns reached millions of people through various social media, public events, exhibitions, media appearances, and messaging in public areas, reflecting considerable engagement from businesses, institutions, and the media.[186]

Toxic masculinity and its impact on gender-based violence

In Albania, entrenched gender norms that associate masculinity with control and emotional restraint, often termed "toxic masculinity," continue to fuel GBV and femicide. Surveys by UN Women (2023)[187] and UNFPA (2024)[188] highlight persistent societal expectations reinforcing male dominance, early marriage for girls and unequal domestic roles. Many men feel pressured to suppress emotions and reject gender equality, and few actively challenge harmful norms. That most of the 32 the women killed in 2021-2023 had suffered prior abuse, yet only a quarter had reported it,[189] illustrates the silence and impunity surrounding GBV. Addressing this requires systemic efforts in education, community engagement and legal reform to dismantle toxic gender roles and promote non-violence.

3.1.4 Harmful practices (early marriages, pre-natal sex selection)

Early and forced child marriages are an underexplored issue that affects girls from different social groups. Rooted in gender inequality, social norms, poverty, and social exclusion, this harmful practice disproportionately affects girls and limits their rights, education and autonomy. It is a form of GBV with long-term physical, psychological and social consequences.

In Albania's Family Code, the minimum age for marriage is 18 years, and while the law provides for exceptions for marriages prior to the legal age, they can only be authorized by the court (Article 7). However, there is no provision that defines the minimum age under which the court is not allowed to grant this exception, which has been highlighted by GREVIO and CEDAW as problematic for Albania.

According to INSTAT, in 2022, 15 girls were registered as married before the age of 18—a decrease from 19 cases in 2021. Among those aged 18 and 19, marriage rates stand at 6.1 per cent and 4.7 per cent, respectively. In contrast, there are no recorded cases of boys marry-

186. "Comprehensive National Review on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action, in the frame of Beijing+30", prepared by Albania and delivered on June 1st, 2023, p.49. See: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_albania_en.pdf

187. UN Women Albania (2023) "Voices of Youth: Gender Equality and Social Cohesion in the Western Balkans", conducted in the framework of the United Nations regional initiative 'Youth 4 Inclusion, Equality & Trust' which is implemented by UN Women, UNDP, UNFPA and UNESCO. See: https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/09/voices-of-youth-gender-equality-and-social-cohesion-in-the-western-balkans

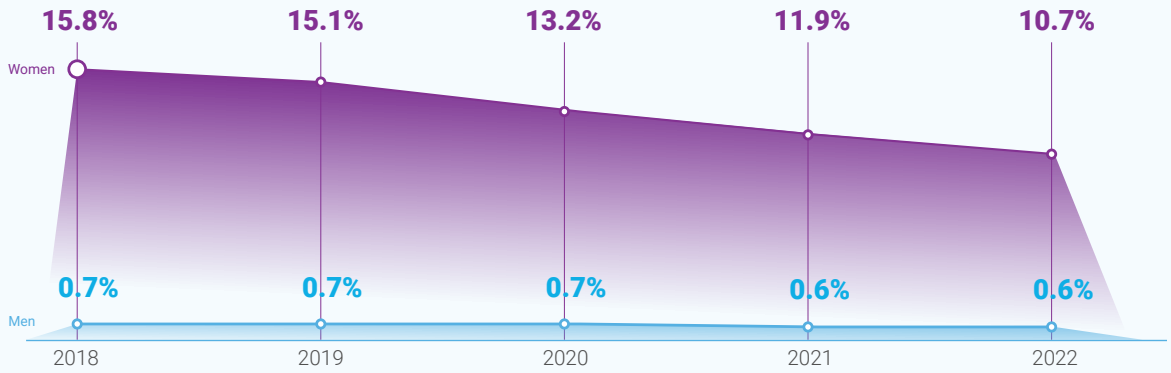
188. "Youth Voice" Network of Organizations in collaboration with UNFPA Albania (2024) "Understanding the barriers and challenges that boys and young men face in fostering and promoting equality", prepared within the framework of the Project "To end violence against women and girls in Albania" (EVAWIA), a joint UN program funded by the Government of Sweden and implemented by three UN agencies: UNFPA, UNDP and UN Women in partnership with the Albanian Government. See: https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=556448803846564

As explained in the section 3.1.2 of this report.

189. Data from the Observatory on Femicide in Albania

Figure 3

Registered early marriages (up to age 19) by sex



Source: INSTAT, Women and Men in Albania 2023.

ing before age 18, and marriage rates among 18- and 19-year-old boys remain below 1 per cent.[190]

CEDAW has recommended that Albania eliminate all exceptions to the legal minimum age of marriage of 18 years for both girls/young women and boys/young men. It also urges continued efforts to combat child and forced marriage by: (i) addressing the root causes of this harmful practice; (ii) encouraging the reporting of cases; (iii) ensuring accountability by punishing complicit family members, religious and community leaders, and law enforcement officials; and (iv) establishing mechanisms to detect such cases and provide specialized support services for girls affected by forced marriage. These recommendations are in line with Joint General Recommendation No. 31 of the CEDAW Committee and General Comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices.[191]

Measures to support girls at risk and to prevent early child marriages are also envisaged in the NSGE 2021-2030 (particularly under Specific Objective III.1, measures III.1.2, and II.5.2.f). CSOs have also made recommendations for legal changes[192] regarding legal specifications for minimum age, below which marriage cannot be allowed even by a court decision; and clarification of active legitimation in proceedings related to underage marriage (i.e. who has the right to file a petition of "permission of underage marriage").

To accurately understand and address this problematic practice, it is essential to distinguish clearly between child marriage—defined as marriage under the legal age of 18—and early marriage, which may involve individuals above the legal age but lacking full, free and informed consent. Additionally, raising awareness about the severity of early and child marriage is crucial in shifting public attitudes, strengthening prevention efforts, and promoting the full protection of girls' rights in all communities.

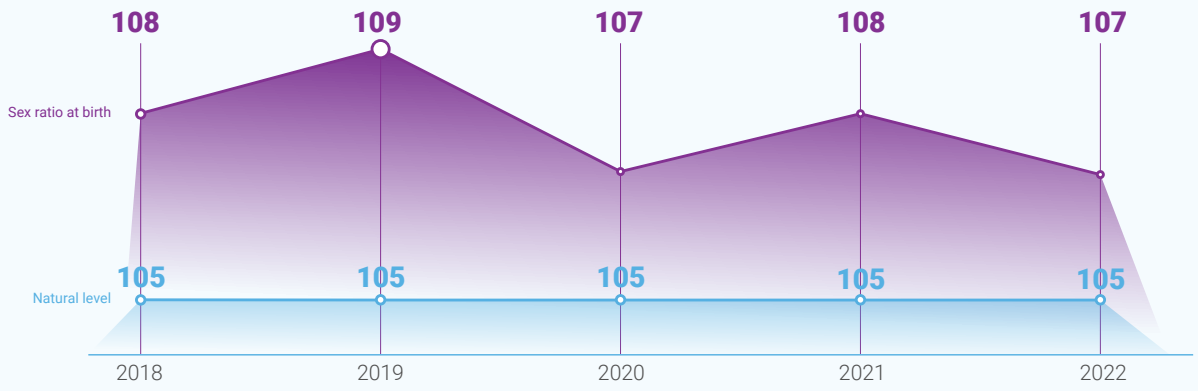
Pre-natal sex selection

In Albania, the practice of prenatal sex selection is influenced by strong patriarchal values, the strong cultural preference for sons, the availability of prenatal determination technologies, and the decline in fertility rates. The sex ratio at birth is 107 boys per 100 girls, which is above

190. INSTAT, "Men and Women 2023", pg.16
191. CEDAW 2023. "Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania". See: https://docs.un.org/en/CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5
192. See: https://www.qag-al.org/publikime/legal_review_report.pdf

Figure 4

Sex ratio at birth



Source: INSTAT, Women and Men in Albania 2023

the natural biological ratio of 105 and thereby indicative of the practice of sex-selective procedures.

Pre-natal sex selection has far-reaching consequences in terms of the rights, health and social equality of women. They face significant pressure from family as well as societal expectations to have sons, and in many cases, they face psychological violence while carrying a female fetus. These situations lead to coerced as well as repeated abortions, impacting their psychological and physical health. On the societal level, the practice of acceptance of prenatal sex selection reinforces gender inequality, lowers the value assigned to girls, and increases demographic imbalances.Addressing this problem requires the implementation of large-scale awareness campaigns aimed at bringing about behavioural changes, primarily ta geted at young people, newly married couples, community leaders and medical professionals. The quality of reproductive health services should be improved, including training health care providers and reviewing medical education programmes. This initiative should be combined with legal reforms and policy changes that support the government's commitment to the elimination of prenatal sex selection and the promotion of gender equality in all fields.

3.1.5 Key EU Legislation and Policies

The EU prioritizes protection against DV and GBV through policy frameworks and legislation. Key instruments include the EU Gender Equality Strategy for 2020–2025, the EU Roadmap for Women's Rights published in 2025, and notably, the EU's joining of the Istanbul Convention in 2023, which solidifies its commitment across all Member States. In 2024, the EU adopted Directive 2024/1385[193] on Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence. This directive criminalizes forms of GBV offline (e.g., female genital mutilation, forced marriage) and online (e.g., non-consensual sharing of intimate images, cyber harassment); mandates protection, support, and access to justice for victims; and requires preventive measures, with an emphasis on consent in sexual relations.[194]

While the Albanian legal framework shows substantial alignment with the Istanbul Convention, it requires further alignment with Directive 2024/1385, especially concerning online violence. Recommended proposals on how to achieve this harmonization have been submitted to the Ministry of Justice in the framework of the reform pro-

193. Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=OJ:L_202401385&qid=1716884102079

194. European Commission (2025), Ending gender-based violence, https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/gender-equality/gender-based-violence/ending-gender-based-violence_en

cess of the Criminal Code.[195] Other relevant EU legislation in this area includes the Victims' Rights Directive (Directive 2012/29/EU), which establishes minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, including GBV survivors; Anti-Trafficking Directive (Directive 2011/36/EU), which among other issues addresses the trafficking of women and girls for the purpose of sexual exploitation; and Asylum Qualification Directive (Directive 2011/95/EU), which provides international protection for persons who have been subjected to rape or other serious forms of psychological, physical or sexual violence.

While the legal framework is largely in place, implementation remains weak, particularly in prevention, protection and enforcement mechanisms.

3.1.6 Recommendations

Strengthen Legal and Policy Frameworks

Criminalize all forms of GBV not yet covered by national law, including femicide, cyber violence, forced sterilization and online harassment; amend the definition of rape in the Criminal Code to be based on lack of consent; abolish mandatory conciliation in criminal cases of rape, sexual abuse and forced marriage; prohibit all exceptions to the minimum marriage age of 18 to eliminate judicial approvals for child marriages; ensure comprehensive anti-discrimination protections for vulnerable groups including Roma, Egyptian women, LGBTIQ+, and women with disabilities. *Linked to: CEDAW Concluding Observations (2023, paras. 25(a)(b), 27, 29(b)(d)), General Recommendations No. 19, 28, 33, and 35; UPR 2024 recommendations 120.57, 120.61, and 120.62; SDG targets 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3; and the Istanbul Convention, particularly Articles 33–37 and 43.*

Strengthen Law Enforcement and Judicial Responses

Establish specialized GBV police units and ensure mandatory gender-sensitive training for law enforcement, prosecutors and judges; Ensure immediate and consistent issuance of Precautionary Measures of Immediate Protection Orders (PMIPO) by police and courts; Create specialized fast-track GBV courts with trained judges to ensure timely legal proceedings for survivors; Strengthen perpetrator accountability by enforcing mandatory perpetrator rehabilitation programmes as a condition for reduced sentencing and introducing electronic monitoring (GPS tracking) for high-risk offenders. This recommendation is linked with CEDAW Concluding Observations (2023, para. 27(c)(d)), General Recommendations No. 33 and 35, UPR 2024 recommendations 120.60 and 120.63, SDG targets 5.2 and 16.1, and the Istanbul Convention, particularly Articles 45 and 49–56.

Expand and Improve Support Services for Survivors

Increase state-funded shelters with guaranteed access without requiring a court protection order; Expand legal aid services, ensuring free legal representation for survivors, especially in rural and marginalized communities; Strengthen psychosocial support and trauma-informed care, including the establishing of regional sexual violence crisis centres and provide specialized training for health care providers to improve victim identification and care; Enhance economic independence for survivors by creating job placement programmes and vocational training, as well as providing microfinance and financial literacy programmes for survivors of DV. *This recommendation is linked with CEDAW Concluding Observations (2023, paras. 25(c), 27(e), 29(e)), General Recommendations No. 28, 33, and 35, UPR 2024 recommendations 120.58 and 120.60, SDG targets 5.2 and 10.2, and the Istanbul Convention, particularly Articles 20–25 on support services.*

Address Harmful Practices: Pre-natal Sex Selection and Early Marriage

Regulate prenatal sex determination practices to prevent sex-selective abortion; Launch awareness campaigns targeting health care professionals, families, and community leaders to shift cultural attitudes on son preference; Establish birth registration audits to track sex ratio imbalances and detect pre-natal sex selection. *This recommendation aligns with CEDAW Concluding Observations (2023) and GR No. 24 and 31 on eliminating harmful practices, UPR 2024 on banning judicial exceptions to the minimum marriage age, and SDG 5.3 on ending early and forced marriage.*

Improve Data Collection and Monitoring

Conduct regular national surveys on GBV, including DV, sexual harassment and online abuse, with disaggre-

195. Input provided by UN Women (2024)

gated data by sex, ethnicity and disability; Expand the Femicide Observatory to systematically monitor gender-based killings and publish annual reports; Create a centralized national database to track GBV cases across law enforcement, health care and social services; Strengthen inter-agency cooperation between government, NGOs and international organizations to improve victim support and law enforcement coordination. *This recommendation aligns with CEDAW (2023), GR 28 and 35, UPR 2024, Istanbul Convention Article 11, and SDGs 5.1, 5.2, and 17.18 on strengthening GBV data and accountability systems.*

Increase Public Awareness and Education

Introduce mandatory training on non-violent communication and on gender equality in schools, with a curriculum focused on gender stereotypes, consent and GBV prevention; Expand national media campaigns challenging patriarchal norms and promoting survivor rights; Engage men and boys in violence prevention initiatives through school programmes, youth activism and community dialogues; Ensure compliance with ILO Convention 190 by mandating workplace anti-harassment policies in public and private sectors and establishing anonymous reporting mechanisms for sexual harassment at work. *This recommendation is linked with CEDAW (2023), GR 28 and 35, UPR 2024, SDGs 4.7 and 5.1, and ILO Convention 190 on gender stereotypes, education, and workplace harassment..*

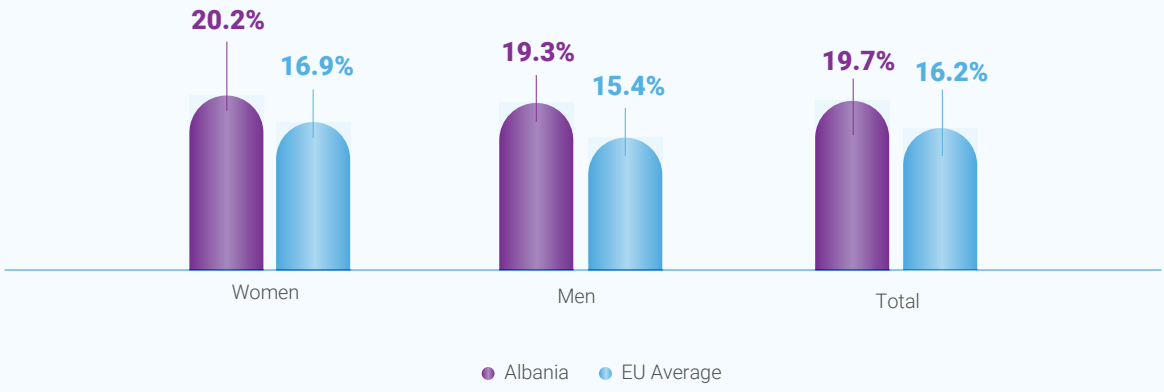
3.2 WOMEN, POVERTY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

3.2.1 Poverty and inequality

Albania has made progress in addressing poverty over the years, including through economic development as well as social protection and inclusion reforms. The at-risk-of-poverty rate has gradually been decreasing, from 23 per cent in 2019 to 21.8 per cent in 2020, 22 per cent in 2021, 20.6 per cent in 2022, and 19.7 per cent in 2023. The number of individuals living below the at-risk-of-poverty threshold in 2023 was estimated to be 545,400, down from 576,316 in 2022.[196] In 2023, the at-risk-of-poverty rate was 3.5 percentage points higher than the EU average.

Figure 5

At-risk-of-poverty rate, 2023

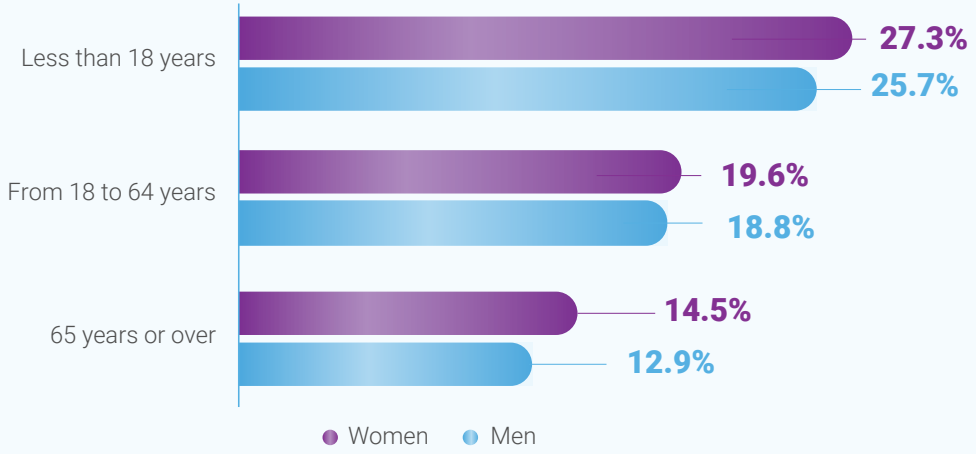


Source: INSTAT and Eurostat, Income and Living Conditions in Albania, 2023

196. INSTAT, Income and Living Conditions Survey in Albania (EU-SILC) 2023, published in December 2024 https://www.instat.gov.al/media/14638/income-and-living-conditions-survey-2023_1312.pdf

Figure 6

At-risk of-poverty rate by age and sex, 2023



Source: INSTAT and Eurostat, Income and Living Conditions in Albania, 2023

Despite progress, many people remain vulnerable to social exclusion and are unable to fully participate in society, with limited access to the resources, rights and services available to the majority population. In Albania, the share of the population at risk of poverty or social exclusion—defined as individuals who are either at risk of poverty, severely materially and socially deprived, or living in households with very low work intensity—was estimated at 42.1 per cent in 2023, down from 44.5 per cent in 2022.[197] This rate is significantly higher than the EU average of 21.3 per cent, reflecting a gap of 20.9 percentage points. Moreover, the proportion of people at risk of poverty before social transfers stand at 36.5 per cent, with rural and minority populations particularly vulnerable to poverty and social hardship.

Women and girls are particularly affected by poverty. The at-risk-of-poverty rate is higher among women than men (20.2 per cent and 19.3 per cent, respectively) and particularly high for children 0-17 years old (26.5 per cent compared to 19.2 per cent for the adult population 18–64 years old). This percentage is higher among households with dependent children (23.9 per cent) compared to those without dependent children (11.3 per cent).[198] Moreover, the purchasing power of social assistance benefits has eroded over time. Even following recent increases, the maximum benefit amount would hardly exceed ALL 12,000 (equivalent to 139 USD or 122 EUR) for a household with three or more dependent children, whereas the poverty threshold for a household with two dependent children was of a monthly amount of ALL 47,345 (equivalent to 551 USD or 453 EUR) in 2023.[199]

With regards to women's poverty, some specific strategic measures are envisaged in the NSGE 2021–2030 under the first strategic goal aimed at: reducing/eliminating poverty through the fulfillment of economic and social rights for women and girls; their empowerment particularly through growth and sustainability of the environmental (green) economy; and their equal participation in digitalization.

While the poverty-related gender gap in Albania is not significant *prima facie*, there are several aspects to consider when examining the relationship between gender and poverty. Traditionally, monetary poverty is calculated at the household level, making it difficult to distinguish the

197. INSTAT(2023), Income and Living Condition Survey: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/14638/income-and-living-conditions-survey-2023_1312.pdf

198. Ibid. https://www.instat.gov.al/media/14638/income-and-living-conditions-survey-2023_1312.pdf

199. Information based on the "Review of local budget spending on social care services", 2022, developed in the context of LNB2 (draft not yet published).

poverty status of different household members.[200] In addition, income-based poverty measurements fail to capture the complex experiences of women and girls who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, deficits in income, health care, housing and education, which tend to cluster and compound one another. To address this, multidimensional poverty measures have emerged that incorporate individual-level variables, such as education and health, but they also continue to rely strongly on household-level variables, such as access to housing or infrastructure. Poverty measures also exclude critical aspects intrinsically intertwined with women's and girls' experience of poverty, including their exposure to GBV, lack of voice and agency, and heightened time poverty.[201] In addition, sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics on poverty are systematically collected through household surveys and do not take into account the power dynamics within the families. A very high number of women worldwide living in non-poor households have no or limited access to their own income and no or little say in how household resources may be used. They are *de facto* income poor and likely to face many other deprivations, yet remain uncounted and invisible.[202]

The EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) measures poverty in Albania based on income distribution, poverty and social exclusion. Poverty measurement under the EU-SILC survey relies on a relative concept, which considers poverty as being economically disadvantaged compared to others within the same population. The poverty line is defined as 60 per cent of the median equivalized disposable income per individual in a household.[203] The equivalized disposable income assumes that all members of a household, be they women or men, share resources equally, meaning every member enjoys the same standard of living.[204] Therefore, income attributed to each individual represents a measure of their standard of living rather than actual earnings. Given this assumption, SILC data do not reveal significant gender disparities in the risk of poverty or social exclusion.

3.2.2 Women from vulnerable groups and poverty

Poverty and inequalities are more evident in rural areas and among the vulnerable groups in Albanian society, including members of the Roma and Egyptian communities, the elderly, youth, persons with disabilities, and others. While disaggregated data on poverty levels within these groups are unavailable, various reports indicate persisting challenges with regards to social inclusion, employment and other opportunities. For example, human rights mechanisms have expressed concerns about: the situation of people living in remote and rural communities, which lag behind in terms of access services, leading to widespread poverty, unemployment and marginalization;[205] persistent and widespread structural discrimination against Roma and Egyptians, who continue to face social exclusion and marginalization;[206] or exclusion and poverty experienced by persons with disabilities resulting both from a lack of awareness among the wider population and from widespread accessibility problems.[207]

Women from these groups are particularly affected due to the intersection of gender with other potential grounds for discrimination and inclusion, including ethnicity, dis-

200. German Institute of Development and Sustainability (IDOS), (2023), Policy Brief: The Gendered Nature of Poverty: Data, Evidence and Policy Recommendations. See: https://www.idos-research.de/uploads/media/PB_24.2023.pdf

201. UN Women (2024). World survey on the role of women in development 2024: Harnessing social protection for gender equality, resilience and transformation. See: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/10/world-survey-on-the-role-of-women-in-development-2024

202. *Ibid.*

203. This calculation is adjusted using the modified OECD equivalence scale, ensuring comparability across households of different sizes and compositions. The concept of equivalized disposable income plays a central role in this methodology. It begins by determining the total disposable income of a household, which includes net income after taxes and deductions for health and social insurance contributions. This total is then divided by the household's equivalized size, as calculated by the modified OECD scale.

204. EUROSTAT (2023). Methodological Guidelines and Description of EU-SILC Target Variables, https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/documents/203647/20298610/Methodological+guidelines+2023+operation_v6-accessibility.pdf/2d6aa68c-aa51-d386-1f1c-0206fda5be49?t=1730709878443

205. UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development (2023., Report on the visit to Albania, July, 2023, https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F54%2F27%2FAdd.1&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False

206. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) 2024. Concluding observations on the combined thirteenth and fourteenth periodic reports of Albania, 23 May 2024, https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=CERD%2FC%2FALB%2FCO%2F13-14&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False

207. UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Development (2023), Report on the visit to Albania, July, 2023, https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=A%2FHRC%2F54%2F27%2FAdd.1&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False

ability, age, sexual orientation, location (rural areas) and other factors. The Government of Albania recognized and incorporated the principle of intersectionality in its NSGE 2021-2030, putting women and girls, including youth, in all their diversity,[208] at the centre of the Strategy's measures and actions. However, four years after the adoption of the Strategy, there is limited information on specific measures taken to address poverty and social inclusion among women and girls (with a few exceptions on increased economic aid for certain groups of women—see below). In its latest Concluding Observations addressed to Albania in 2023, the CEDAW Committee raised concerns about "the disproportionately high levels of poverty and limited access to economic and social benefits among disadvantaged groups of women, in particular rural women, women with disabilities, women belonging to ethnic minorities and lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex women."[209]

3.2.3 Social Protection

For several years, Albania has been implementing a broad social protection and social inclusion reform, based on a robust legal and policy framework. This framework includes the 2016 Law on Social Care Services, the National Strategy on Social Protection 2015-2020 (extended until 2023) and the current National Strategy on Social Protection (NSSP) 2024-2030, which aims to advance the results achieved in previous years of reforming social protection of low-income and disadvantaged populations. Several policy documents have been developed on social protection and the inclusion of specific disadvantaged groups.[210]

The overall social protection scheme includes social insurance[211] and employment and labour market programmes.[212] Social protection of low-income and disadvantaged populations is a very important component of the scheme through both cash assistance[213] and social care services.[214] In 2022, social protection spending was 1.66 billion Euros, representing 9.2 per cent of GDP and 30.4 per cent of total expenditures. This is modest compared to the EU's 19.5 per cent of GDP spent on social protection in 2022. In 2023, social protection spending in Albania fell to 8.7 per cent of GDP but remained higher in terms of total spending (1.9 billion Euros or 30.7 per cent of total expenditures). The projection for 2024 was 9.5 per cent of GDP or 2.2 billion Euros, accounting for 30.9 per cent of total expenditure. The same projections are expected for 2025, with 9.5 per cent of GDP or 30.1 per cent of total expenditures. The increase in 2024 and 2025 is due to the new pensions scheme that accounts for around 0.3 per cent of GDP.[215] The pension scheme is part of the social insurance fund, which makes up for most of the spending on social protection. This fund was 7.6 per cent of GDP in 2022, 7.2 per cent of GDP in 2023, 7.1 per cent in 2024 and is planned to be 7.3 per cent of GDP in 2025. Unemployment cash benefits,[216] cash benefits, disability payments and new policies such as the Baby Bonus make up for 1.4 per cent of GDP in 2022, 1.3 per cent of GDP in 2023, 1.2 per cent of GDP in 2024 and 1.1 per cent of GDP in 2025.

Cash benefits

In 2021, to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the amount of economic aid (EA) increased for certain categories, particularly to the benefit of women. These included doubling the amount of EA for families with

208. These include Roma and Egyptian women, young women, and girls; women, young women, and girls with disabilities; economically and socially deprived women, young women, and girls; women, young women, and girls living in rural areas; women, young women, and girls victims of rape or human trafficking; single mothers; women, young women, and girls migrant and asylum seekers; women, young women, and girls LBTI+; and older women, since they face multiple forms of discrimination.
209. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEADW), 2023. Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania. https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CEDAW%2FC%2FALB%2FCO%2F5&Lang=en
210. National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025, the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2021-2025, the National Agenda on Children's Rights 2021-2025, the Deinstitutionalization Action Plan 2020-2022, the Strategy on Social Housing 2016-2025 updated in 2021, National Action Plan on LGBTI+ persons 2021-2027 and National Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons 2021-2023.
211. Contributory and Non-contributory Pensions.
212. Vocational training Wage subsidies On-the-job training and internships Entrepreneurship support, Unemployment Benefits, Maternity Benefits, etc.
213. Economic Aid/ (Ndihma Ekonomike - NE) and different subsides for NE beneficiaries, disability allowance, social pension.
214. Social and family services.
215. Ministry of Finance of Albania, budget law for 2024.
216. The reduction of the number of people who benefit from the unemployment payment, 3,750 unemployed during 2025-2027, aims to translate into the integration of women and men from these families in the labor market.

three or more children, while an additional 10 per cent was provided for other families, and tripling payments for orphans, victims of trafficking and victims of DV. In 2022, cash benefits were increased again to mitigate the potential economic impact of the war in Ukraine, including doubling the payment for women heads of household with up to two children, and doubling aid for people over 65 who do not benefit from old-age pension or social pension. The other families entitled to receive aid but did not fall within the aforementioned categories, still received a 10 per cent increase in their benefits compared to 2022.[217]

As a result of these assistance measures, the number of women benefiting from this support has increased over the years, with 29,140 women victims of violence and about 8,090 women heads of households being beneficiaries of the cash benefits scheme (as of June 2024). Some efforts have been made to recognize the unpaid work of caregivers of persons with disabilities, who are primarily women. Currently, 164,000 persons with disabilities and their caregivers benefit from economic aid. Additionally, for the first time, special support is offered to unemployed women with three or more children under the age of 18 and a family income of up to 100,000 ALL (equivalent to 1,165 USD or 1,120 EUR) per month. This support covers social and health contributions for the period of care for a child up to five years old. There has also been a notable increase in the number of Roma and Egyptian women receiving economic assistance/benefits or participating in reintegration programmes—from 112 Roma women and 89 Egyptian women in 2016 to 1,785 Roma women and 846 Egyptian women in 2019.[218]

Despite these improvements, there are increasing concerns about the adequacy of social assistance benefits and the programme's role in lifting people out of poverty—issues acknowledged in the NSSP 2024-2030.[219] In addition, the absence of an official and well-defined minimum standard of living makes it difficult to asses to what extent the economic assistance helps alleviate poverty. The sole official reference from a state institution regarding the calculation of minimum living standards originates from the People's Advocate, which in 2019 determined that the minimum subsistence level for an individual was approximately 17,875 ALL per month (equivalent of 208 USD or 182 EUR). In 2024, adjusting for inflation, the People's Advocate calculated the minimum subsistence level in 2024 as 21,000 ALL (equivalent to 245 USD or 214 EUR).[220] However, current benefits remain below this threshold: while the minimum wage stands at 40,000 ALL (466 USD or 408 EUR), over twice the estimated minimum subsistence level,[221] the urban old-age pension is 18,341 ALL (214 USD or 187 EUR), unemployment benefit is 20,000 ALL (233 USD or 204 EUR), and the average monthly EA per family is just 7,237 ALL (84 USD or 73 EUR)—approximately 60 per cent lower than the subsistence minimum. These figures highlight persistent gaps and reinforce concerns that existing cash benefits are insufficient to lift women, men, and children out of poverty.

In addition, despite some efforts to account for unpaid work, the Albanian social protection system does not systematically recognize unpaid care work in the design and implementation of social protection measures. This includes ensuring that contributory pension schemes provide adequate credits or compensation for time spent on caregiving in line with ILO guidance on gender-responsive social protection systems and Albania's obligations under ILO Conventions No. 100 (Equal Remuneration) and No. 111 (Discrimination in Employment and Occupation).

Social services (non-cash expenditures)

Social services are a vital component of the social protection system, supporting individuals' overall well-being. The services address a range of needs caused by poverty, poor health, inadequate housing or other vulnerabilities (disabilities, residing in shelters, and others), while others address social inclusion, such as counselling, coaching, mentoring, psychological support, rehabilitation or specialized services. Integrated social services combined with financial support are essential, especially for women victims of violence, caregivers and women facing vulnerabilities due to informal work and care burdens.

217. Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (2024), Comprehensive national-level review for the implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, Beijing+30, June 2024
218. Ibid.
219. Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 152, dated 13.3.2024 "On the adoption of the national social protection strategy 2024 - 2030 and the relevant action plan pursuant thereto".
220. People's Advocate (2024), Report on the Killing of Women and Girls and Femicide in Albania, 2021-2023.
221. INSTAT (2023), Social Protection. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/en/themes/social-condition/social-protection/#tab2

Efforts have been made to improve social services in Albania over the years. UNDP has UNDP has supported the State Social Service conduct regular mapping of social services in 2019, 2021, 2023 and 2025. According to this mapping, in 2023, there were around 391 public and non-public social care services institutions, an increase of 16 per cent since 2021)[222] and in 2025, the number of service providers increased to 439 or 13 per cent higher than 2023.[223] These services are offered by public[224] and non-public[225] service providers, the total number of which during the 2021–2025 has increased by 29 per cent. a growth mainly attributed to public providers.[226] These 439 institutions provide 1.669 social care services for 39.091 individuals in need. Public institutions providing social care services comprise 59 per cent of the total number, serving 44 per cent of the individuals in need, and "non-public" institutions account for 41 per cent of the total number, providing services for 56 per cent of beneficiaries.[227] (In previous mappings of 2021 and 2023 a third category of hybrid institutions -combined public and non-public- was included, which does not feature in the last one). Women and girls constitute around 52 per cent of the beneficiaries of overall services both in 2023 and 2025.[228]

The 2025 mapping reveals that while service provision is increasingly oriented toward addressing needs, social care services at local level remain limited in both scope and coverage, with their distribution still uneven across the country. [229] There are also gaps in services to support specific needs of women such as women victims of violence or women in their role as caregivers. For example, the 2025 mapping revealed that the number of service providers for women has decreased in nearly all regions of the country, except in Dibër, Korçë, Tirana, Fier, and Gjirokastër. Women victims of violence primarily access shelter services (51 per cent), emergency services (20 per cent), and counselling (19 per cent), but have limited access to day centers, community-based, or in-home services. In 16 municipalities, there is no designated person responsible for services for victims of domestic violence. Overall, such services account for only 11 per cent of all social services, and just 6 per cent of all service beneficiaries are victims of violence. This is a slight improvement from the previous mapping when shelters represented only 3 per cent of all social services, and that overall, services for victims of violence constituted only 8 per cent of all services.[230] However, the percentage of victims of violence as beneficiaries of these services has not changed. (It was still 6 per cent in 2023).

In the context of decentralization reform, local government is responsible for social service delivery, but its financial and technical capacities are limited. To address municipalities' challenges in funding social care services, the Social Fund was established in 2019 as an instrument to allocate funds from the central budget to municipalities with approved local social plans. Over the last five years, the central government has financed around 84 services (19 at the regional and 65 municipal levels), out of which 74 services are currently functional. Municipalities have made progress in adopting local social plans with the support of donors and CSOs. All municipalities now have social plans; when a plan expires, a new one is developed. Around 680 women and men have been employed until 2025, following the projects funded from the Social Funds in different Municipalities.[231]

The increased role of local government and positive impact of the Social Fund in service provision was also evident in the 2025 mapping of social services. About 34 per cent of public service beneficiaries are linked to institutions funded by municipalities, while 24 per cent

222. UNDP (2023), Mapping of Social Services in Albania. See: https://www.undp.org/albania/publications/mapping-social-services-albania-0
223. UNDP (2025). Mapping of Social Services in Albania (final report not published as of July 2025).
224. Public providers are all those who are funded and administered by public sources (central, regional, local government, foreign aid, mixed public sources)
225. Non-public providers are all those who are supported by non-public sources (foundations, associations, private donors, NGOs, international organizations operating outside the context of official development aid, mixed non-public sources, etc
226. Ibid.
227. Ibid.
228. Based on 2025 mapping. According to 2023 mapping, women constituted 53% of beneficiaries.
229. Ibid
230. Ibid
231. Information received from the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

benefit from services financed solely by the Social Fund. Over the past two years, the Social Fund has played a significant role, accounting for 18 per cent of service providers and 15 per cent of beneficiaries nationwide. In some regions such as Gjirokastër, Vlorë, Elbasan, Fier, Kukës, Berat, and Dibër its impact is even greater, contributing between 27 per cent and 38 per cent of services and increasing the number of beneficiaries by 20 per cent to as much as double.[232]

3.2.4 Migration and asylum

Albania has made efforts to improve its legal and policy framework on migration and asylum, in response to evolving migration dynamics—both outward and inbound—that have intensified in recent years. The main legal framework includes the adoption of new laws on Asylum[233] and Foreigners[234] in 2021 and subsequent secondary legislation, which have brought Albania's asylum and migration system closer to international standards and EU legislation. In 2024, Albania approved the National Strategy on Migration (2024-2030), which is expected to address previous policy gaps in migration governance and management.

With regards to outward migration, the results of the 2023 census confirmed concerns about the impact of migration on the Albanian population, which has decreased by 420,000 people since the 2011 census. The majority of the population emigrating abroad is between 20 and 39 years old, with men being more likely to emigrate than women. There is also a higher migration tendency among less qualified workers and among men engaged in agriculture, craftsmanship and factories. As for women, those who work in the services sector and those engaged in elementary occupations[235] are more likely than men to emigrate. In general, university-educated women find it more difficult to integrate into the labour force of the host country.[236]

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights noted that economic factors, such as high unemployment rates, limited job prospects and low wages, remain primary drivers of emigration.[237] In addition, other governance structural factors include dissatisfaction with corruption and clientelism, and the performance of the health, education and justice sectors.[238]

While the number of asylum seekers from Albania to EU Member States has declined and Albanians are no longer among the top origin countries for asylum applications, irregular migration remains high. According to Eurostat, in 2023, Albanians represented the second. largest group of individuals refused entry into the EU, after Ukrainians, with 14,000 refusals. Eurostat also notes that Albanians were among the largest groups of people returned to a country outside the EU, with 7,800 returns recorded in 2023.[239]At the same time, Albanian nationals remain among the top recipients of EU citizenship. In 2022, 50,300 Albanians acquired citizenship in an EU Member State, marking a 55 per cent increase compared to 2021. The main granting countries for Albanians were Italy (75.8 per cent) and Greece (19.2 per cent), reflecting the strong migration ties between Albania and these countries.[240]

In terms of net migration, Albania has a negative balance, meaning that more migrants are leaving the country than coming in. The composition of inward migrants is 64 per

232. UNDP (2025), Mapping of Social Services in Albania (final report not published as for July 2025).
233. Law No. 10/2021 on Asylum in the Republic of Albania.
234. Law N0. 79/2021 "On Foreigners".
235. Routine tasks that may require the use of hand-held tools and physical effort to be conducted, such as cleaning, restocking supplies, and performing basic maintenance in residences or professional spaces (e.g., hotels and offices).
236. IOM (2023), Study on Predictive Modelling: Migration Impact on the Albanian Workforce and Skills Development Needs from a Gender Perspective in Albania. See: https://albania.iom.int/resources/study-predictive-modelling-migration-impact-albanian-workforce-and-skills-development-needs-gender-perspective-albania
237. Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (2024), Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Albania, https://uhri.ohchr.org/en/document/0002235d-aea9-4ebc-9a06-a7a5db730413
238. IOM (2023), Assessment of Labour Mobility Frameworks and their Impact on the Mobility of Albanian Labour Migrants, https://albania.iom.int/resources/assessment-labour-mobility-frameworks-and-their-impact-mobility-albanian-labour-migrants.
239. Eurostat (2024), Migration and asylum in Europe—2024 edition, sourced from Eurostat: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/web/interactive-publications/migration-2024#irregular-migration-and-return
240. Eurostat (2024), Acquisition of citizenship statistics. See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Acquisition_of_citizenship_statistics

cent men and 36 per cent women, for both international migrants and returnees.[241] The new Migration Strategy recognizes the important link between migration and employment opportunities in the country, while addressing key challenges in migration management, including the protection of migrants' rights and their integration into Albanian society. The Strategy aims to include a gender perspective in its objectives and actions by: improving sex-disaggregated data collection on migration; implementing measures to ensure that Albanian policies on migration are gender-responsive; and implementing measures that promote decent work for both men and women and eliminate gender inequalities in all relevant areas and in the workplace.

On the other hand, UN agencies working with refugees and asylum seekers have raised concerns that anti-poverty measures and the broader social protection system—including the legislation on social protection, the new NSSP (2024-2030), and legislation on social housing—are not aligned with Law No.10/2021 "On Asylum in the Republic of Albania." These frameworks do not consistently consider the categories of asylum-seeker and refugee women and girls, as well as those granted subsidiary or temporary protection. The inclusion of all these categories in the social protection scheme for both cash assistance and services would be in line with the legislation on asylum and provide predictable means for vulnerable asylum-seeker and refugee families to meet basic needs, access social benefits, access jobs, and have a greater guarantee of decent work and health insurance benefits.[242]In addition, the CEDAW Committee has raised concerns that refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women and girls face intersecting forms of discrimination and disproportionate levels of GBV in Albania, especially in border areas, and that undocumented migrant women are exposed to a high risk of sexual exploitation, forced labour and recruitment by human trafficking networks. It also highlights the cumbersome process and onerous fees faced by recognized refugees in obtaining documentation, as well as the centralization of the refugee documentation process, which further increases costs and their risk of detention, extortion and GBV during travel.[243]

3.2.5 Key EU legislation and policies

EU residents are not immune to poverty and social exclusion—on average, more than a fifth of the EU population lives at risk of poverty or social exclusion. In 2023, the risk was higher for women than men (22.3 per cent compared with 20.3 per cent).[244]

The main policy framework in this area is the European Pillar of Social Rights, which is a joint commitment among national governments, EU institutions and key stakeholders to fight poverty and social exclusion. It outlines the main principles relevant for social inclusion, including: minimum income, inclusion of people with disabilities, housing and assistance for the homeless, and access to essential services.

The Pillar Action Plan put forward a 2030 poverty target to reduce the number of people at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 15 million by 2030, including at least five million children. The target was endorsed at the 2021 Porto Social Summit and welcomed by the European Council. The Action Plan also announced several initiatives to support the implementation of the Pillar principles. In the area of poverty and social exclusion, relevant initiatives include the Council Recommendation on Access to Social Protection for Workers and Self-Employment (2019), the European Council Recommendation on Minimum Income (2023), a European Platform on Combating Homelessness (2022), and Guidance on the Use of Ex Ante Distributional Impact Assessment. [245]

In its latest report on Albania (2024), the European Commission notes government efforts to consolidate the

241. IOM (2023), Study on Predictive Modelling: Migration Impact on the Albanian Workforce and Skills Development Needs from a Gender Perspective in Albania, https://albania.iom.int/resources/study-predictive-modelling-migration-impact-albanian-workforce-and-skills-development-needs-gender-perspective-albania

242. UNHCR input to the Country Gender Equality Profile (2025)

243. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, (2023) Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania (CEDAW/C/ALB/5). CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5

244. Eurostat (2023), Living Conditions in Europe. See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living_conditions_in_Europe_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion

245. European Commission (2023) The European Pillar of Social Rights in 20 principles, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/european-pillar-social-rights-20-principles_en, European Commission (2024). Albania 2024 report. Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2024_en

economic aid scheme, the implementation of the biopsychosocial evaluation system for persons with disabilities, and those related to the reform of the social care service system. However, it recommended that the effectiveness of the economic aid scheme's targeting be assessed through field research and analysis of Eurostat's microdata on income and living conditions, as well as household budget surveys. This would help identify vulnerable groups that do not yet benefit from the scheme. Authorities are also urged to finalize the impact assessment on the adequacy the exit strategy to facilitate exit from economic aid schemes, increase their amounts, establish an annual indexation mechanism and implement the roadmap for benefit revision based on the assessment's findings. [246]

As of May 2025, the EU has opened the negotiations with Albania for Chapter 19 on Social Policies and Employment, (under Cluster 3) and the country is aligning key ongoing actions related to social protection reforms with the broader negotiation timeframe. Efforts are underway to finalize the roadmap for implementing EU policies related to this chapter and the EU Pillar for Social Rights.[247] In this context, it is essential to apply a gender lens to ensure that relevant measures adequately address key challenges faced by women—particularly those from disadvantaged groups—in relation to social inclusion and protection as addressed in the previous analysis and in line with relevant recommendations of the EU Commission and human rights mechanisms addressed to Albania.

3.2.6 Recommendations

The following are some recommendations aimed at advancing gender equality within Albania's social protection, migration, and poverty alleviation policies, drawing direct links to the principles set forth in the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women's Concluding Observations on the Fifth Periodic Report of Albania and relevant Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Recommendations.

1. **Ensure comprehensive implementation of the social protection reform** and Strategy on Social Inclusion that addresses the root causes of poverty and social exclusion, ensuring an adequate standard of living for both women and men without discrimination (in line with UPR Recommendation 124.112).[248]
2. **Enhance both the value and scope of social protection benefits, ensuring they are not only sufficient but also strategically targeted to address the needs of vulnerable groups, particularly women** (in line with UPR Recommendation 124.110). In this context, the recommendation of the Ombudsperson to formally recognize, and update accordingly, a minimum living standard should be taken into consideration.
3. **Ensure a balanced allocation between cash benefits and essential support services**, in particular services for women, such as women victims of GBV, family and child-support services and others. This integrated approach will help ensure that individuals not only receive financial assistance but also have access to the necessary services for long-term well-being, social inclusion, and rehabilitation (in line with UPR recommendation 124.111).
4. **Extend social protection to women working in the informal economy** to safeguard their financial security and well-being. This extension should encompass health care, pensions, and other social security benefits, thereby offering women the same protections available to those in formal employment (in line with CEDAW Committee Recommendations).[249]
5. **Ensure that women engaged in family businesses and care work** receive fair and equal compensation for their work and benefit from social security schemes (in line with CEDAW Committee recommendations).[250]
6. **Adopt targeted and multifaceted strategies to effectively reduce poverty among women, particularly those from disadvantaged groups**, such as

246. European Commission (2024). Albania 2024 report. Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2024_en
247. UN (2025), Progress Report of the UN Joint Programme Leave No One Behind (July-December 2024), unpublished.
248. Human Rights Council (2024). Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Albania (Fifty-eighth session, Agenda item 6); A/HRC/58/5.
249. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, (2023) *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania* (CEDAW/C/ALB/5). CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 34 (b).
250. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 34 (c).

rural women, women with disabilities, women from ethnic minorities, and lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and intersex women. This can be achieved by enhancing access to financial resources, particularly through low-interest loans that do not require collateral. Such measures would allow these women to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities and establish sustainable livelihoods, thus enhancing their financial independence and facilitating their long-term socio-economic inclusion (in line with CEDAW Committee recommendations).[251]

7. **Revise the poverty measurement framework** to adopt a multidimensional approach, ensuring that the experiences of women, especially those from marginalized groups, are accurately captured. This will not only highlight the specific barriers they face but also promote social inclusion by informing more effective and tailored interventions.
8. **Address the needs of refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant women through comprehensive actions that combat intersecting forms of discrimination and gender-based violence**. Particular attention should be given to high-risk areas like borders, tourist locations, and mining zones. Efforts must ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and punished (in line with CEDAW Committee Recommendations).[252]
9. **Implement affordable and accessible documentation** processes for recognized refugee women, with **reduced fees** and **simplified administrative procedures** to ensure their access to essential services such as **education, employment, health care, housing and social benefits.**[253]
10. **Adopt a gender-sensitive approach** when receiving asylum-seeking and refugee women, including training immigration officers in gender-sensitive interviewing techniques and prioritizing the protection needs of these women and girls in the asylum process.[254]

3.3 WOMEN'S ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT

3.3.1 Economic activity and employment

Albania has experienced a notable expansion of economic activities over the years. Nevertheless, agriculture remains the dominant sector, employing 32.3 per cent of the labour force. Agriculture is followed by: market services (29 per cent);[255] public administration, community, social and other services and activities (17.6 per cent); manufacturing (11.2 per cent); construction (7.6 per cent); and lastly, mining, electricity, gas and water supply (2.2 per cent).[256] The employment progress in recent years indicates that the sectors with the highest relative growth in the country are information services, other processing industries, health care, accommodation and tourism, computer programming, and trade and repair of motor vehicles.[257]

When looking at sex-distribution in specific sectors, women make up a higher percentage of employers compared to men in several sectors, including agriculture (53.3 per cent women versus 46.7 per cent men), public administration and social services (56 per cent women versus 44 per cent men) and manufacturing (57.2 per cent women versus 42.8 per cent men) and lower in market services, construction and mining.[258]

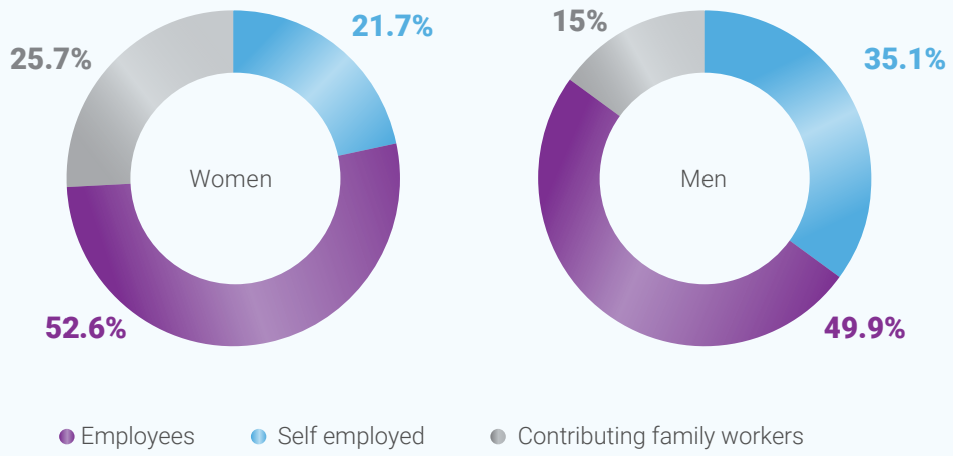
In terms of employment type, the majority of employed women are categorized as employees, followed by those working as contributing family workers. A notable gender gap of 10.7 percentage points exists in the share of contributing family workers, with women disproportionately represented. The gender gap among the self-employed is even more pronounced—13.4 percentage points—indicating a significantly lower share of women in self-employment compared to men.

In 2023, the labour force in Albania was estimated to be 1,485,843 persons (53.8 per cent men and 46.2 per cent

251. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 34 (a).
252. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 46 (a).
253. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 46 (b).
254. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 46 (c).
255. Trade, transportation, accommodation and food, and business and administrative services.
256. INSTAT (2024), Labour Market in Albania, 2023, https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13552/tregu-i-punes-2023.pdf
257. National Employment and Skills Strategy 2023-2030, https://arkiva.financa.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/National-Employment-and-Skills-Strategy-2030_EN.pdf
258. INSTAT (2023), Labour Force Survey:

Figure 7

Employed population by type of employment and sex, 2023



Source: INSTAT, Labour Market in Albania, 2023

women), out of whom 1,327,042 were employed (53.9 per cent men and 46.1 per cent women). The labour force participation rate for women aged 15-64 was 69.6 per cent, with a gender gap of 12.4 percentage points compared to men.[259]

With regards to education levels, women with higher education show the highest labour force participation rate at 87.5 per cent, followed by those with medium education at 66 per cent and those with low education at 62.3 per cent. The gender gap in labour force participation is most pronounced among women with medium education at 21.4 percentage points, while it is much lower among those with higher education at 5 percentage points.[260]

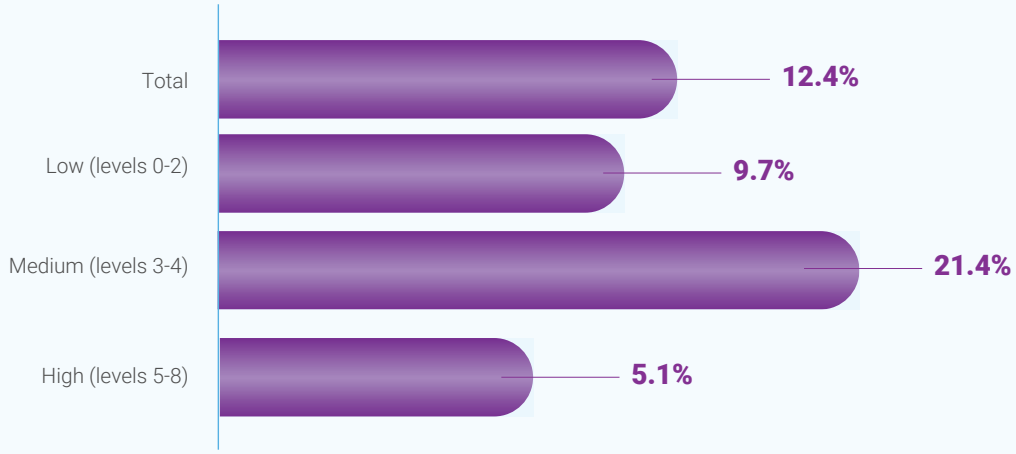
Some progress has been made in reducing unemployment in recent years. In 2023, the unemployment rate stood at 10.7 per cent, marking a slight decrease of 0.2 percentage points compared to 2022, with no gender disparity. Between 1 July 2022 and 30 June 2023, the number of unemployed jobseekers benefiting from Employment Promotion Programmes increased to 15,204 — an 11.2 per cent rise from the baseline. During the same period, 10,862 unemployed individuals participated in vocational training programmes.[261] Despite these improvements, employment challenges persist, particularly for older workers who may face physical limitations in manual jobs and increased vulnerability to job displacement due to automation.

More problematic is the inclusion of youth and disadvantaged communities in the labour market. Many of these individuals are inactive, unemployed, and not in education, and people living in remote areas are often completely excluded. In 2023, 24.6 per cent of youth aged 15-29 were not in employment, education or training (NEET), and 49.4 per cent of them were unemployed. The remaining portion is not in the labour force because they are discouraged workers[262] (2 per cent), fulfilling domestic and family responsibilities (13.4 per cent), or for other reasons (35.3 per cent). Compared to the previous

259. INSTAT (2024), Labour Market in Albania, 2023, https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13552/tregu-i-punes-2023.pdf
260. *Ibid.*
261. EU Delegation in Albania, AIDE MÉMOIRE, Briefing Note on Conclusive Assessment Report, Technical assistance on Compliance Review and Monitoring of the EU Support to Social Inclusion Programme Tirana, Albania, NEAR/TIA/2020/EA-RP/00-61, June 2024.
262. A discouraged worker is a person without work, currently available for work, but not seeking work because they believe that no suitable jobs are available.

Figure 8

Labour force participation gender gap by education level, 2023



Source: INSTAT, Labour Market in Albania, 2023

year, the discouraged youth decreased by 5.7 percentage points.

Among young people aged 15-29, 25.6 per cent of women are NEET, which is higher than young men with a gender gap of 2.1 percentage points, indicating that young women are more likely to be outside the labour market and education system than young men. Among young people who are NEET, not in employment, education, or training, young men are more economically active than young women. 61 per cent of NEET men are unemployed, compared to 39 per cent of NEET women. In contrast, young women are far more likely to be engaged in domestic work and family care, with 25.3 per cent of NEET women performing unpaid care work, compared to just 0.2 per cent of NEET men. This highlights the significant burden of unpaid care responsibilities on young women in Albania. [263]

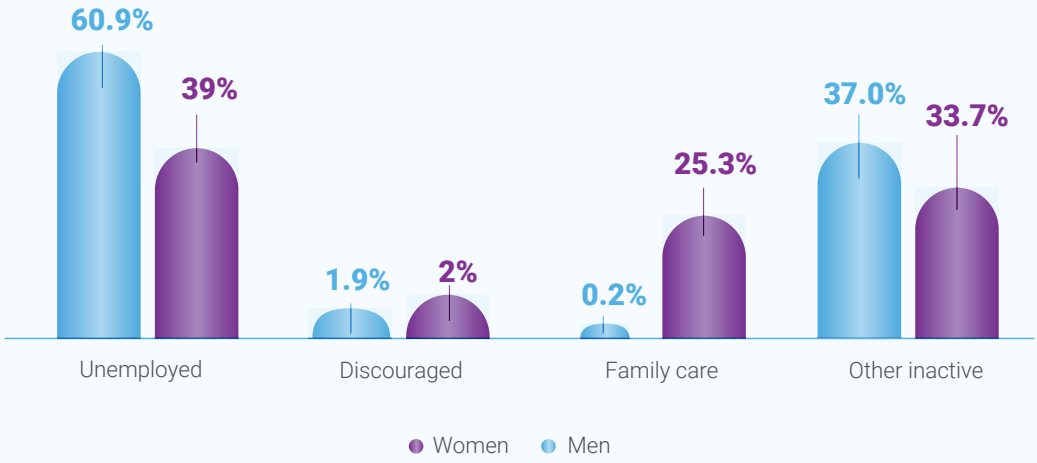
With regards to employment of disadvantaged women (including women with disabilities, women from Roma and Egyptian communities, women LBTIQ+ and women beneficiaries of social assistance), specific data is missing. However, UN agencies working to support inclusive labour markets in Albania report on multi-dimensional barriers these women face in their pathways to become employable, and particularly skills adapted to the labour market. Based on some piloted practices of an EU-funded initiative for labour market inclusion, local labour market actors should ensure sustainable outsourcing of local financial mechanisms through strengthened partnerships with specialized CSOs.[264] This supports the delivery of existing and new models of employment and skills development services at the local level, targeting women with different aspects of vulnerabilities. [265]

Education level does not significantly impact the gender gap in unemployment. Like men, most unemployed women have a medium level of education. However, the gender gap in unemployment rates is slightly higher among those with higher education (3.5 percentage points), though this remains relatively small compared to the gender gap in employment rates.[266]

263. INSTAT (2024), Labour Market in Albania, 2023, https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13552/tregu-i-punes-2023.pdf
264. Delegating certain financial services or support functions (such as managing subsidies, grants, microcredits, or employment support funds) to external organizations, in this case CSOs.
265. UNDP input to the report.
266. INSTAT(2023), Labour Force Survey: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/14273/tregu-i-punes-2023.pdf

Figure 9

NEET by main reasons, 2023



Source: INSTAT, Labour Market in Albania, 2023

3.3.2 Informal employment

Based on Albanian legislation, "informal employment" is not subject to the requirements of labour and taxation legislation, and employees do not benefit from labour rights.[267] For the purpose of statistical information and data collection in the framework of INSTAT's Labour Market publication, informality includes non-agricultural workers whose economic relations with the employer are not covered or are partially covered by formal agreements.[268] Informal employment also includes self-employed persons who work in small enterprises with five or fewer employed persons, and whose workplace is their own home, the client's or employer's home, a structure attached to their home, a construction site, a fixed stall in the market or on the street, or not at a fixed (changing) location.[269]

In 2023, for the population aged 15 years and over, 49 per cent of employed were paid employees, 29.7 per cent were self-employed (with or without employees) and 21.3 per cent were contributing family workers. Women were 1.4 times more likely than men to be contributing family workers. The Labour Force Survey (LFS) estimates show that 27.2 per cent of employed women and 16.3 per cent of employed men are contributing family workers. 25.7 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men engage in unpaid work in the family business. [270]

Informality remains a concern in Albania, with a substantial part of the working population remaining outside official statistics. In 2023, informal employment in the non-agriculture sector (which also includes semi-formal employment relations)[271] accounted for 26.2 per cent, decreasing by two percentage points compared to 2022.[272]

In Albania, a lack of clear standards to define informal employment continues to hinder accurate monitoring, and sex disaggregated data are unavailable. Various

267. Law No 9634/2006 "On labour inspection" amended.
268. Employees who do not benefit from paid annual leave, or from paid sick leave in case of illness, or employees who benefit from paid annual leave and paid sick leave, but their employers do not pay social security contributions for them.
269. INSTAT (2024), Labour Market in Albania, 2023, https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13552/tregu-i-punes-2023.pdf
270. *Ibid.*
271. Cases when a part of the salary is declared with the tax authorities and the rest is paid in cash and, therefore, not declared.
272. *Ibid.*

institutions have published different estimates over the years, including on informality in the agriculture sector, which remains inadequately captured by national statistics. According to the ILO, the sectors where informality is most prevalent are agriculture, wholesale, retail trade, and construction, where informal employment exceeds 84 per cent.[273] In addition, the EU has raised concerns about informal employment in tourism, which has grown significantly in recent years, posing challenges to efforts aimed at reducing the informal economy.[274]

Most of the sectors with higher rates of informality are dominated by women, who remain without the protection of labour laws and social benefits such as pensions, health insurance, paid sick leave and employment injury benefits. The lack of social protection has long-term consequences, often perpetuating poverty into old age due to a lack of pension coverage.

In fact, fewer women are receiving pensions globally, and as a result, more elderly women are now living in poverty, even in developed economies.[275] (In the EU, women's average pension is 29.4 per cent lower than men's.)[276] Women in informal employment also face lower wages and unsafe working conditions, including exposure to sexual harassment. Furthermore, when jobs in informality are lost, workers are more likely to exit the labour force rather than transition to unemployment, which has a significant impact on women's inactivity rates.[277]

Albania has made efforts to address informality; however, information on the specific measures implemented and their effectiveness remains limited.[278]

3.3.3 Labour income and gender pay gap

An important development in labour and employment is the increase of the minimum wage to 40,000 ALL (equivalent to 466 USD or 408 EUR)/month, a significant change in recent years. The average monthly gross wage for an employee is 70,539 ALL (equivalent to 821 USD or 719 EUR),[279] which is an increase of 14 per cent from 2022.

According to the unadjusted Gender Pay Gap (GPG) calculated from the 2022 Structural Earnings Survey (SES), the gap—defined as the difference between the average gross hourly earnings of male and female paid employees, expressed as a percentage of male earnings—stood at 6.7 per cent.[280] As this indicator is derived from the SES, which follows Eurostat methodology, it is directly comparable with the EU average. Notably, Albania's GPG is significantly lower than the EU average of 12 per cent.[281] While EU Member States regularly produce annual GPG estimates that are benchmarked against SES results, Albania has not yet adopted this practice.

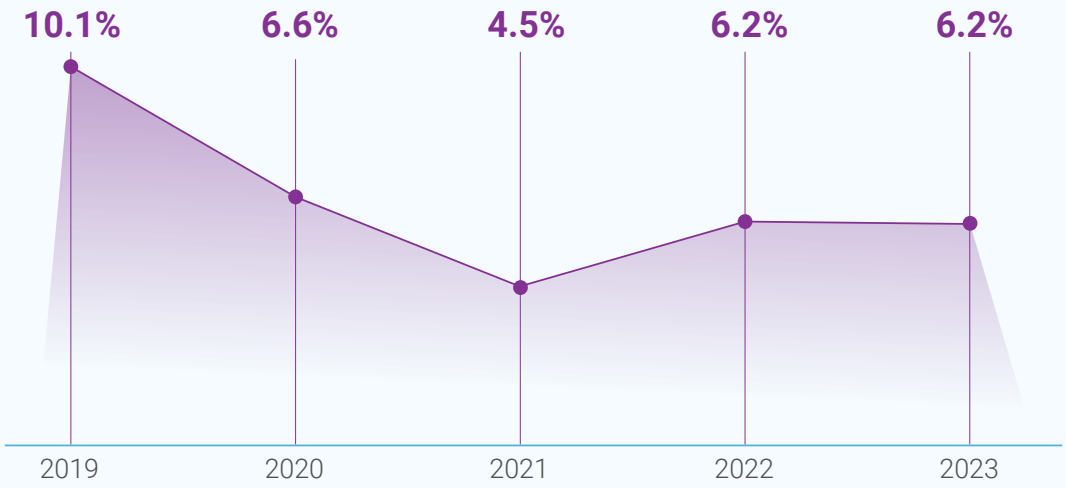
In addition, INSTAT annually produces the GPG based on administrative data, which stood at 6.2 per cent in 2023—remaining relatively stable compared to 2022, but marking an increase of 1.7 percentage points compared to 2021.[282] However, it is important to note that this does not account for women involved in informal work. This data is considerably lower than the EU average of 13 per cent.[283]

The GPG varies across sectors, and there is a direct proportion between GPG and the share of men and wom-

273. ILO (2023), Decent Work Country Programme 2023-2026, Albania https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/%40europe/%40ro-geneva/%40sro-budapest/documents/genericdocument/wcms_865203.pdf
274. EU Commission (2024), Albania 2024 Report. See: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a8eec3f9-b2ec-4cb1-8748-9058854dbc68_en?filename=Albania%20Report%202024.pdf
275. UN Women (2025), Women in informal economy, https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/csw61/women-in-informal-economy
276. Eurostat Data Browser [Online]. Gender pension gap by age group. See: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ILC_PNP13__custom_3335865/default/table?lang=en
277. ILO (2021). ILO Monitor: COVID-19 and the world of work. Eighth edition. Updated estimates and analysis.
278. EU Commission (2024), Albania 2024 Report. See: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/a8eec3f9-b2ec-4cb1-8748-9058854dbc68_en?filename=Albania%20Report%202024.pdf
279. This wage is calculated based on the enterprises' payrolls declared to the General Directorate of Taxation for contributions on social security, health and tax on income from employment.
280. https://databaza.instat.gov.al:8083/pxweb/sq/DST/START__SES__SES06/SES0608/table/tableViewLayout1/
281. https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/sdg_05_20/default/table?lang=en&category=eq.eq_labour_earn.eq_gpgr
282. *Ibid.*
283. https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/statement_23_5692

Figure 10

Gender Pay Gap



Source: INSTAT, Labour Market in Albania, 2023

en in employment. The GPG is highest in sectors where women are concentrated, reflecting the impact of horizontal segregation on women's wages. For example, the GPG is around 10.4 per cent—or 67 per cent higher than the average (6.2 per cent)—in "Wholesale and retail trade; transportation and storage; accommodation and food service activities," where 32 per cent of women find employment, and 8.4 per cent in agriculture where 37.3 per cent of women are employed. On the other hand, the GPG is below the average in male-dominated sectors, such as construction (-6.8 per cent); electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply (-3.9 per cent); water supply, sewerage, waste management and remediation activities (-3.7 per cent); and transportation and storage (-1.8 per cent). In 2023, the GPG was highest for Services and Sales Workers (22.7 per cent), with an equal percentage of women and men employed (19.7 per cent).

It is important to note that Albania's GPG is highly controversial: the formula applied for the calculations neither considers informality (which is significant in Albania), nor other factors such as type of employment, educational level, marital status, years of experience number of children etc. (factors that are considered in the adjusted GPG), and there are information gaps around women's and men's actual earnings (payroll system of salaries plus allowances) in the public sector.[284]

3.3.4 Unpaid care work and work-life balance

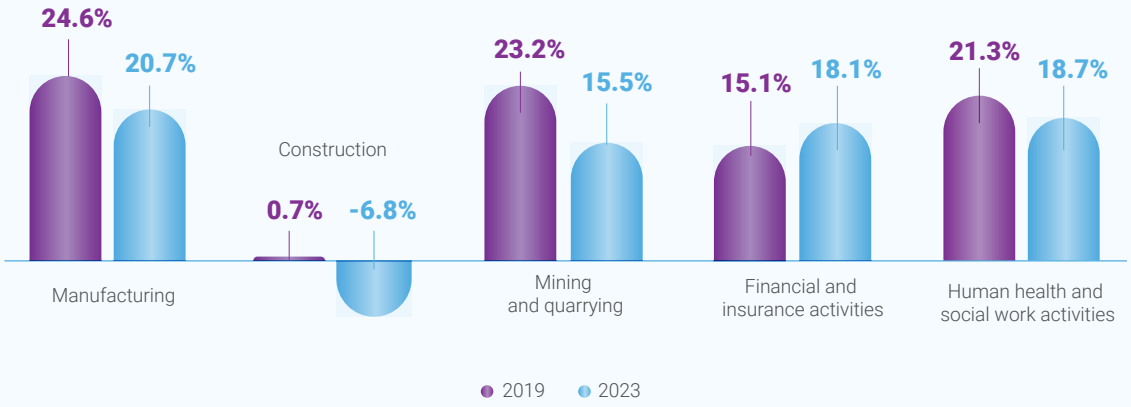
In recent years, Albania has undertaken a series of measures aimed at addressing unpaid care work and balancing work and family life, including paid maternity leave; the right to a four-month full or split parental leave until the child reaches the age of six, and paid care support for persons with disabilities.

However, women continue to exhibit a higher rate of inactivity compared to men, which was 30.4 per cent and 18 per cent, respectively, in 2023. Inactive women are more likely than inactive men to be involved in domestic

284. Sigma and OECD (2024). Public administration in Albania. See: https://www.sigmaweb.org/en/publications/public-administration-in-albania-2024_5577d117-en.html

Figure 11

Gender pay gap by main economic activity



Source: INSTAT, Labour Market in Albania, 2023

chores. As of 2023, there remains a gender disparity in domestic tasks, with women leading by approximately 25 percentage points.[285] Studies indicate that women devote 21.74 per cent of their daily time to unpaid tasks like cooking, cleaning and childcare, while men contribute just 3.47 per cent.[286] This underscores the persistent involvement of women in domestic and unpaid work, gender disparities in labour force participation and overall barriers for women's economic empowerment.

Data on women's engagement in unpaid care work in the family starting at a young age have also been collected from studies conducted by international organizations and CSOs. Findings confirm that unpaid family work and care disproportionately fall on girls and women: 67 per cent of girls compared to 30 per cent of boys aged 10-14 engage in such tasks; among those aged 15-64, 95 per cent of girls and women compared to 38 per cent of boys and men; and among those over 65, 86 per cent of women and 63 per cent of men.[287]

Women's burden of unpaid care work and unemployment is also related to the availability, affordability and quality of childcare services (kindergartens and crèches). In Albania, efforts have been made to increase the supply of pre-primary education facilities and improve the quality of early childhood education. However, demand surpasses available capacity, leading to an unequal distribution of facilities, with some areas, particularly those in rural or underserved regions facing a shortage of facilities. In addition, geographical and in-group segregation is observed in kindergartens, with children from the Roma

285. INSTAT (2023), Annual data of the Labour Market segregated by sex, age education and year https://databaza.instat.gov.al:8083/pxweb/sq/DST/START__TP__LFS__LFSV/NewLFSY014/

286. SDG Study, 2023 based on data from Time Use Survey, https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/06/developing-a-case-for-investing-in-free-universal-childcare-in-albania

287. UNFPA, "Current family-friendly policies and legal provisions in Albania", February 2021; "Fact sheet: Current situation of gender equality in Albania", March 2021; "Analysis on gender-responsive family friendly policies in Albania", June 2021; "Implementation of Family-Friendly Policies and Gender Equality in the Public and Private Sector - Business Perspective", June 2022; "Implementation of Family-Friendly Policies and Gender Equality in the Public and Private Sector - Perspectives of Employees", August 2022; etc., see: https://albania.unfpa.org/sq/publications/zbatimi-i-politikave-miqësore-për-familjen-dhe-barazinë-gjinore-në-sektorin-publik-dh-1

community often experiencing limited access to pre-primary education.[288]

Regarding work-life balance, several studies also shed light on the challenges of balancing work and family life and related gender dimensions. Employees in the private sector work significantly longer hours per week than those in the public sector (65 per cent versus 14 per cent), and are more likely to work on Saturdays and public holidays (37 per cent versus 5 per cent). Alarmingly, 29 per cent of private sector employees are not entitled to annual leave. While the private sector offers slightly more flexibility in working hours, both sectors remain largely rigid. About one in three private sector employees has some degree of flexibility, compared to only 7 per cent of women employed in the public sector. Differences between the two sectors are also notable in workplace conditions. Public sector employees often lack basic facilities for eating or socializing and may not even have a designated lunch break. Across both sectors, supportive services such as breastfeeding spaces and childcare are scarce. Although 38 per cent of businesses report allowing pregnant or breastfeeding women to disconnect from work, only 4 per cent offer a dedicated nursing space. Awareness and implementation of family-friendly policies remain low. Only half of businesses surveyed (200 nationwide) had heard of such policies. However, there is strong support for government involvement: 95 per cent of businesses believe the state should help promote gender-responsive and family-friendly policies, through tax incentives (79 per cent), financial assistance (65 per cent), awareness campaigns (35 per cent), and inclusive decision-making (15 per cent).[289]

The insufficient work-life-family balance policies and measures impact individuals' health and well-being, particularly for women. For example, around 30 per cent of women face challenges in fulfilling their family obligations due to the time spent at work, compared to 19 per cent of men.

Additionally, 16 per cent of women experience irritability, mental fatigue or illnesses caused by work versus 12 per cent of men.[290]

The reduction and redistribution of care and unpaid domestic work and the promotion of work-life-family balance are addressed in the national strategies for gender equality. In NSGE 2016-2020, the reduction of women's unpaid work in the family was intended to be achieved through increased access to and quality of social services. However, this objective was only partially implemented—57.5 per cent. Among the unimplemented actions was the local self-government units' provision of social services in community centres for children, women and mothers with disabilities, those between retirement and advanced old age, and other groups. NSGE 2021-2030 contains a specific objective with measures focused on the equal division of work and unpaid care in the family, information on the forms of paid leave allowed for each parent, improvement of the legal framework and policies related to the flexibility of working from home, and extending paid leave time for both parents. 2022 monitoring of the implementation of NSGE 2021-2030 reveals limited progress: only 18 per cent of planned activities had been fully implemented, 10 per cent were partially implemented, 18 per cent were not implemented, and for 54 per cent of the activities, no information had been provided by the responsible institutions. Overall, it is important that care economy objectives under NSGE 2021–2030 are fully integrated into employment and social protection policies, with cross-sectoral coordination and budget allocation, especially at the local level.

3.3.5 Discrimination at work

Gender-based discrimination against women in the workplace remains a complex and deeply rooted issue, often stemming from persistent gender stereotypes and the traditional roles ascribed to women as mothers and primary caregivers. This discrimination manifests both directly and indirectly across all levels of employment, from job application and recruitment to promotion and career advancement. A key concern is the persistent gender pay gap, with women frequently earning less than men for work of equal value. Additionally, workplace ha-

288. UNICEF Albania (2023), Supply-side barriers to Early Childhood Education in Albania, https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/6066/file/Supply-side%20barriers%20to%20Early%20Childhood%20Education%20in%20Albania.pdf

289. Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (2024), Comprehensive National-level Review for Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Beijing+30 https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Albania-Report.pdf

290. Draft Policy document on the Establishment of a Regulatory Labor Framework: Recommendations on improvements of social policies for establishment of a family friendly work environment in the labor market, UNFPA, Albania, 2023 (draft).

rassment—particularly sexual harassment—continues to be one of the most serious forms of gender-based discrimination in the workplace.

The relevant Albanian legal framework has improved considerably and includes the Law on Gender Equality (2008), the Labour Code (1995) and its important 2015 amendments, and the Law against Discrimination (2010) and its key 2020 amendments. Albania is party to the main ILO treaties addressing discrimination in the workplace, including ILO Convention No. 190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (2022).[291] However, a review of national legislation is necessary to ensure it is aligned with international standards, and particularly with EU anti-discrimination legislation.

Despite legal improvements, women still experience discrimination across sectors and face multiple obstacles towards securing equality of opportunity and treatment in employment. The legal and policy measures in place do not appear to have achieved the desired impact. For example, a list of jobs prohibited for women (Decision No. 207 of 2002 of the Council of Ministers) appears not to reflect scientific developments or the principle of gender equality.[292] In addition, official data on the prevalence of gender-based discrimination and harassment in the workplace is unavailable, and CSOs are instead the main source. According to a CSO survey in 2022, around 20 per cent of both men and women surveyed reported having experienced gender-based discrimination at work. More women than men reported experiencing interview questions that might imply discrimination, such as questions about plans to get married (45 per cent versus 35 per cent). 13 per cent of pregnant women did not benefit from paid maternity leave and 40 per cent indicated that they were pressured to return to work earlier than planned. In terms of sexual harassment, 23 per cent of survey respondents have faced at least one form of sexual harassment at work, with no significant gender differences. Significantly more respondents identified men as perpetrators of sexual harassment (among women who suffered sexual harassment, 72 per cent stated that the perpetrator was a man, and 24 per cent had experiences with both men and women as perpetrators).[293]

However, the level of reporting of cases of gender-based discrimination to authorities such as the Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination (CPD) and the Social Services and Labour Inspectorate (SSLI) remains low. Moreover, both institutions show limited proactive engagement, with few *ex officio* investigations initiated by the CPD and minimal SSLI inspections specifically targeting cases of gender-based discrimination.

According to the annual reports of the CPD, the number of reported cases of gender-based discrimination it receives has remained very low over the years in comparison with the total number of complaints. This is also supported by the previously mentioned survey results, where close to 70 per cent of those who experienced gender-based discrimination did not report it to any institution.[294]

Over the years, almost all CPD complaints and decisions on gender-based discrimination have been labour-related, including unfair dismissals and unfair treatment, sexual harassment, and limitations to career progress. Only in 2023 did the CPD also consider a few cases related to gender-based discrimination in other areas related to benefits from social housing, treatment by the police forces, and hate speech, though disaggregated data on specific cases is unavailable.

Although detailed analysis still needs to be undertaken, the limited number of cases brought forward to authorities could be due to limited awareness among women, legal professionals and civil society about the complaint and remedy mechanisms, but also due to ambiguities about required procedures for gender-based discrimination cases. In addition, as in other areas, women face barriers to access to justice, including difficulties in ob-

291. Other relevant ILO treaties Albania is party to, include the Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention (No. 111); the Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention (No. 156); and the Maternity Protection Convention (No. 183)
292. UN Country Team Albania (2024), Submission for the Fourth Universal Periodic Review of Albania, https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/al-un-contributions-s47
293. Gender Alliance for Development Centre, Albania (2022), Gender-based Discrimination and Labor in Albania, second edition, https://www.gadc.org.al/media/files/upload/GBD%20in%20Labour%20Albania_EN_15.03.2022.pdf
294. *Ibid.*

Table 4

Cases considered by the CPD

Year	Total number of considered cases	Total number of cases related to gender-based discrimination considered by the CPD (all areas)	Total number of cases of discrimination at work on various grounds considered by the CPD	Total number of cases of gender-based discrimination at work	Total number of ex officio cases initiated by the CPD (all areas)
2020	226	7	127 (56%)	7	13
2021	324	15	168 (52%)	15	22
2022	297	7	140 (47%)	7	16
2023	359	11	144 (40%)	No information	15
2024	380	16	149 (39%)	No information	13

Source: Commissioner against Discrimination of Albania (CMD), Annual reports, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2023[285]

taining legal aid, despite victims of discrimination being entitled to free legal aid based on the State Legal Aid Law. In particular, women from disadvantaged groups face intersecting forms of workplace discrimination, and specific measures should therefore prioritize outreach and access to justice for these groups.

Similarly, there is limited sex-disaggregated data on complaints, investigations or sanctions by the SSLI, the only administrative body mandated to enforce gender equality measures on labour relationships, social and health insurance, and safety at work. ILO supervisory bodies have raised concerns with regard to the overall mandate and the resources available to the SSLI to effectively ensure compliance with labour laws.[295]

After the ratification of ILO Convention No. 190 on Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, efforts are being made to implement its standards in the workplace. In 2023, the SSLI and CPD increased collaboration to identify cases of violence and harassment in the field of work. Few claims concerning discrimination based on sex in the workplace are brought before the SSLI and legal provisions governing sexual harassment are ambiguous regarding the burden of proof and intent.[296]

3.3.6 Women in the rural economy

Women are heavily involved in labour-intensive agricultural activities, and they have traditionally been among the most disadvantaged groups in Albania. In 2023, 37.3 per cent of women in the workforce worked in agriculture compared to 27.9 per cent of men.[297] In 2022, the Strategy of Agriculture, Rural Development and Fisheries (SARDF) 2021–2027 was approved, aiming to address some key gender equality gaps. One of the objectives of the SARDF is to promote local development through improved employment and business opportunities on and off farms and through community-led development initiatives. In this context, SARDF includes support to women and men farmers to establish and develop agricultural businesses, especially for young people in rural areas. In addition, the empowerment of and improvement of services for rural women feature strongly in the NSGE 2021-2030 and Action Plan.

Information on the implementation progress of the SADRF is not available, but according to the 2022 monitoring of the implementation of the NSGE 2021–2030, several awareness-raising and training activities have been organized with women and girls in rural areas.

295. ILO CEACR, 2023 Observation and Direct request concerning the Labor Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81). See: https://normlex.ilo.org/dyn/nrmlx_en/f?p=NORMLEXPUB:13100:0::NO::P13100_COMMENT_ID%2CP13100_COUNTRY_ID:4349278%2C102532

296. UN Country Team Albania (2024), Submission for the Fourth Universal Periodic Review of Albania. See: https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/al-un-contributions-s47

297. INSTAT (2024), Labor Market in Albania, 2023. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13552/tregu-i-punes-2023.pdf

Despite these efforts, women in rural areas face the greatest challenges in accessing and benefiting from the labour market. Their gross average monthly wage of 44,304 ALL (equivalent to 516 USD or 452 EUR) in 2023 is lower than that of women employed in other sectors (and close to the minimum wage), and the GPG is 8.4 per cent, up from 7.6 per cent in 2022.[298] In 2023, the number of registered farmers was 96,440 ALL, marking an increase of 14.3 per cent compared to the end of 2022. However, only 11.2 per cent of farm owners/administrators were women, a slight increase from 10.8 per cent in 2022.[299]

As previously noted, agriculture is one of the sectors with the highest levels of informal employment, with women disproportionately represented in this workforce and dominating the unpaid family workers category. The sector employs approximately 37.3 per cent of all economically active women, and according to the Food and Agriculture Organization, 87 per cent of them are engaged as informal or family workers.[300] In 2023, 27.2 per cent of employed women participated in the labour market as contributing (unpaid) family workers.[301]

Rural women often face compounded disadvantages due to time poverty and limited mobility, resulting in lower human capital and reduced access to technology compared to both urban women and rural men.[302] An audit on gender equality and women's empowerment in rural areas, conducted by the Albanian State Audit in 13 municipalities, found that employment promotion programmes, implemented by the National Agency for Employment and Skills (NAES) for the period 2020–2023, were general in nature and did not specifically target women, particularly rural women.[303] While these programmes are designed for nationwide implementation and are intended to benefit vulnerable groups, there is no evidence indicating their actual reach or impact in rural areas. In addition, the concentration of vocational training centres and agriculture-oriented high schools in urban centres further restricts rural women's access to education and economic opportunities and rural entrepreneurship initiatives. Notably, the State Audit report found that no women or girls from the targeted rural areas had participated in vocational training during the audit period.[304]

In terms of rural advisory services, although the government formally recognizes the role of women in the sustainable development of rural areas, in practice, rural women have limited opportunities to access technical information and improve their skills, knowledge and experience. Agricultural competitiveness and modernization policies overlook rural women's entrepreneurship potential, sometimes only recognizing their role in niche products, agri-processing or other non-farm-related activities.

Field advisors, who are predominantly men, typically use male-dominated communication and information-sharing channels to reach farmers and collect their feedback. This gender gap in information is reflected in data from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, which shows that only about 11 per cent of rural women receive agricultural information. Rural women instead rely on private providers and CSOs who are more accommodating of their learning needs and time constraints.[305] Women's engagement with advisory services is also limited by their family obligations and patriarchal norms. Based on a survey in several regions of Albania, around 63 per cent of respondents considered the head of the family—typically a man—was more suitable for participation in advi-

298. INSTAT (2024), Labor Market in Albania, 2023. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13552/tregu-i-punes-2023.pdf
299. INSTAT (2024), Business Register in Albania, 2023, https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13413/regjistrat-e-biznesit-2023.pdf
300. FAO and UN Women. 2024. Strengthening the status of the spouse and partner in Albania's agricultural businesses — Policy paper. Budapest. See: https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3392en
301. INSTAT (2023), Labor Force Survey. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/14273/tregu-i-punes-2023.pdf
302. Institute of Statistics, Institute of Public Health & ICF. 2018. Albania Demographic and Health Survey 2017-2018. Tirana, Albania: Institute of Statistics, Institute of Public Health, and ICF.
303. Berat, Dibra, Kruja, Elbasan, Lushnja, Gjirkoastra, Pograde, Lezha, Shkodra, Kavaja, Vlora, Kukes and Divjaka, comprising 116 Local Administrative Units.
304. Albanian State Audit Institution and UN Women (2024), Gender equality and the empowerment of rural women through labor market involvement - Final Performance Audit Report. See: https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/06/gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-rural-women-through-labor-market-involvement-final-performance-audit-report; https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-12/en_joint-report_cooperative-performance-audit_web.pdf
305. FAO and UN Women. 2024. Towards gender-responsive agricultural extension services in Albania — Assessment report. Budapest. See: https://doi.org/10.4060/cc7701en

sory and training services, while only 29 per cent thought that women (typically the wife) were suitable.[306]
In addition, the role of rural women as entrepreneurs is very limited. Recent data show that in 2022, the share of women-owned or -managed businesses in agriculture, forestry and fishing was only 18.5 per cent, compared with 81.5 per cent of men-owned or -managed businesses.[307] Gender inequalities in access to loans play a role in this regard, along with the fact that land ownership titles continue to largely be in the name of the "head of the household" (typically the husband, father-in-law, brother, father or grandfather). This limits women's rights to productive resources, such as the right to business registration and the right to benefit from loans and agricultural advisory services, and also limits their opportunities to leave a violent relationship.[308] (For more on land ownership, see section below.)

Overall, the economic and social status of rural women is not conducive to their economic inclusion and empowerment. Poverty is higher in rural areas where employment opportunities are limited. Severely affected by various forms of migration, depopulated rural areas suffer from the loss of social services, including crèches, kindergartens, transportation and health services, leaving rural women underserved.

According to the State Audit Institution, in almost 80 per cent of municipalities audited, the ratio of crèches and kindergartens is not in fair proportion to the rural and urban administrative units.[309]
In its 2023 recommendations addressed to Albania, the CEDAW Committee raised concerns about the limited access of rural women to economic and social benefits in Albania and the barriers they face to achieving full participation in economic life.[310]

3.3.7 Women's entrepreneurship and access to financial opportunities

Recently, Albania has made efforts to support women in entrepreneurship. A dedicated strategy is expected to be approved, aiming to support the entrepreneurship of women and girls. Other initiatives include creating start-ups and empowering women entrepreneurs, which increase their economic independence and reduce reliance on other income sources, thereby giving women more control over their lives and families. Looking ahead, Albania plans to promote the creation of programmes and policies that increase women's access to funds, grants and loans.[311]

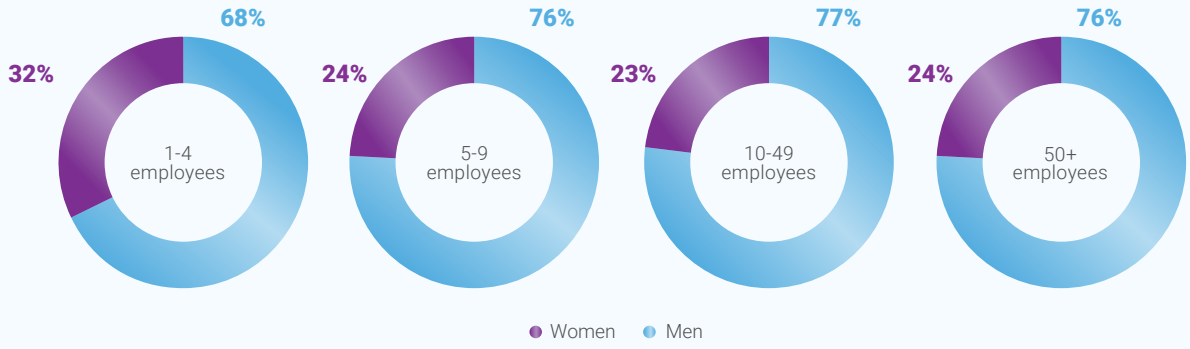
There were 130,338 active enterprises in Albania in 2023, marking a 4.1 per cent increase from 2022. The vast majority—85.9 per cent—are small enterprises with 1–4 employees. Women own or manage 31.2 per cent of all active enterprises, a figure unchanged from 2022. However, women manage mainly small enterprises, and less than a quarter of medium and large enterprises (see Figure 13). The highest rates of women in decision-making roles are found in the "Retail" (33.9 per cent) and "Other Services" (40.5 per cent) activities. Women account for 47 per cent of the total employment in registered businesses.

The number of businesses with women owners or managers is greater in the Service Sector than in the Manufacturing Sector, respectively 33.4 per cent and 17.1 per cent.[312]
A recent analysis of Albania's 50 largest revenue-generating companies shows that women hold just 17 per cent of Supervisory Board seats (25 out of 147), and 22 per cent of CEO or senior administrator roles (16 out of

306. World Vision Albania (2023), Financial Education and Capacity Increase of Farmers. See: https://worldvision.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/2022.05_Edukimi-financiar-i-fermereve-dhe-zhvillimi-i-kapaciteteve.pdf
307. INSTAT (2023). Women and Men in Albania, 2023. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/12598/burra-dhe-gra-2023.pdf
308. Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (2024). Comprehensive National-level Review for Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Beijing+30. See: https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Albania-Report.pdf
309. Albanian State Audit Institution and UN Women (2024), Gender equality and the empowerment of rural women through labor market involvement - Final Performance Audit Report. See: https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2024/06/gender-equality-and-the-empowerment-of-rural-women-through-labor-market-involvement-final-performance-audit-report;
Ibid.
310. CEDAW 2023.
311. Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (2024), Comprehensive National-level Review for Implementation of Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action Beijing+30. See: https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2024-08/Albania-Report.pdf
312. INSTAT, "Men and Women, 2030", pg. 106. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/al/publikime/librat/2023/burra-dhe-gra-2023/

Figure 12

Active enterprises by size and sex of the administrator



Source: INSTAT, Business Register in Albania, 2023

73). Of seven companies with a designated Chair of the Board, three are held by women, and their representation in Non-Executive Director positions remains low, with a minimal presence across major corporations.[313]

Additionally, women's representation in corporate boardrooms in Albania continues to be far below the 40 per cent gender parity threshold mandated by EU policy. There is an urgent need to accelerate progress towards gender equality in the corporate governance sphere.

Advancing gender equality in private sector governance

The Albanian government has taken initial steps towards improving gender equity in the management of the private sector as part of its overall commitment to European integration. Although current legislation and institutions are lagging, new mechanisms have emerged to encourage the private sector to meet international gender guidelines. In this context, the Women's Empowerment Principles (WEPs) provide an additional and voluntary framework encouraging the practice of gender-responsive approaches by companies in the workplace, market and society.

Although backed by donors and not legally enforceable, the WEPs[314] have been increasingly seen as a key tool for preparing the private sector for pending EU legal requirements, particularly those codified in Directive (EU) 2022/2464 on Corporate Sustainability Reporting (CSRD). The directive requires corporations to make public disclosures on gender equality, fair compensation, diversity in leadership positions, and other measures of social sustainability. Implementation of the WEPs facilitates the creation of internal structures and reporting requirements that align with these future regulatory requirements.

Albania has witnessed a notable increase in WEP signatories—from just 11 companies in 2021 to 75 companies by 2024—demonstrating a growing awareness of corporate responsibility for gender equality. Alongside this

313. [Author] [2024] Women on Board Albania. See: https://wobal.org/advancing-women-in-corporate-leadership-wob-al-index-next-steps/
314. The work with businesses and corporations to sign the Principles of Women's Empowerment, and other activities subject to the implementations of these principles are being supported by UN Women Albania.

Table 5

Active enterprises by sex of owner/administrator and economic activity, by percentage

Economic Activity	2020		2021		2022		2023	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Total	66.8	31.4	68.9	31.1	68.8	31.2	68.8	31.2
Producers of goods	83.1	16.9	83.0	17.0	82.8	17.2	82.9	17.1
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	82.3	17.7	82.9	17.1	81.5	18.5	81.8	18.2
Industry	79.4	20.6	79.0	21.0	78.9	21.1	78.8	21.2
Construction	90.2	9.8	89.5	10.5	88.8	11.2	88.8	11.2
Producers of services	66.3	33.7	66.7	33.3	66.6	33.4	66.6	33.4
Trade	65.0	35.0	65.7	34.3	65.8	34.2	66.1	33.9
Transport and Storage	93.4	6.6	93.1	6.9	91.9	8.1	91.9	8.1
Accommodation and food service activities	71.0	29.0	71.4	28.6	71.6	28.4	71.3	28.7
Information & Communication	75.1	24.9	75.5	24.5	74.6	25.4	75.0	25.0
Other Services	59.4	40.6	59.9	40.1	59.8	40.2	59.5	40.5

Source: INSTAT, Men and Women in Albania, 2023

growth, initiatives such as EXPO 2023 and EXPO 2024 on Women's Entrepreneurship have been convened in Tirana, bringing together WEP-aligned companies, women entrepreneurs, public institutions, and international partners to discuss financing mechanisms and inclusive business development. These platforms have helped more than 80 women entrepreneurs improve their access to investors and corporate networks, further contributing to gender-inclusive economic growth.

Systemic change requires more governmental intervention. This requires ensuring mandatory requirements for corporate reporting on gender, integrating gender into public-private dialogue, and ensuring that private sector reforms, as required by the EU *acquis*, explicitly address gender equality in line with Chapters 23 and 24 and the CSRD framework.

In 2022, 56.5 per cent of borrowers from private banks were men, while 43.5 per cent were women. While specific sex disaggregated data on business loans/credits or soft loans for businesses are unavailable, a CSO survey published in 2023 indicates that more than half of women entrepreneurs (53.9 per cent) used family savings as the main source of financing to establish, register or start a business. Only one in ten women entrepreneurs accessed financing through commercial banks, and seven out of ten women entrepreneurs reported never having applied for a bank loan for their business.[315] Other studies indicate that many women lacked the necessary capital to invest in their businesses, leading them to rely on personal savings, family loans, and, in some cases, multiple jobs to save funds. Additionally, the refusal of business loans and the lack of an adequate taxation system that supports female entrepre-

315. Gender Alliance for Development Centre, GADC (2023), Assessing the Environment for Women's Entrepreneurship: A Survey on Women Entrepreneurs in Albania, https://www.gadc.org.al/media/files/upload/Study%20women%20in%20business.pdf

neurship hindered business growth.[316]On a positive note, women have been the majority of beneficiaries in recent support schemes under the Creative Economy Fund and the Start-Up Fund, accounting for 80 per cent and 78.9 per cent of recipients, respectively. In 2019, women represented 56 per cent of beneficiaries of the other support schemes of the Albanian Investment Development Agency. However, during the years 2020-2022, the Albanian Investment Development Agency did not apply support schemes or investments.[317]

UN agencies focusing on infrastructure development and construction projects have observed that women's participation in these sectors in Albania remains limited, largely due to gender norms and lack of targeted, gender-responsive interventions. However, in projects where such strategies have been integrated—such as recruitment drives, specialized training, and mentorship for women in construction and urban planning—significant improvements in women's engagement and leadership have been recorded.[318]

Overall, there is a strong need for capacity-building initiatives that integrate traditional skills, such as craftsmanship, with modern business practices—especially in areas like digital marketing, product development and presentation, and financial management. These interventions would not only enhance sustainability but also help women entrepreneurs scale their businesses effectively. To ensure lasting impact, it is equally important to establish sustainable knowledge transfer mechanisms that empower future generations of women entrepreneurs.

3.3.8 Access to education

Over the years, Albania has made progress with regards to women's education. Recent Population Census data shows that among those with tertiary education, 55.7 per cent are women and 44.3 per cent are men. The proportion of women with tertiary education completed has continuously increased—from 41.1 per cent in the 2001 Census to 51.0 per cent in 2011, and 55.7 per cent in 2023.

Despite progress, gendered patterns persist, with horizontal segregation evident in higher education. In the 2023–2024 academic year, girls comprised 58.4 per cent of tertiary students.[319] The fields of study most pursued by girls are education (82.6 per cent of graduates), health and well-being (78.1 per cent of graduates) and human sciences (78.4 per cent of graduates).[320] Even though more women graduate from university than men, they do not enter the labour force in the same numbers and often do not enter in line with their professional qualification.[321] Over-qualification has become more prevalent in recent years, and working in a job that has lower educational requirements than one's own education level is associated with a 'wage penalty,' which has been shown to be higher for women than men.[322]

In terms of primary and secondary education, efforts are being made to combat school drop-out, including through a scholarship system. The Youth Strategy and National Youth Guarantee plan aim to support vulnerable young people, especially those not in employment, training or education. However, there is a need to increase scholarships, particularly for the most vulnerable groups. Gender gaps in access and retention persist among students with disabilities and the Roma population, with girls more frequently experiencing school drop-out.[323] Concerns have also bee022 n raised about the quality of education following the average results of the 2022 PISA test among 15-year-olds, which were considerably down compared to 2018.[324] Most students in vocational education are boys, accounting for about 84 per cent of enrolments. Underlying reasons include the social climate in vocational schools (dominated by boys), the common mentality ," associating vocations, the type of curricula

316. UNDP 2023, Women in Western Balkan economies in a nutshell. See: https://www.undp.org/montenegro/publications/women-western-balkan-economies-nutshell#:~:text=Around%20the%20Western%20Balkans%20region,in%20the%20labour%20market%20remain
317. INSTAT (2023), Women and Men in Albania, 2023. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/12598/burra-dhe-gra-2023.pdf
318. United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) input to the County Gender Equality Profile (2025)
319. INSTAT (2023), Students enrolled in secondary education. See: https://databaza.instat.gov.al:8083/pxweb/sq/DST/START__ED__REG/ArSm01/
320. INSTAT (2024). "Graduation Statistics 2022-2023". See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/13332/statistika-te-diplomimeve_2022-23-update-2024.pdf
321. INSTAT (2020). Labor Market 2019. See: http://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2020/labour-market-2019/
322. ILO (2019). Skills and jobs mismatches in low- and middle-income countries. See: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_726816.pdf
323. UNCT Albania (2024). Submission for the Fourth Universal Periodic Review of Albania
324. PISA is the OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment. PISA measures 15-year-olds' ability to use their reading, mathematics and science knowledge and skills to meet real-life challenges.

offered, and girls' employment perspectives upon graduation, all associated with so-called "male professions".

Access to skills and the digital economy

The gender digital divide remains a significant barrier to achieving digital inclusion and gender equality in Albania, particularly as the country aligns its development priorities with the EU's digitalization agenda. Women and girls in Albania face lower levels of access to digital tools, internet connectivity, digital literacy and STEM education compared to men, which limits their participation in the digital economy and public life. These disparities are especially pronounced among women in rural areas, Roma and Egyptian communities, and women with disabilities. As the EU advances its Digital Decade targets—such as ensuring that 80 per cent of the population has basic digital skills by 2030—closing the gender digital gap in Albania becomes both a national priority and a regional imperative. Addressing this divide requires targeted investments in digital skills training for women and girls, equitable access to digital infrastructure, and the integration of gender perspectives into all national digital transformation policies and programmes.

3.3.9 Property rights

For women in particular, asset ownership is a source of economic empowerment and provides protection in the case of marital dissolution or abandonment. There is increasing evidence that ownership of property by women has positive consequences for women's empowerment, nutritional and health outcomes, and children's schooling.[325]

The Albanian legislation guaranteeing women's equal property and inheritance rights has improved considerably following the adoption of the Law on Cadaster and Law on Public Notaries in 2018. Both pieces of legislation and their ensuing bylaws clarify procedures and make the joint registration of marital property compulsory. They also enable corrections in property titles for registration of joint property during marriage under the name of both spouses, if that was not the case prior to the 2018 legislation.[326] Before 2018, although property acquired during marriage was considered joint marital property, the law did not mandate its registration under both spouses' names.

However, several years after these improvements, updated data on women's property rights are unavailable, making it difficult to assess the degree of implementation and actual impact of these provisions. The most recent available data is from the 2018 Demographic and Health Survey, which indicated that 52.2 per cent of men and 23.2 per cent of women owned a dwelling either alone or jointly in 2018.[327]

Legal improvements extend also to land and property ownership in rural areas, but mainly provide protections to women benefiting of property owned by both spouses (property bought jointly by both spouses during marriage). On the other hand, other provisions apply to "agricultural families," who, according to the Civil Code, are represented by the head of the family, usually the eldest man. However, this often does not provide adequate protection to women who join agricultural families and become agricultural labourers through marriage. They provide unpaid labour to the family's agricultural business without any legally recognized decision-making power.[328]

Research shows that in rural areas, customary practices that favour men in landownership and inheritance prevail. As a result, there remains a significant gap between the legal (*de jure*) rights and actual (*de facto*) practices regarding women's land and inheritance rights. This discrepancy is especially pronounced in mountainous and remote regions, guided by patriarchal norms and informal community institutions.[329] The lack of land ownership significantly undermines rural women's economic power within their families and restricts their ability to pursue agricultural or non-agricultural business initiatives. It also limits their access to public financial support for rural development.

325. World Bank (2023), Albania Gender Landscape, https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/en/099009306242233233/pdf/IDU13dd6d2e1105a0146141a426192b3de433582.pdf

326. With the adoption of a new Law on Cadaster and Law on Public Notaries in 2018.

327. https://dhsprogram.com/data/available-datasets.cfm

328. UN Women and Centre for Civic Legal Initiatives (2023), Advancing Gender Equality Commitments in Albania
A Review of Selected Legislation, https://albania.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-01/01_legislation_women_2.pdf; FAO and UN Women. 2024. Strengthening the status of the spouse and partner in Albania's agricultural businesses —
Policy paper. Budapest. https://doi.org/10.4060/cd3392en

329. FAO and UN Women Albania (2024) Towards gender-responsive agricultural extension services in Albania: Assessment report, https://www.fao.org/europe/resources/country-gender-assessment-series/towards-gender-responsive-agricultural-extension-services-in-albania/en

3.3.10 Tourism

In recent years, tourism has become an important sector for the Albanian economy. It therefore offers important opportunities for women's economic empowerment, especially in hospitality, crafts and cultural guiding. However, women are often concentrated in low-paid jobs with limited decision-making power. Promoting gender empowerment through support for women-led businesses and better working conditions strengthens both gender equality and the sustainable development of the sector.

Currently, Albania is in the process of developing its National Tourism Strategy 2025–2030, which underwent the public consultation process in October 2024.[330] The document outlines Albania's vision for a sustainable and inclusive tourism sector and acknowledges social inclusion as a key principle. In its narrative description, the strategy incorporates gender mainstreaming explicitly, emphasizing the education, empowerment and leadership of women in tourism. It also highlights the importance of targeted capacity-building programmes to ensure that women gain the necessary skills and leadership training to take on key roles in the industry. Additionally, the strategy promotes grants, mentorship programmes and business development training to support women entrepreneurs in tourism and hospitality.

The strategy also recognizes the central role of women in community-based tourism (CBT), especially in rural and underdeveloped areas. Many community-driven tourism activities are already led by women, and expanding these initiatives can create greater economic participation and leadership opportunities. Future CBT developments should prioritize women-led projects, ensuring their active role in shaping and managing tourism experiences in their communities. However, to translate the intentions in the narrative part of the strategy into meaningful change, concrete actions and resources are essential. To enhance impact, Albania should integrate sex-disaggregated data collection, adopt gender-responsive budgeting, and ensure institutional support for women's involvement in tourism governance. Strengthening these measures would align the tourism sector with global gender equality commitments, fostering a more inclusive and competitive industry.

3.3.11 Key EU legislation and policies

Numerous EU legal acts and policies address gender equality and women's rights in areas such as the labour market, combating discrimination in the workplace, private sector development and skills development.

Over the years, Albania has made efforts to align its legislation on employment and women's economic empowerment with EU policies, notably through amendments to the Labour Code in 2015 and 2024, including secondary legislation, and the Law against Discrimination in 2020. According to the European Commission's latest report on Albania (2024), the government is moderately prepared in the employment sector and has made some progress, including the launch of the National Strategy on Employment and Skills 2023–2030 and the piloting of the Youth Guarantee Plan to improve access to jobs. However, the report highlights persistent gender inequalities in employment and social policy and emphasizes the need for Albania to further align its legal framework with EU directives, particularly the work-life balance directive.[331]

Albania is currently in the process of revising its Law on Gender Equality. A key aspect of this process is its alignment with relevant EU Directives, including those related to equality between men and women in matters of employment and occupation, equal pay, social security, self-employment and access to and supply of goods and services, as well as directives related to safety and health at work of pregnant workers and standards for equality bodies in the field of equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation.[332] However, the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality alone cannot guarantee full alignment with all EU legal instruments in this area. A comprehensive effort is needed to ensure alignment and transposition of the EU *acquis* in all relevant laws and bylaws in areas related to employment, safety at work, anti-discrimination, social protection and social services, corporate governance, company law, agriculture, entrepreneurship, and others.

Albania is currently preparing to advance negotiations on Cluster 3, which focuses on strengthening economic competitiveness and fostering inclusive growth. This

330. See: https://www.konsultimipublik.gov.al/documents/RENJK_785_Strategjia-Kombe%CC%88tare-e-Turizmit-2024-2030_Update_6_Tetor.pdf

331. European Commission (2024). Albania 2024 report. Available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2024_en

332. Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, Draft Law on Gender Equality in Society (draft of February 2025, unpublished).

cluster includes, among others, Chapter 19 on Employment and Social Policies.[333] This is an opportune moment for the country to further align its legislation on gender equality and employment, and, in particular, take institutional measures to address persistent gender equality gaps identified by EU and human rights mechanisms.

3.3.12 Recommendations

Key recommendations for women's economic empowerment in Albania are based on recent human rights mechanisms' recommendations in the context of Albania's fifth periodic review by the CEDAW Committee in 2023[334] and UPR fourth cycle (2024–2025).[335] The following recommendations also reflect the UN Country Team Albania's input to these mechanisms during the review processes.[336]

1. **Promote full and productive employment and decent work** for all women and men, and develop targeted labour market policies to address unemployment among youth and disadvantaged women. These should include vocational training and employment services tailored to sectors with decent work potential. (In line with CEDAW Committee Recommendations 2023 and UPR 2025.).[337]
2. **Enhance access to formal employment for women**, especially those from disadvantaged groups, and extend social protection schemes to women employed in the informal economy. In this context, it is important to adopt a gender-responsive formalization strategy, prioritizing the extension of social protection, legal recognition, and decent working conditions for women in informal employment, particularly in agriculture, tourism and unpaid family work. (Aligned with ratified ILO Conventions: C100, C111, and C190.).
3. **Effectively enforce the principle of equal pay for work of equal value**, in order to narrow and eventually close the Gender Pay Gap, by: (i) conducting regular labour inspections; (ii) applying gender-neutral analytical job classification and evaluation methods; (iii) conducting regular pay surveys; and (iv) encouraging employers to publish a narrative with their gender pay gap data with a view to better understanding the reasons behind the gender wage gap, and to take appropriate remedial measures. (In line with CEDAW Committee Recommendations.).[338]
4. **Recognize, reduce and redistribute women's burden of unpaid care work** by: (i) providing affordable child-care facilities and care services for older persons; (ii) promoting equal sharing of domestic and family responsibilities between women and men; and (iii) ensuring that women employed in family businesses are adequately remunerated and have access to social protection schemes. In addition, it is important that Albania develops a comprehensive legal and policy framework to guarantee flexible labour agreements between employers and employees for an adequate work-family/private life balance. (In line with CEADW Committee, 2023 UPR, 2024 Recommendations and UNCT Submission to CEDAW 2022.).[339]
5. **Strengthen the human and logistic capacities of the State Labour and Social Services Inspectorate** and increase women's access to confidential and independent complaint mechanisms to address employment discrimination against women. (In line with CEDAW Committee Recommendations 2023 and UNCT Submission to UPR 2024.)[340] Moreover, enhancing collective bargaining and social dialogue mechanisms is essential for combating workplace

333. The accession negotiations, which opened in July **2022**, are based on a negotiation framework and follow an analytical examination or the "screening process", which is organized around six clusters. These clusters consist of the EU *acquis* composed of chapters, each covering a specific policy area and broader principles and standards.
334. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, (2023) *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania* (CEDAW/C/ALB/5). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, United Nations. https://www.ohchr.org/documents/treaties/cedaw
335. Human Rights Council. (20 December 2024). *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Albania* (Fifty-eighth session, Agenda item 6); A/HRC/58/
336. UNCT Albania (2024), Submission for the Fourth Universal Periodic Review of Albania, https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/al-un-contributions-s47; UNCT Albania (2022) Confidential Report to CEDAW Committee in view of fifth period review of Albania (not published)
337. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/4, para. 31; CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 38 (a).
338. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 34 (a).
339. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 34 (c); UPR 124.109, A/HRC/58/5.
340. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 34 (b).

discrimination and promoting the inclusion of anti-discrimination provisions in collective agreements. (In accordance with the ILO Conventions on Workplace Discrimination No. 111 and Anti-Harassment Convention No. 190.).

6. **Ensure effective enforcement of ILO Convention 190 against violence and harassment in the world of work**, both in public and private sectors, including through the adoption of a National Implementation Plan with clear roles for enforcement bodies (CPD, SLSSI), mandatory workplace policies, and sector-specific prevention programmes. Particular attention should be paid to vulnerable and informal workers. In addition, regular, sex-disaggregated data systems and surveys are necessary to monitor the prevalence of workplace harassment and discrimination, ensuring data from both formal and informal sectors. (In line with CEADW Committee Recommendations and UNCT Submission to UPR 2024.).[341]
7. **Undertake reforms to ensure rural women's equal rights to economic resources,** as well as access to ownership and control over land and other forms of property, financial services, inheritance and natural resources, in accordance with national laws. Furthermore, national statistics to collect rural-urban sex-disaggregated data should be strengthened to inform gender-sensitive, evidence-based policies on rural women. (In line with CEDAW Committee Recommendations and UNCT Submission to CEDAW 2022.).[342]
8. **Ensure women's equal access to markets and financial credit**, including low-interest, collateral-free loans, public procurement, and ICT, so that women may engage in e-commerce and cross-border trade with their goods and products. In addition, Albania should foster women's entrepreneurship and women-led businesses, including social entrepreneurship, by providing innovative investment schemes. (In line with CEDAW Committee recommendations 2023 and UNCT Submission to CEDAW Committee 2022.).[343]
9. **Ensure that rural women and girls, women and girls with disabilities, and those belonging to ethnic minorities have adequate access to ICT** so they can benefit from distance learning and enrol in internet-based education programmes. Albania also needs to improve programmes on digital literacy and STEM.[344] (In line with CEDAW 2023 Recommendations.).[345]
10. **Ensure that young people** are not left out of education and employment opportunities, facilitated through financial support and coordination for effective implementation of the Youth Strategy and Guarantee Plan.[346]
11. **Increase awareness and provide legal aid to women** to ensure they fully benefit from improved provisions enabling registration of joint property during marriage under the name of both spouses. (In line with UNCT Submission to CEDAW, 2022 and UPR, 2023.).[347]

3.4 EQUAL PARTICIPATION, LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING

The participation of women in leadership and decision-making is a fundamental pillar of democratic governance and social equity. Albania has made notable progress in promoting gender equality in political, economic and public spheres, underpinned by legislative frameworks including mandatory gender quotas in electoral processes and public administration. However, women continue to face structural, cultural and institutional barriers that hinder their full and effective equal participation in leadership and decision-making.

3.4.1 Women in Parliament and local governance

Women in Parliament

Albania has taken significant steps to enhance women's representation in the national government. The Electoral Code (2020) mandates a minimum 30 per cent gender quota for parliamentary elections, with the Central Election Commission (CEC) empowered to enforce compliance by sanctioning political parties that fail to meet this threshold. The minimum 30 per cent gender quota and sanctions are also mandated for all levels of the electoral administration, replacing the previous system of fines with list-rejection measures if political parties do not

341. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 34 (d).
342. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 40 (a).
343. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 38 (b).
344. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
345. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 32 (c).
346. CEDAW/C/ALB/%, Recommendation 32 (c)
347. UNCT Albania (2024), Submission for the Fourth Universal Periodic Review of Albania, https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/al-uncontributions-s47

comply with gender quotas. This legal framework has contributed to an increase in women's representation in the Albanian Assembly from 29.5 per cent (36 women) in 2020 to 35 per cent (49 women) in 2025.[348]

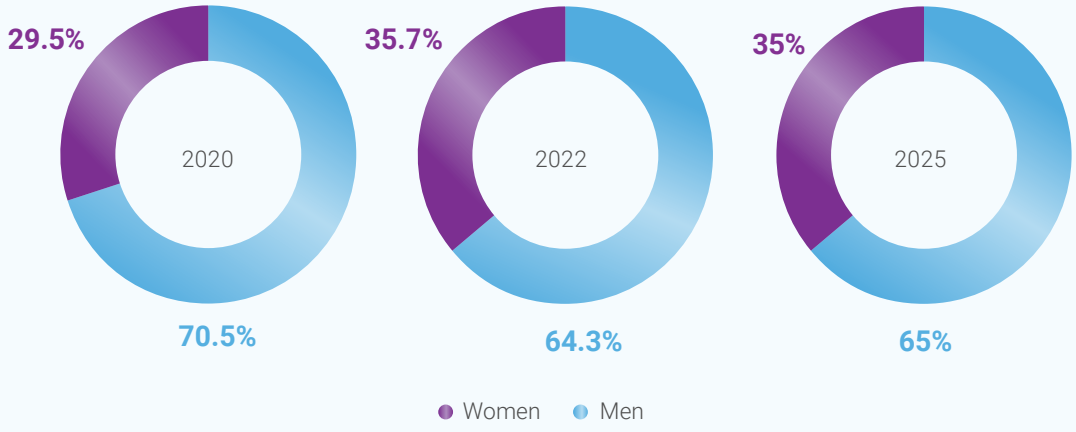
While Albania surpasses the global average (27.2 per cent) and the European average (31.8 per cent), it still ranks behind EU gender parity leaders like Iceland (47.6 per cent), Sweden (46.7 per cent), Finland (46 per cent), Denmark (45.3 per cent), and Norway (44.4 per cent), as well as North Macedonia (39.2 per cent) and Serbia (37.2 per cent) in the Western Balkans.[349]

Five of the eight parliamentary commissions are led by women. However, the participation of women on these commissions needs to be improved, especially in the Commission for Productive Activity, Trade and Environment (only 10 per cent women members) and the Commission for National Security (15 per cent women members), both led by men, as well as the Commission for Foreign Affairs, which is led by a woman with 26.3 per cent women's representation.[350]

In the 11 May 2025 parliamentary elections, Albania had 2,046 candidates, of whom 787 or 38 per cent were women.[351] These candidates competed for 140 seats across 12 prefectures. The elections involved 3.7 million registered voters, including approximately 246,000 from the diaspora.[352] Electoral reform introduced the "zipper" quota, requiring that one-third of Parliament seats must be held by women, which should be fulfilled both under closed and preferential lists. Official data on the final results are still under preparation. It is important to note that women again had to overcome significant challenges during the campaign, including internet harassment, gender-targeted campaigns, limited access to campaign funds, and gender biases in parties—issues recognized as obstacles to full electoral participation by observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR). The open-list system also diminished the strength of the quota, as many quota-list women were overshadowed by the highest-voted women.[353] These challenges highlight the need for far-reaching structural reforms to increase leadership opportunities for women.

Figure 13

Composition of the Albanian Parliament 2020-2022



Source: IPU Parline, Global data on national parliaments, 2025

348. "Albania Comprehensive National Review on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action", pg.59. See: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_albania_en.pd

349. IPU Parline, Global data on national parliaments. See: https://data.ipu.org/women-ranking/?date_month=01&date_year=2025 Information still valid in the aftermath of Albania's Parliamentary elections in 2025, where women represent 35% of MPs.

350. INSTAT, "Men and women, 2023", pg.110. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/12598/burra-dhe-gra-2023.pdf and https://www.parlament.al/

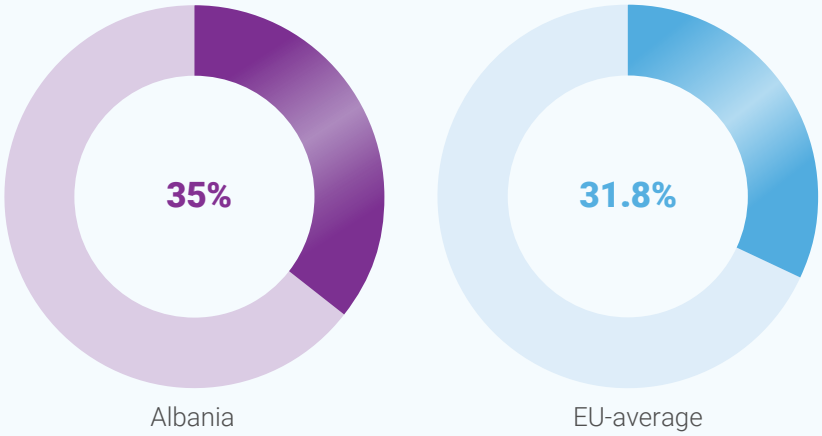
351. Preliminary official data from CEC, analysed from UN Women (June 2025) in the frame of this report

352. See: https://www.ifes.org/tools-resources/election-snapshots/elections-albania

353. For more information on the gender-quota system introduced during the 2025 amendments of the Electoral Code see UN Women and Central Election Committee "Practical Information on the Electoral System in Albania 2025" (p.13-14) https://kqz.gov.al/media/documents/Informacion-praktik-mbi-proceset-zgjedhore-ne-Shqiperi9.pdf

Figure 14

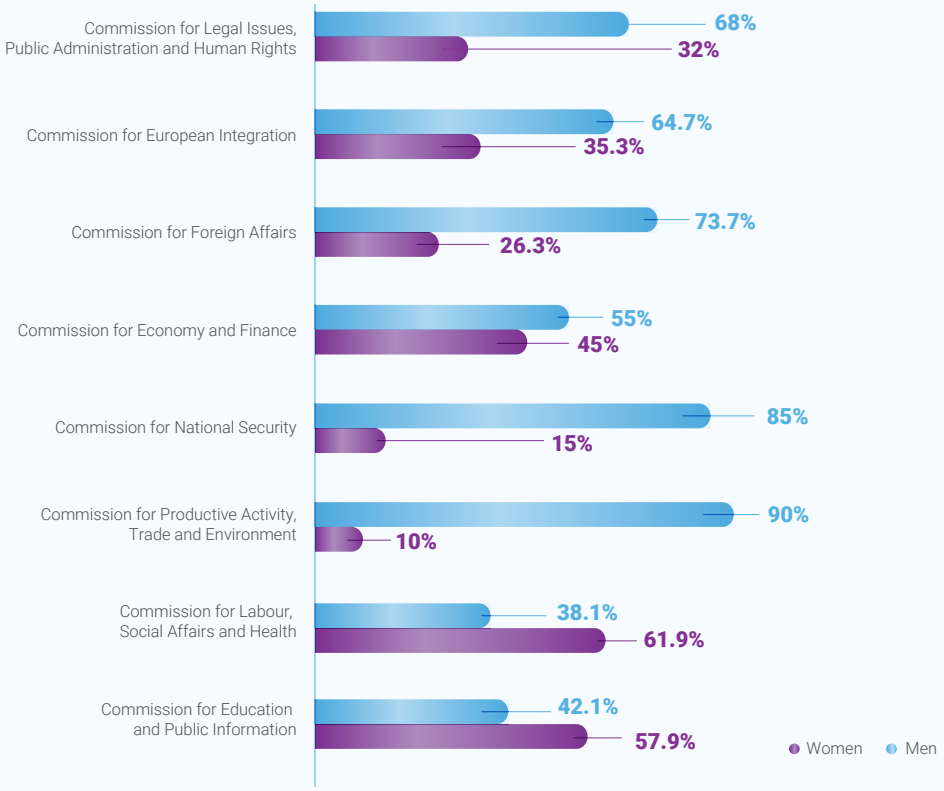
Proportion of women in national parliaments



Source: CEC 2025.

Figure 15

Composition of Parliamentary Commissions by sex, 2022



Source: INSTAT, Men and Women, 2023.

Women in local governance

Despite the 50 per cent gender quota introduced in Albania's 2015 Electoral Code for local elections, women remain significantly underrepresented in municipal leadership. Data from the 2019, 2022, and 2023 elections show that women made up a small fraction of mayoral candidates and winners. For the 2019 local elections, a total of 97 candidates (11 women and 86 men) were registered for mayors, and 61 mayors (eight women and 53 men) were the winners.

A total of 9,882 people (4,842 women and 5,040 men) were registered as candidates for municipal council members, and 1,621 municipal council members (707 women and 914 men) were the winners. In the partial local elections of 2022, a total of 19 candidates (three women and 16 men) were registered for mayors in the six municipalities where these elections were held, and six mayors (two women and four men) were winners.[354] In the local election of 2023, a total of 144 candidates (15 women and 129 men) were registered for mayors,[355] and eight women and 53 men were the winners. A total of 23,763 candidates were registered for municipal councils[356] (11,828 women and 11,935 men), out of whom 1,673 won (57.8 per cent men and 42.2 per cent women).

To be registered in these elections, candidate lists for municipal councils had to represent women and men equally, with alternating genders on the lists, but this condition was not met in most municipalities.[357] After the 2023 local elections in Albania, 102 municipal councillors and 80 councillor candidates revoked their mandates before taking office.

According to the Central Election Commission, 132 of those who withdrew were women, compared to just 50 men. This significant gender gap in withdrawals has raised concerns among observers that such resignations may be used to circumvent gender quota requirements, with women stepping aside to allow men further down the party list to take office. This reflects a persistent challenge in political culture, where women's candidacies often serve to formally meet legal requirements rather than drive systemic change. Ensuring meaningful representation at the local level requires ongoing efforts to strengthen women's political participation, create supportive environments, and promote genuine inclusion in decision-making processes.

In addition, a 2023 survey published in 2024 by civil society[358] highlighted that an increase in the number of wom-

Table 6

Women and Men Candidates and Elected Officials in Local Elections (2019–2023)

Election Year	Position	Total Candidates	Women Candidates	Men Candidates	Women Elected	Men Elected
2019	Mayors	97	11	86	8	53
	Municipal Council	9,882	4,842	5,040	707	914
2022 (Partial)	Mayors (6 municipalities)	19	3	16	2	4
2023	Mayors	144	15	129	8	53
	Municipal Council	23,763	11,828	11,935	706	967

Source: INSTAT, Men and Women in Albania, 2023

354. "Albania Comprehensive National Review on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action", pg.60. See: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_albania_en.pd
355. ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, September 2023, pg. 13. See: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/d/553972.pdf
356. *Ibid*
357. ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, September 2023, pg. 14. See: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/d/553972.pdf
358. AWEN, April 2024. "Political representation in municipal councils following the implementation of the 50/50 gender quota: What is happening to the gender gap?". See: https://www.awenetwork.org/media/665858df0c2bc.pdf

en councillors does not necessarily mean that their influence in the municipality councils has increased. Analysis from transcripts of 49 municipal council meetings revealed that of the 8,300 speaking instances, men spoke 6,169 times (74.33 per cent) and women spoke 2,131 times (25.67 per cent). Furthermore, women were interrupted about 2.5 times more often than men. The survey also revealed that many women also withdraw due to being discredited, frequently interrupted during public speeches[359] and facing pressure from party leaders—an issue that has received little public attention. While political parties may respect the gender quota when submitting lists to the Central Election Commission, they often pressure women—including with the threat of dismissal—to withdraw en masse after the elections to make space for men.[360] In one municipal council, more than 10 women withdrew to make space for men. This strategy legitimizes the idea that politics is men's sphere, and that women are at their service.[361]

To facilitate women's active participation in public and political life, including in mayoral elections, comprehensive legal, institutional and educational efforts by authorities at all levels are needed to overcome existing gender stereotypes. Furthermore, political parties have been urged by international organisations to identify and curb any possible gender-based barriers for women candidates, including by reviewing current intra-party practices that hinder more effective representation of women within party structures and as candidates.[362]

In addition, significant progress is still needed to improve the representation of women as Administrators in Administrative Units or as heads of villages. The municipality of Tirana, for example, which has 27 Administrative Units and three neighbourhoods, has only five women Administrators (16 per cent),[363] and in the municipality of Elbasan, out of 116 villages, only two (1.7 per cent) have women as Head of Village.[364] In other municipalities, data will also show either the minimum or total absence of women from these leadership positions.

A specific focus must also be placed on young women and their political participation. Beyond increasing representation, ensuring meaningful participation is essential, as young women continue to face gender stereotypes, limited mentorship opportunities, and underrepresentation in key political structures, especially in Administrative Units and villages. Addressing these barriers is crucial for fostering a more inclusive political landscape where young women actively shape policies at both the local and national levels.

Local Youth Councils (LYCs), steadily institutionalized under the National Youth Strategy 2022–2029[365] with support from the Minister of State for Youth and Children, aim to empower youth—especially young women—in local governance and policymaking. Around 70 per cent of LYCs currently hold monthly meetings with municipal authorities, fostering active youth engagement.[366] In at least 10 municipalities, LYCs have strengthened their capacity to lead climate change and activism initiatives through targeted training.[367] Nationally, the Youth 2030 Conference (February–March 2024) brought together 350 young people, including LYC members, to monitor Strategy implementation.[368] However, institutional gaps, social norms and inadequate support mechanisms continue to hinder young women's participation. To bridge these gaps, targeted interventions—including mentorship programmes, leadership training, and gender-responsive policies—are needed to create inclusive pathways for young women in governance. Expanding opportunities in youth councils, local government, and political organizations is crucial to building a strong pipe-

359. *Ibid*
360. *Ibid*
361. AWEN, April 2024. "Political representation in municipal councils following the implementation of the 50/50 gender quota: What is happening to the gender gap?". See: https://www.awenetwork.org/media/665858df0c2bc.pdf
362. ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report, September 2023, pg. 13. See: https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/d/d/553972.pdf
363. See: https://tirana.al/faqe/administrata-e-bashkise
364. See: https://elbasani.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/listaadministratore.pdf
365. Measure 116 under specific objective 1.1 "Raising political awareness of young people, especially among girls and young women, by supporting voter education programmes and other awareness-raising initiatives". See: https://riniafemijet.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/SKR29_Anglisht.pdf
366. See: https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/content/western-balkans-success-story-local-youth-councils
367. UNICEF, 2023. See: https://www.unicef.org/media/151936/file/Albania-2023-COAR.pdf
368. This conference was organized with the support of the European Union and Technical Assistance "EU Support for Social Inclusion in Albania" EU4SI. See: https://rinia.gov.al/en/rinia-2030-strategjia-kombetare-e-rinise-2022-2023/

line of future young women leaders and ensuring they play an active role in shaping Albania's democratic and policy frameworks.

Reflecting Albania's growing commitment to gender equality in political leadership, several organizations—including UN Women, the National Democratic Institute (NDI), OSCE/ODIHR, and national CSOs—have implemented complementary projects to support women's increased political participation (WPP). UN Women Albania launched and scaled up its corporate manual on WPP in 2024–2025, targeting around 150 women from diverse backgrounds prepared to run in the 2025 parliamentary elections and future political cycles. This project included capacity development programmes and mentoring opportunities aimed at increasing the number of qualified women candidates. In parallel, UN Women is equipping elected women municipal councillors with the legislative, representative and oversight skills necessary to perform their mandates effectively (2023–2026), based on a national capacity needs assessment finalized in 2023.

Other stakeholders have played critical roles: the NDI has promoted multi-party dialogue and campaign skills training for future women leaders; the OSCE Presence in Albania has lobbied for strategies to end discrimination and carried out gender-sensitive media monitoring during electoral processes; and local organizations have worked to prevent gender-based political violence, promote youth leadership, and monitor the implementation of gender quotas. These collective efforts are a multifaceted approach towards strengthening the inclusiveness, resilience and representativeness of Albania's politics, guaranteeing that women's contributions and leadership meaningfully shape the future of the country's democracy.

3.4.2 Violence against women in elections

A study conducted in 2021, "Violence against women during the elections and gender bias in the media coverage of the April 2021 general elections in Albania,"[369] revealed that while many media outlets operate in Albania, media owners usually exercise control over the content, limiting editorial independence and encouraging self-censorship among journalists, many of whom are precariously employed. In the past, the media have reported cases of violence against women during elections and violence against women in politics, including cases where women candidates have faced pressure to resign rather than take their seats as MPs and physical attacks on women candidates during election rallies. Overall, however, the media often contribute to the delegitimization of women as viable political actors by portraying women in public life in a sexualized manner, reporting claims about their personal lives, or focusing on their clothes and appearance, rather than their work and essential contributions to society. Although women constituted 40 per cent of MP candidates, only 22 per cent of media coverage during the pre-election period was dedicated to them, with 78 per cent focusing on men candidates. Quantitative monitoring revealed very low media engagement on issues related to women's rights and gender equality. Only two per cent of election-related articles or broadcasts in the pre-election period, one per cent in the election and post-election period, and two per cent in the period covering the formation of the new cabinet of ministers included some discussion of sexual and reproductive rights, violence against women, women's economic, cultural or social rights, or women's political participation.[370]

A similar monitoring exercise is taking place for 2025 general elections (during the campaign and post elections until the formation of the new Cabinet of Ministers) to assess how electoral and media dynamics affect women candidates and to identify trends of gender-based barriers to political engagement. Preliminary findings indicate that while electoral quotas have improved women's formal representation on party lists, media coverage remains a critical barrier to their substantive participation. Analysis of six leading political talk shows revealed that men comprised 75 per cent of invited guests, dominating key roles such as candidates, expert commentators, and journalists. This persistent gender imbalance limits

369. Prepared by the Observatory for the Rights of Children and Youth (The Observatory) and supported by UN Women Albania within the United Nations Joint Program "End violence against women in Albania" funded by the Government of Sweden through the Acceleration Fund NGOs in Albania. See: https://albania.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/media_brief_web.pdf

370. "Albania Comprehensive National Review on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action", pg.64. See: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_albania_en.pd

women's access to the public agenda and undermines their ability to influence political discourse.[371]
Despite the presence of women candidates in the electoral campaign, gender equality issues were largely excluded from televised debates and campaign discourse. Out of 55 monitored political talk shows, only five meaningfully addressed gender-related topics. A major concern was the scale of gender-based online abuse. Analysis of 100,755 Facebook comments on posts by women candidates found that 5.5 per cent (5,561 comments) contained hostile, offensive, or discriminatory language. Both high-profile and lesser-known women were targeted, often facing immediate abuse after announcing their candidacy.[372]These attacks, which fused political and gendered identity, show that online platforms are not just channels of communication but active spaces of gendered hostility. The lack of moderation and high tolerance for toxic content in online media enabled the spread of misogyny and disinformation, undermining women's political legitimacy and participation.

The People's Advocate, in partnership with the Commissioner for the Protection from Discrimination, conducted the study "Violence against Women in Politics"[373] during the 2021 election year, focusing on issues such as sexist and discriminatory language during the election campaign. The thematic analysis identified different forms of violence that women experience in political decision-making, such as contempt and offensive language; interruption of speech, ridicule, insults, jokes; false accusations in the media; threats; calling their abilities into question; removal from the parties' candidate lists; denial of access to party finances during election campaigns; dismissing or threatening to dismiss them (and their family members) from government positions; false accusations and rumors of a sexual nature; sexual harassment; disregard during meetings; considering their contribution as of little or no importance; limiting the role in the voting of predetermined decisions; manipulation of women's vote during voting procedures; and exclusion from information, among others. In cases where women have sought leadership positions in a party, their own party is the main source of violence. Based on these findings, the People's Advocate addressed recommendations to political parties, women's political organizations, the Central Election Commission, CSOs, human rights institutions and the media.

Obstacles to gender balance in politics are also present across EU countries. According to the European Parliament Brief "Women in Politics in the EU - State of Play in 2024," key factors influencing women's decision to engage in politics include women's perceptions of politics as men-dominated or unwelcoming, unequal access to key resources, unequal family responsibilities, a men-dominated political culture in parties and parliaments, gender roles and stereotypes in wider society, and an absence of women role models. The level of abuse and violence directed at women in politics and public life is a growing concern, particularly as it deters women from engaging in politics because they find the environment too toxic. To increase the number of women who run for office and are elected, various forms of gender quotas, targeted support, training for women to run for office, equal access to campaign funding, and combating gender stereotypes and violence against women in politics are essential.[374]

In addition, according to the 2024 European Parliament Brief "Violence against Women Active in Politics in the EU: A Serious Obstacle to political participation," violence against people active in politics—whether men or women—represents a major obstacle to the exercise of political rights and freedoms and constitutes a serious violation of basic human rights. The increasing polarization of liberal societies has been accompanied by rising violence against political stakeholders generally. Given the severe implications of violence against women in politics in particular, the issue needs to be understood and addressed in a distinct manner.

When political violence targets women because of their gender, taking sexist and sexualized forms, and seeks to

371. Network "Equality in Decision-Making" and Birn Albania with the support of UN Women Albania 2025. "Preliminary Trends Report: Gender Based Violence against Women in Politics" unpublished draft.
372. Ibid.
373. Supported with technical expertise by UNDP within the United Nations Joint Program "Ending Violence against Women in Albania", financed by the Government of Sweden.
374. European Parliament Brief "Women in politics in the EU - State of Play in 2024". See: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/760348/EPRS_BRI(2024)760348_EN.pdf

Table 7

Proportion of women among in highest-ranking civil service positions

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Senior administrators	45.2	49.7	53.8	53.8
Level 1 administrators	36.2	42.5	46.8	46.8
Level 2 administrators	48.8	51.9	56.6	56.6

Source: European Institute for Gender Equality, EIGE

discourage women from participating in politics, it is often a backlash against women's general presence in political life. Violence against women in politics takes multiple forms, from physical attacks to psychological and symbolic abuse, including sexual and sexist comments, online hate speech and sexual harassment. Women tend to feel that this type of violence causes significant psychological discomfort and discourages them from defending their positions.[375]

3.4.3 Women in executive government

Women's representation at the ministerial level is high in Albania, with **nine women out of 17 ministers (53 per cent) in 2024, placing** it well above the **global average of 22.8 per cent women ministers**.[376] In the government cabinet, the Prime Minister is a man and the Deputy Prime Minister is a woman. In the five ministries with the highest budget portfolio for 2024, three were headed by women ministers.[377] The Chief Negotiator for European Integration is a woman, and in 2020, an Albanian woman MP was appointed for the first time to serve as Vice President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.[378]

3.4.4 Women in public service

2021 data on women's participation in diplomatic missions show that 30.8 per cent of Ambassadors, 66.7 per cent of Ministers Powerful, 46.2 per cent of Minister Councillors, 56.5 per cent of Councillors, 63.6 per cent of Secretary First, 59 per cent of Secretary Second and 50 per cent of Secretary Third are women.[379] Women's representation as senior administrators has also improved during 2020-2023, as presented in the table 7.

3.4.5 Women in the judiciary

- **The Constitutional Court** in Albania has been headed by a woman since 2019 and is composed of nine members, six of whom (67 per cent) are women.[380] In the history of the Constitutional Court, in terms of gender representation, there were fewer women judges than men until 2019.[381]
- **The High Judicial Council** is headed by a man and a woman is deputy head. The Council is composed of 11 members, five of whom are women.[382]
- The **High Prosecutor Council** is headed by a woman and has a man as deputy head. 2 of the 9 members

375. See: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2024/759600/EPRS_BRI(2024)759600_EN.pdf
376. "Women in Politics: 2023."See: https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/03/women-in-politics-map-2023
377. The five ministries with the highest budget portfolio for 2024 were the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Infrastructure and Economy, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Ministry of Economy, Culture and Innovation, and the Ministry of Defense. The first three are headed by women ministers. See: https://arkiva.financa.gov.al/akti-normativ-nr-1-date-21-02-2024/
378. Action Plan for the Implementation of Resolution 1325 "Women, Peace and Security" 2023-2027, page 14.
379. INSTAT, "Men and women, 2023", pg.112. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/media/12598/burra-dhe-gra-2023.pdf and https://www.parlament.al/
380. See: https://www.gjk.gov.al/web/Perberja_90_1.php
381. Annual Report of the Constitutional Court, 2023, pg.11. See: https://www.gjk.gov.al/web/raporti_vjetor_2023_gjk_2680.pdf
382. See: https://klgj.al/perberja-e-keshillit/

are women.[383]

- The **High Inspector of Justice** is headed by a man and has nine Councillors, six of whom (67 per cent) are women; its General Secretary, the Assistant Councillor and the Secretary are also women. Out of four Magistrate Inspectors, three (75 per cent) are women; of five Non-Magistrate Inspectors, two (40 per cent) are women, and out of the total of 21 Assistant Inspectors, 11 (52.3 per cent) are women.[384]
- The **Supreme Court** is headed by a man, and the deputy head is also a man. The Court is composed of 15 members, of whom only four (26.6 per cent) are women.[385]
- The **Court of Appeal of General Jurisdiction** (functioning as of 1 February 2023 as the only appeals court in Albania) is currently composed of 78 judges, but only 28 of them are in office. Of these, 20 (71.4 per cent) are women.[386]
- In the **Court of First Instance of General Jurisdiction in Tirana**, there are 64 judges on duty, of whom 30 (46.8 per cent) are women.[387]
- In the **School of Magistrates**, the Steering Council is headed by a man and has a man as vice-head, and out of 15 members, only four are women (26.7 per cent). The Pedagogical Council is composed of 17 members, including the Director of the School of Magistrate, who is a man, and four members (23.5 per cent) are women.[388] Over the years, the number of women competitive students has increased significantly compared to men (see Table 7 below), which will lead to more women being members of the judiciary in the future.

While there is a visible rise in the presence of women among Albania's prosecutorial and judicial organs, significant gender disparities persist in the distribution of power and leadership roles. Women tend to be overrepresented in mid-level or technical positions, while key leadership roles—especially in the most visible institutions like the Supreme Court, High Judicial Council and School of Magistrates—remain dominated by men. This suggests the presence of a "glass ceiling" effect, whereby women's access to decision-making power is limited despite their growing numbers in the profession.The main issue around gender extends beyond simple representation; it also includes the lack of structural pathways that allow women to move into higher judicial ranks. Without targeted efforts at gender-sensitive professional development—such as mentoring opportunities, fair criteria for advancement, and organizational responsibility—Albania risks perpetuating gendered hierarchies in its judiciary. Reaching full equality requires going beyond statistical representation to address the underlying power inequalities and institutional structures that hinder women's full and fair participation in the higher ranks.

Table 8

Leadership positions, enrolment and admission trend of students at the School of Magistrates

Category	2020		2021		2022	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Steering Council	8	6	8	6	11	4
Director	1	0	1	0	1	0
Competitive students	97	180	82	176	93	224
Winner students	26	50	25	42	26	51

Source: INSTAT, Men and Women in Albania 2023

383. See: https://klp.al/stafi-yne/
384. See: https://ild.al/en/office-of-the-high-inspector-of-justice/our-staff/
385. See: https://www.gjykataelarte.gov.al/sq/anetaret-e-gjykates-se-larte
386. See: https://gjykata.gov.al/apel-tiran%C3%AB/gjykata-e-apelit-tiran%C3%AB/gjykata/gjykat%C3%ABsit/
387. See: https://gjykata.gov.al/rrethi-tiran%C3%AB/gjykata-e-shkall%C3%ABs-s%C3%AB-par%C3%AB-e-juridiksionit-t%C3%AB-pergjithsh%C3%ABm-tiran%C3%AB/gjykata/gjyqtar%C3%ABt-e-gjykat%C3%ABs/
388. See: https://www.magjistratura.edu.al/en/keshilli-pedagogjik

3.4.6 Women in the defence and security sector

Women's participation in the armed forces

In 2022, women officers made up 40.9 per cent of the total number of women employed with ranks.[389] In 2023, 4,955 were men in uniform and 899 (or 15.3 per cent) were women in uniform (additional data presented in the table below).[390] Since 2019, Albania has contributed military women to the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS)—one of the few peacekeeping operations in which the country participates.

Deployment figures include two military women in 2020, one in 2021, none in 2022, one in 2023, and two in 2024. This mission represents Albania's primary channel for promoting women's participation in peacekeeping, in line with its commitments under the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

Women's participation in Albania's armed forces reflects gradual progress in professional advancement but remains constrained by structural barriers. While there has been increased access to officer ranks for women, their presence in different ranks and operational deployments remains limited.

Their sporadic participation in international peacekeeping missions indicates persistent problems related to deployment practices, organizational culture and support structures. To ensure meaningful and lasting integration, greater efforts are needed to implement gender-sensitive policies in recruitment, promotion and deployment, in line with Albania's international obligations and aspirations for EU integration.

Women's participation in police structures

The number of women employees in police structures remains very low, with no significant progress over the last five years. In 2022, among 10,868 police employees, 14.8 per cent were women. Women are scarce in the top management levels—no woman has been Major Director to date, and in 2022, only one woman occupied a Director position. The number of women employees increases with decreasing rank levels, reaching the highest levels for Inspector and Civilian ranks. In 2022, among the total number of employed women, women Inspectors made up 9.1 per cent and women Civilians 52.5 per cent. The number of men in police structures is very high compared to the number of women, except for the Civilian level, in which the number of women exceeds that of men.[391]

In the Academy of Security, all competitive procedures—including recruitment, promotion, and specialization—are conducted in accordance with the State Police Regulation,[392] according to which: "In the admission quotas for

Table 9

Data on personnel of the Armed Forces by sex, 2023

Category	Total	Number		Rate	
		Men	Women	Men %	Women %
Officers	1,762	1,386	376	78.7	21.3
Non-Commissioned Officers	2,652	2,293	359	86.5	13.5
Soldiers	1,438	1,276	162	88.7	11.3
Civilians	1,748	1,094	654	62.6	37.4

Source: Ministry of Defense, 2024

389. INSTAT, "Men and Women, 2030", pg. 106. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/al/publikime/librat/2023/burra-dhe-gra-2023/
390. "Albania Comprehensive National Review on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action", pg.111. See: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_albania_en.pd
391. INSTAT, "Men and women, 2023", page 105. See: https://www.instat.gov.al/al/publikime/librat/2023/burra-dhe-gra-2023/
392. Approved by DCM no. 750, dated 16.09.2015, amended by DCM no. 1143, dated 09.12.2020, where "Quotas for competition" are defined in article 128, paragraph 2.

Table 10

Number and percentage of women employees in police structures by rank, 2022

Rank	Total Employees	Women Employees	Women (%)
Major Director	1	0	0
High Director	7	0	0
Other Directors	160	16	10
Head commissar	275	25	10
Commissar	495	49	10
Vice commissar	1500	242	16
Inspectors	7258	661	9.1
Civilians	1172	615	52.5

Source: INSTAT, "Men and women, 2023"

each competition, there are also determined the quotas for the less represented gender, the children of women/men police officers who have fallen on duty and the minorities."[393] Meetings featuring young women and women from the Local Directorates and the General Directorate of the State Police were held in all district directorates to promote the Academy of Security education system and highlight the need for young women and women in the State Police.[394] In these meetings, an increase in the participation of young women and their interest in joining the State Police forces was noted. In addition, the Association of Women in the State Police[395] became active in 2023; it held consultative meetings in the Anti-terror Directorate, some Local Police Directorates, and the Academy of Security on the issues of young employees/women in State Police.[396] Despite the implementation of proactive measures—including gender quotas for Academy intake, targeted recruitment programmes for young women, and the recent formation of the Association of Women in the State Police in 2023—there is limited evidence to indicate significant improvements in outcomes. While the increased interest and participation are encouraging, there is no publicly available data that reflects a noticeable increase in women's intake into the Academy, nor is there any indication that more women are completing training or being promoted within the State Police. Until such trends are empirically verified—across Academy enrolment rates, graduation rates and career progression metrics—it is difficult to determine whether these programmes are indeed translating into measurable gains in women's representation at all levels of the police force.

3.4.7 Addressing gender gaps in infrastructure and ICT sectors

Women's participation and leadership in infrastructure sectors like construction, transport, urban development and ICT need to be directly addressed. These are largely male-dominated fields, and increasing women's role is an important avenue for righting gender imbalances and enhancing the responsiveness and inclusivity of infrastructure planning and provision.

Affording women opportunities to work in technical occupations, leadership positions, or decision-making bodies in these fields increases the quality and equity of public investments in areas like mobility, security

393. Amended (words added in point 2) by DCM no. 1143, dated 9.12.2020
394. According to Order No.1426 of the General Director of the State Police, dated 06.10.2023.
395. By Court Decision no. 1124/1, dated 21.07.2023
396. "Albania Comprehensive National Review on the Implementation of Beijing Platform for Action", pg.61-62. See: https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/b30_report_albania_en.pd

and economic opportunity. This also applies to digital infrastructure, with women's participation in ICT and programming already proving to have significant impacts. For example, women-led programming has successfully created quality digital platforms, emphasizing the value in inclusive leadership as well as technical skills.
Advancing this agenda requires integrating gender-responsive policies into public procurement and planning systems, investing in leadership and technical skill training for women, and encouraging inclusive representation in urban planning and governance arrangements involving infrastructure.

3.4.8 Key EU legislation and policies

The **EU** has established a strong legal and policy framework to promote **equal participation, leadership, and decision-making** for women across political, economic and corporate sectors. While there is no single directive mandating gender balance in political representation, several key directives and policies indirectly support this goal. A detailed list is available in Annex 3.
Aside from the directives, the EU *acquis* corpus includes Communications, Resolutions and Roadmaps, including the European Commission's Roadmap to Women's Rights COM/2025/97 final, which promotes every woman's universal right to participate freely and safely in public life. Furthermore, the EU considers UNSCR 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security to be an integral part of its external and security policy framework, with implications directly affecting gender integration in the armed forces as well as in peacekeeping missions.

The ***EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025***[397] and various Commission Communications and European Parliament Resolutions actively encourage **gender quotas, equal political representation, and funding for women candidates**. The establishment of gender quotas in parliamentary and municipal elections in Albania has only resulted in formal inclusion rather than active participation. Lasting social norms, patriarchal structures in the parties, and GBV continue to hinder women's full involvement in the political sphere.
To ensure commitment to EU principles throughout Europe, legal harmonization must involve institution-building, mechanisms for enforcement, and targeted support schemes. Such initiatives must include measures to ensure accountability for acts of discrimination, enhance the protection of women in the political sphere, and influence the creation of an environment conducive to active and equal participation in all levels of public decision-making processes.

3.4.9 Recommendations

1. **Strengthen and exceed gender quotas in politics and governance –** Albania should revise and strengthen its gender quota law to improve compliance with EU standards of gender equality, which require parity with a minimum of 40 per cent representation of the underrepresented gender. The current quotas, set at 30 per cent, are not enough to fulfil this requirement, and perpetuate the persistence of structural inequalities, with men continuing to dominate political and decision-making spaces. It is essential to amend the national legal framework to ensure a minimum of 40 per cent representation of women, backed by strong enforcement and effective deterrent mechanisms. Beyond satisfying this minimum requirement, however, Albania should also seek to exceed it in order to promote truly inclusive and democratic governance. This effort should include all women—irrespective of political party, geographic region, age group or social background—and be fortified by efforts to reduce barriers such as political violence, lack of campaign financing, and internal party resistance.
2. **Ensure representation of underrepresented groups –** Parties should ensure the inclusion of underrepresented groups—such as women with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian women, young women, and rural women—in line with Albania's commitments under CEDAW, the National Strategy for Gender Equality and the Gender Equality Law.
3. **Combat cyber-violence and gender-based discrimination in politics** by making the necessary law improvements to criminalize such forms of violence and using specific tools that have proven successful in Europe. Among the measures and tools with potential to significantly improve the situation are drafting or expanding existing rules of procedure

397. See: https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/items/682425/en

and codes of conduct to: cover violence; establish confidential complaint procedures; reject publicly any form of violence against women in politics; raise awareness through public statements, activism and campaigns; ensure electoral bodies monitor violence against women in politics; make early warning systems for electoral violence sensitive to violence against women in politics; organize civic campaigns to educate people on the risks of violence towards women in politics; improve access to political finance for women to ensure a level playing field; and provide the needed specialized training for law enforcement agencies and judicial bodies to effectively identify, investigate, and prosecute GBV online.

4. **Address financial disparities in electoral campaign funding –** Equal financial treatment is critical for women candidates. The Albanian electoral law does not regulate the internal financial distribution of public or other private funds among party candidates, leaving women at a disadvantage. Many women candidates lack equal access to campaign financing due to structural barriers and gendered stereotypes about fundraising. To prevent financial discrimination, political parties should (i) adopt internal regulations ensuring equal access to campaign funds for women candidates[398] and (ii) ensure full transparency in fund distribution within parties.
5. **Introduce legal quotas for women in corporate leadership** in line with Directive (EU) 2022/2381 on Women on Boards. Measures should include mandatory reporting on gender diversity, incentives for companies promoting gender balance, and penalties for non-compliance. Increasing the participation of women in executive and board-level positions is crucial for advancing gender equality in economic decision-making.
6. **Enhance work-life balance policies to promote women's career progression** by encouraging men to take parental leave, thereby reducing the caregiving burden on women. Expanding flexible working arrangements and improving access to public childcare services will allow more women to pursue leadership roles without being disproportionately affected by family responsibilities. Implementations of all measures and actions outlined in the NSGE 2021-2030 regarding this issue will also improve the actual situation.
7. **Promote women's representation in security and law enforcement** through targeted recruitment, mentorship programmes, and leadership training to increase their participation in these traditionally male-dominated sectors. Ensuring equal promotion opportunities and institutional support will be critical in addressing this imbalance.
8. **Increase support for women entrepreneurs and their access to finance** to ensure equal access to financial resources, investment opportunities and business training. Public and private sector initiatives should facilitate networking, mentorship and capacity-building programmes to empower more women to enter and succeed in the business sector, particularly in non-traditional industries.
9. **Improve monitoring and accountability mechanisms** to track progress in gender equality efforts across all sectors. Institutions like the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the Central Election Commission should be given greater authority to enforce gender balance regulations and effectively sanction violations.
10. **Challenge gender stereotypes through education and public awareness** in schools, universities and workplaces to promote gender equality, leadership skills, and women's empowerment from an early age. Media organizations should also be encouraged to prioritize fair representation of women in leadership. Preventing, curbing and prohibiting harmful gender stereotypes in media, education and public discourse is crucial for promoting women's full participation in political and public life.
11. **Strengthen regional cooperation and best practice sharing** through active collaboration with EU and Western Balkan countries to share best practices and lessons learned in promoting gender equality in decision-making. Engagement with EU institutions, civil society organizations, and international partners will provide opportunities to align with European gender equality benchmarks and implement effective policy reforms.

The above recommendations are in line with and support the implementation of **CEDAW and UPR recommendations** for Albania regarding women's participation in decision-making, as mentioned below.

398. ibid

The CEDAW Committee, in its fifth periodic review of Albania,[399] emphasizes the need for improved measures to enhance women's participation in political leadership and decision-making. Aligning with General Recommendation No. 23 on Political and Public Life and Target 5.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Committee highlights key actions to achieve gender parity in governance:

Firstly, the Committee recommends capacity-building programmes to equip women candidates with political leadership and campaigning skills, as well as access to campaign financing[400] to reduce economic barriers to participation. Additionally, it calls for temporary special measures, such as statutory quotas and a gender parity system, to ensure equal representation of women in Parliament, municipal bodies, government, civil service and the foreign service. These measures should specifically address women from marginalized groups, including rural women, women with disabilities, ethnic minorities and LGBTIQ+ individuals.[401]

Moreover, the Committee underscores the importance of combating gender-based discrimination in political discourse, particularly hate speech and harassment against women politicians. It urges Albania to strengthen reporting and monitoring mechanisms, requires political parties to adopt codes of conduct promoting gender equality and hold social media companies accountable for discriminatory content.[402]

The CEDAW Committee further expresses concern that Albania has not fully implemented temporary special measures to promote gender equality in political and public life. It highlights that, while electoral quotas exist, broader measures are needed to address the underrepresentation of women, especially those facing intersecting discrimination, such as rural women, women with disabilities and women from ethnic minorities (Recommendation 19).[403]

The Committee urges Albania to adopt additional temporary special measures, beyond quotas, to accelerate substantive equality of women and men and ensure meaningful participation of all women in political decision-making (Recommendation 20).[404] Complementing the CEDAW Committee's findings, the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** also urges Albania to: Promote women's representation at all levels of public administration and increase their presence in the private sector.[405,406]

Undertake legal reforms to prevent political GBV,[407] addressing gender stereotypes in political discourse and the media[408] and allocating public funds for gender-focused policies aimed at reducing gender disparities.[409]

3.5 GENDER, ENVIRONMENT, CLIMATE CHANGE

3.5.1 Gender dimension of climate change and environmental degradation

Albania has demonstrated a commitment to climate change adaptation and mitigation through legal and policy measures, as well as through the development of sector-specific targets and action plans, with a focus on areas like energy, transport, agriculture and coastal ecosystems. Despite these efforts, the implementation of climate adaptation measures is lagging, and the integration of climate change considerations into various sectors faces challenges due to the lack of financial resources and institutional capacity.[410] In its latest progress report, the EU acknowledges that Albania is somewhat

399. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, (2023) *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania* (CEDAW/C/ALB/5). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, United Nations. https://www.ohchr.org/documents/treaties/cedaw-
400. CEDAW/C/ALB/5, p. 8 Article 28 (a).
401. CEDAW/C/ALB/5, p. 8 Article 28 (b).
402. CEDAW/C/ALB/5, p. 8 Article 28 (c).
403. CEDAW/C/ALB/5, p. 5 Article 19
404. CEDAW/C/ALB/5, p. 6 Article 20
405. Human Rights Council. (20 December 2024). Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Albania (Fifty-eighth session, Agenda item 6); A/HRC/58/5, Recommendation 124.137, p.18.
406. A/HRC/58/5, Recommendation 124.138, p.18.
407. A/HRC/58/5, Recommendation 124.176 p.20.
408. A/HRC/58/5, Recommendation 124.144 p.18.
409. A/HRC/58/5, Recommendation 124.141, p.18.
410. World Bank Group (2024), Country Climate and Development Report, Albania, see https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/5a7fd970-4855-4ec0-8423-152cf0656ea8/content

prepared to tackle climate change, with some developments noted on relevant legal and policy measures.[411] However, alignment with the EU *acquis* remains limited, and the country's capacity to incorporate climate change into sectoral strategies and plans remains weak.[412]

Women and girls are disproportionately impacted by environmental degradation and threats of climate change. Across the board, from life expectancy to education, housing, health, safety, job security and nutrition, women and girls are impacted more severely than men. Yet, women are largely excluded from policies, strategies and programmes addressing climate change and environmental resilience.[413] This is also the case for women in Albania, who in recent years have been severely impacted by environmental degradation and several disasters, including those induced by climate change.

In Albania, the availability of analyses on how climate change affects women and men differently is limited. According to a survey conducted for the Fourth National Communication (4NC). Thus far, analysis in this area has focused mainly on agriculture, which is labour-intensive with women heavily involved. Agricultural production and arable land in Albania are highly dependent on environmental conditions, and are the first to be affected by waste treatment processes such as incineration. For example, the decrease in agricultural production recorded in the Verri Village of Fier in Albania was found to be related to the impact of the nearby incinerator on the surrounding arable land. This concern was expressed especially by the women of this area, who felt the direct consequences of the incinerator on their livelihood.[414]

Furthermore, the 4NC survey identified an increase in time-use for main household chores and enhanced violence against women as the main impacts of climate change on women's lives. Women also reported a greater increase in health, physical and emotional problems following climate-related disasters compared to men. In particular, pregnant women are disproportionately affected by the disruption in access to health care following a disaster.[415] In the aftermath of floods, women are more prone to developing bronchitis or infections as they clean up damp houses. Similarly, exposure to high temperatures has adverse effects on pregnant women (teratogenic effect). These gender-specific impacts intersect with those that are related to ethnicity, location (especially in areas with more vulnerable populations), poverty and migration status.[416]

The waste management cycle is another area where gender differences are prevalent. These differences are dictated by women's primary household responsibilities and depend on varying perceptions about what is and is not waste, and on women's and men's different consumption behaviours. Waste and wastewater treatment processes impact production, industrial pollution and household behaviour with different consequences for women and men. For example, women are more affected by the lack of wastewater treatment and an inoperative sewerage system, as women's contamination risk tends to be greater than men's.[417]

3.5.2 Resilience to natural disasters

Albania is currently in the process of consolidating its policy framework on disaster risk reduction in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 (SFF DRR). The main legal basis in this area is Law No.49/2019 'On Civil Protection,' which established the National Agency for Civil Protection (NACP), the National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy (2023-2030), the National Civil Emergency Plan (2023) and Disaster Risk Assessment at the Central and Local Levels (2023). Despite improve-

411. in particular (i) in the circular economy with the setting-up of the National Agency for Waste Economy; (ii) on water quality with the adoption of the Laws on water resources and protection of marine environment, and three river basin management plans; and (iii) on civil protection with the adoption of the national strategy for disaster risk reduction 2023-2030. The 2024 approval of the amendments to the law on protected areas, however, is considered a negative development and there was no particular development for addressing climate change.

412. EU Commission (2024), EU Report 2024, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2024_en

413. UN Women (2022). disaster risk reduction. see: https://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/ humanitarian-action/disaster-risk-reduction

414. Monitoring Network against Gender-Based Violence (2019). Report of civil society organizations for implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania, Beijing +25. See: https://rrjetikunderdhunesgjinore-monitorime.al/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Albanian-CSOs-report-on-the-implementation-of-BPfA.pdf

415. Albania's revised Nationally Determined Contributions Action Plan (2021). Available at: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/2022-08/Albania%20Revised%20NDC.pdf

416. UN Women Albania (2023), Disasters Risk Reduction and Climate Change, Gender Mainstreaming Guidance, https://albania.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/web_drr_14122023.pdf

417. United Nations Country Team Albania (2020). Common Country Analysis. See: https://albania.un.org/en/111493-albania-common-country-analysis-2020; UN Women Albania (2023), Disasters Risk Reduction and Climate Change, Gender Mainstreaming Guidance, https://albania.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/web_drr_14122023.pdf

ments, Albania still needs to strengthen its civil protection system by revising emergency plans and substantially improving operational capabilities and infrastructure for early warning and response.[418] This becomes particularly urgent in a context where, among European countries, Albania has one of the highest levels of disaster risk and exposure to earthquakes, flooding, landslides and wildfires, which have affected 95 per cent of Albanian municipalities in the past two decades.[419]

Due to gender-specific barriers and inequalities, women experience higher loss of lives and livelihoods during natural disasters as well as a longer recovery time. Comprehensive studies on the specific impact of these events on women and men in Albania are lacking. However, several reports indicate that women—particularly those who work in agriculture and are already in a vulnerable situation—are more severely impacted compared to men by the consequences of natural hazards and the ensuing health crisis.[420]The post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) conducted after the 2019 earthquake to assess the performance of DRR services following the event found that "...the [earthquake] response was influenced by a series of existing vulnerabilities [...]." In particular, the PDNA highlighted the disproportionate impact of the earthquake on women and girls in the affected areas, noting that it was likely to increase their burden, especially for women living with their families. This is due to the likelihood of women being pushed further towards traditional roles and activities such as caring for children and elderly, disabled or ill family members, cleaning up, and taking care of what remained from their dwellings.[421]

A rapid gender assessment conducted in the aftermath of the COVID-19 outbreak in Albania revealed that women faced more limitations than men when trying to access food (46 per cent versus 43 per cent) due to market closures and the reduced opening hours of stores. More women than men worked from home instead of their usual place of work (51 per cent versus 27 per cent). As women's economic security was shaken, their share of unpaid care and domestic work increased, with 76 per cent of women reporting increased time spent on unpaid domestic work versus 66 per cent of men. In addition, women's psychological and mental health were more significantly affected (69 per cent of women versus 57.5 per cent of men), and women experienced more challenges seeking health services than men (55 per cent of women versus 45 per cent of men).[422]

A recent survey in rural Lezha found that women remain highly vulnerable in disaster preparedness due to systemic barriers. Only 2 per cent of both women and men rated early warning information as "very accessible," while 9 per cent of women and 18 per cent of men found it "not very accessible." 1 per cent of women and 2 per cent of men reported taking preparedness measures, whereas 43 per cent of women and 54 per cent of men took no action. Traditional gender roles in rural Albania shape these differences, as women, often primary caregivers, may be more attuned to safety but lack the financial resources to act. Additionally, only 4 per cent of women and 11 per cent of men confirmed access to timely humanitarian aid, highlighting gender disparities in aid distribution. To bridge this gap, stronger collaboration among research institutions, public and private sectors, and humanitarian organizations is needed. Key solutions include inclusive early warning strategies, clearer communication, awareness campaigns and training exercises to improve preparedness and equitable disaster response.[423]

3.5.3 Gender considerations in climate change, DRR and development frameworks

Albanian legislation and national policies on environmental protection and climate change do not sufficiently and consistently address gender inequalities. Even

418. EU Commission (2024), EU Report 2024, https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2024_en
419. World Bank Group (2024), Country Climate and Development Report, Albania, see: https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/5a7fd970-4855-4ec0-8423-152cf0656ea8/content
420. Ministry of Tourism and Environment, GEF and UNDP (2021). Albania's First Biennial Update Report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). See: https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/resource/First%20Biennial%20Update%20Report%20for%20Albania_EN.pdf
421. United Nations Albania (2020). Albania Post Disaster Needs Assessment. see: https://albania.un.org/en/46378-albania-post-disaster-needs-assessment-pdna-volume-report-february-2020
422. UN Women (2020). the Impact of Covid-19 on women's and Men's lives and Livelihoods in Europe and Central Asia: Preliminary results from a rapid Gender Assessment. See: https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/07/the-impact-of-covid19-on-womens-and-mens-lives-and-livelihoods-0
423. Bonner, I. (2024). Bridging the gap—Investigating barriers and enhancing resilience in last mile communities through inclusive early warning strategies in rural Lezha, Albania. Tirana, Albania (Research funded by the Global Disaster Preparedness Centre of the American Red Cross.). See: https://preparecentre.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Full-Paper-Inclusive-EWS-in-Albania.pdf

though Albania's First Biennial Update report contains guidelines on mainstreaming gender equality goals in climate change mitigation and adaptation programmes and plans, they are not reflected in all recent key climate-related laws and policies. This includes Law No. 155/2020 on Climate Change, the National Strategy on Climate Change, the National Action Plan on Mitigation (NAPM) and the National Adaptation Plan (NAP), adopted in 2019.[424] These documents use largely gender-blind language, especially in the narrative description, and no dedicated gender-sensitive objectives or actions are defined. Similarly, gender considerations are missing from other adaptation policies and plans, such as the National Strategy for Sustainable Tourism Development (2019-2023), the National Forest Policy (2019-2030) and the Integrated Cross-Sectoral Plan of Tirana-Durrës Area.[425] The Green City Action Plan of Tirana has a specific section on adaptation and includes a scoring system for assessing the *ex-ante* impact of proposed actions against five socio-economic indicators, including gender equality.[426] However, information on how gender impact was initially assessed and the monitoring of the gendered impact of actions under this Action Plan over time is publicly unavailable.

On the other hand, the policy framework on DRR and emergency response has been more conducive to addressing gender inequalities. Law No. 45/2019 'On civil protection' provides for a few gender considerations, including the right of women to seek protection and be prioritized in emergency response for adequate living conditions together with children, the elderly and persons with disabilities. However, a careful analysis of the law is necessary to understand whether current provisions provide sufficient guarantees to adequately address the priorities and needs of women during emergency situations.[427]

A positive development in this context is the adoption of Albania's first National Strategy on Disaster Risk Reduction 2023-2030 ('DRR strategy') and its Action Plan, approved in 2023.[428] The strategy—in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030—aims to guide all future activities and investments in disaster risk management in Albania. The Strategy includes a dedicated objective to ensure awareness raising and resilience building among communities, with a particular focus on gender equality principles (Objective 2). The strategy also makes explicit reference to the increased risks that women and other groups face during natural disasters and addresses intersecting forms of vulnerabilities resulting from gender and other factors, such as age, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, social and economic status, and others. The document makes important commitments about gender equality, including to:

- ensure that in all phases of disaster risk management and strategic projects, the priority needs of women and vulnerable groups, and the impact of disasters on the well-being of these groups, is taken into consideration;
- adopt general strategic provisions on gender equality and vulnerability at the local level in the preparation and implementation of local DRR Action Plans;
- promote women's participation and their leading role during all phases of disaster risk management; and
- ensure gender-responsive budgeting in all projects, schemes and initiatives that focus on DRR, complemented with a checklist with gender-responsive budgeting criteria.
-

However, these gender equality commitments are not reflected in the Strategy's Action Plan with specific activities that would directly address the needs and priorities of women and girls and other vulnerable groups. Additionally, gender-sensitive indicators, which are essential to monitoring the impact of the strategy on women and girls and vulnerable groups, are absent.

The explicit gender-sensitive provisions—in particular the commitment to ensuring that general provisions on gender equality and vulnerability are "adopted at the local level" during the process of preparing and implementing

424. Approved with Decision of Council of Ministers No. 466, dated 3.7.2019 "On the approval of the strategic document and national plans for hothouse gas mitigation and adaptation to climate change". See: https://faolex.fao.org/docs/pdf/alb211874.pdf
425. Accessible at: https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/59900990/integrated-cross-sectorial-plan-of-tirana-durres-area
426. Municipality of Tirana (2018). Green City Action Plan of Tirana. Available at: https:// ebrdgreencities.com/assets/Uploads/PdF/tirana-GcAP.pdf (English version); and at: https:// ebrdgreencities.com/assets/Uploads/PdF/tirana-GcAP-Alba.pdf (Albanian version).
427. UN Women Albania (2023), Disasters Risk Reduction and Climate Change, Gender Mainstreaming Guidance, https://albania.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/web_drr_14122023.pdf
428. DCM No.94, dated 22/02/2023, as published in the Official Gazette No.31, dated 24/02/2023. See: https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2023/31/099f9b27-e232-4aa5-ae19-20d532632f74

local DRR Action Plans—provide a solid foundation for making DRR management in Albania truly gender-responsive. In this context, it is important that the term "adopted" is understood as a comprehensive process where gender equality considerations are integrated throughout the preparation and implementation phases of local plans, following the recommendations developed specifically in this area.[429]

Similarly, DRR can be one of the fields of intervention to be considered when local-level institutions—especially municipalities—prepare and implement local action plans focused on gender equality. Mainstreaming gender in areas other than "social issues" is very important and must be at the centre of attention of the local (and central) level. This approach is in line with key thematic policy area 3.6: "Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation" of the EU GAP III.

This approach is in line with key thematic policy area 3.6: "Addressing the challenges and harnessing the opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation" of the EU GAP III. Key measures mentioned as EU actions in this plan include promoting girls' and women's participation and leadership to ensure gender-responsive strategies to climate mitigation and adaptation, DRR and the inclusive and sustainable management of natural resources; and capacity-building, financing and support for investment in gender-responsive national climate, environment, and DRR strategies and action plans.

Similarly, the Government of Albania has integrated gender considerations into the National Action Plan on Civil Emergencies.[430] This document includes a brief analysis of the impact of emergencies on women and includes gender equality as one of its key principles during the implementation process. However, the gender equality commitments remain mainly declarative and must be translated into specific actions implemented at both the national and local levels.

BOX 3.
Durres Local Gender Action Plan 2023–2025

Durres is the first municipality in Albania that has planned a specific objective on DRR in its Local Gender Action Plan (LGAP) 2023–2025, approved by Municipality Council Decision No. 151 dated 22.12.2022. This plan, drafted with UN Women's technical assistance during the implementation of the EU for Gender Equality in Albania (EU4GE I) project funded by the EU, is a concrete tool to implement the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021–2030 and the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. It also considers the EU GAP III key thematic policy area 3.6, through the specific objective: "Promoting gender-responsive planning for coping with and reducing the risk of natural disasters." The Plan includes several specific activities, including:

- Preparation of a map with detailed information on the most vulnerable areas, with updated data on the number of families and individuals disaggregated by sex, age, disabilities, special needs, etc.;
- Preparation of information materials, in simple and understandable language, on institutions and contact numbers, as well as places where women and girls can go during natural disasters;
- Organization of informational activities within the administrative units and areas most at risk from natural disasters, with a focus on women and girls in all their diversity; and
- Preparation of a gender-responsive local action plan focused on coping with and reducing the risk of natural disasters.

The implementation cost under this specific objective is calculated for 2,778,962 ALL (32,375 USD or 31,125 EUR) (with a financial gap of 1,931,400 ALL (22,501 USD or 21,632 EUR)).[431] The impact of this objective will be measured during the last months of 2025, when the Municipality of Durres will conduct monitoring for the implementation of LGAP 2023–2025 as a preliminary step before drafting the new LGAP for the coming years.[432]

429. UN Women Albania (2023), Disasters Risk Reduction and Climate Change, Gender Mainstreaming Guidance, https://albania.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/web_drr_14122023.pdf
430. DCM No.94, dated 22/02/2023, as published in the Official Gazette No.31, dated 24/02/2023. See: https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2023/31/099f9b27-e232-4aa5-ae19-20d532632f74
431. See: https://durres.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/PVVBGJ-2023-2025-Bashkia-Durres.docx
432. All these steps (monitoring of the existing LGAP and the preparation of the new LGAP) are foreseen to be supported by UN Women in the frame of implementation of EU for Gender Equality in Albania phase II (EU4GE II) funded by the EU.

In March 2023, the national document 'On disaster risk assessment at the central level' was approved, representing an important step towards strengthening the national civil protection system.[433] The document contains six thematic assessments,[434] but neither the core document nor the thematic assessments include gender considerations, address gender equality issues or make reference to vulnerable groups.[435]

3.5.4 Women's participation in climate and DRR decision-making

One of the reasons for the lack of a gender perspective in Albania's legal and policy framework on climate change is the absence of interest groups representing women and disadvantaged groups in *ex ante* assessments and during the process of developing policies and programmes related to the environment and climate change. CSOs report that even when consultative meetings have been organized—for example, on integrated management of recycled waste—they do not adequately engage local women and community-based NGOs.[436] Representation and active participation of women and disadvantaged groups in these processes is an obligation under the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in decision-making, and Access to Justice in Environmental Issues (Aarhus Convention).[437]

3.5.5 Sex disaggregated data on climate change and its impacts

The national statistical system in Albania does not measure DRR at the national or local level. In cases of disasters, *ad hoc* measurements are undertaken. The exact methods and tools used in these measurements have not yet been reflected in the common national framework for DRR and its monitoring framework.

The first disaster risk measurement from a gender perspective was conducted by UN Women following the 2015 floods in the South of Albania, using both quantitative and qualitative tools.[438] Subsequently, following the earthquake of November 2019, available secondary data and primary information were collected by various state institutions and private actors (non-administrative sources). INSTAT also conducted structured surveys, such as on building assessment, a business survey, and a livelihood survey, administered among displaced women and men in hotels and tents.

The methodology that INSTAT used was based on the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and Household Budget Survey (HBS), which were the most consolidated household surveys at the national level. The data-collection method used by INSTAT following the earthquake allowed the computation of three specific gender indicators proposed by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific and UN Women working group:[439]

(i) Number of deaths, missing persons and directly affected persons, disaggregated by sex
(ii) Number of people whose damaged dwellings were attributed to disasters, disaggregated by sex
(iii) Number of people whose livelihoods were disrupted or destroyed, disaggregated by sex.

Finally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Albania was included in UN Women's global initiative to measure the

433. Approved with DCM No.168, dated 24/03/2023, and published in the Official Gazette No.51, dated 28/03/2023. see: https://qbz.gov.al/eli/fz/2023/51/182631e0-3d7c-46d8-bee2-6b37acb60a55
434. One for each of the major risks identified: floods, earthquakes, landslides, technological risks, fires, and infectious diseases
435. UN Women Albania (2023), Disasters Risk Reduction and Climate Change, Gender Mainstreaming Guidance, https://albania.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/web_drr_14122023.pdf
436. Monitoring Network against Gender-Based Violence (2019). Report of civil society organizations on the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action in Albania, Beijing+25. Available at: https://rrjetikunderdhunesgjinore-monitorime.al/en/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Albanian-CSOs-report-on-the-implementation-of-BPfA.pdf
437. UNECE (1998) Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters. see: https://unece.org/dAM/env/pp/documents/cep43e.pdf
438. UN Women - Women's resilience to disasters Knowledge Hub (2021). Gender inequality, earthquake and flood impacts in Albania. See: https://wrd.unwomen.org/explore/insights/%20gender-inequality-earthquake-and-flood-impacts-albania
439. UN ESCAP statistics division, IUCN, UNEP and UN Women (2019). Mainstreaming gender in environment statistics for the SDGs and beyond: Identifying priorities in Asia and the Pacific. Working Paper Series SD/WP/10 October. See: https://repository.unescap.org/%20%20handle/20.500.12870/1138?locale-attribute=es

socio-economic impact of lockdown. A consolidated methodology was developed and applied uniformly across countries and regions globally, thereby ensuring comparability of data.[440]

3.5.6 Key EU legislation and policies

Addressing risks associated with climate change and environmental degradation is a key priority for the EU, which is actively working to reduce its environmental footprint both in the Member States and globally. In 2021, the EU adopted a set of proposals known as the 'European Green Deal,' which, together with Regulation (EU) 2021/1119 (or the 'European Climate Law'), aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and make Europe the world's first climate-neutral continent by 2050.[441] In addition, the EU seeks to ensure that climate concerns are addressed in other policy areas such as transport and energy, and promotes low-carbon technologies and adaptation measures.

As Albania is preparing to advance negotiations on Cluster 4, which focuses on the green agenda and sustainable connectivity, serious steps need to be taken to ensure gender mainstreaming in all relevant legislation and policy measures.

3.5.7 Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on previous reports in this area,[442] recent recommendations of human rights mechanisms in the context of Albania's fifth periodic review by the CEDAW Committee (2023)[443] and UPR fourth cycle (2024-2025),[444] as well as the input of UN Country Team Albania to these mechanisms during the review processes.[445]

1. **Ensure that legal and policy frameworks for disaster risk reduction, climate change and tourism development address gender inequalities and gender differentiated impacts consistently and comprehensively**. Albanian legislation and national and local policies in these areas need to mainstream gender in a consistent way and be equipped with adequate capacities and resources to this effect. (In line with UPR recommendations, 2024,[446] and UNCT Albania submission to the UPR, 2024.)
2. **Address specific needs and priorities of women and girls during disasters**. This could be achieved through advanced planning and implementation of specific measures during emergencies, such as adequate infrastructure and critical services for all women and girls, reduction of further risks, including measures to prevent GBV in shelters/camps and to respect women's and girls' privacy. Attention should also be paid to post-disaster recovery measures to ensure that women benefit equally from all infrastructure and recovery programmes.
3. **Analyse and address women's specific vulnerabilities to the impact of climate change and environmental degradation, particularly those of rural women.** A key priority remains ensuring the participation of rural women in the design and implementation of national policies, programmes and initiatives concerning climate change, as well as the preservation of biodiversity and cultural heritage. (In line with CEDAW Committee Concluding Observations.)[447]

440. UN Women (2020). the Impact of Covid-19 on women's and Men's lives and Livelihoods in Europe and Central Asia: Preliminary results from a rapid Gender Assessment. see: https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/07/the-impact-of-covid19-on-womens-and-mens-lives-and-livelihoods-0
441. European commission (2022). European civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, climate change and Environment Factsheet. see: https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/what/%20humanitarian-aid/climate-change-and-environment_en
442. See for example, UN Women Albania (2023), Disasters Risk Reduction and Climate Change, Gender Mainstreaming Guidance, https://albania.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2024-03/web_drr_14122023.pdf
443. Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, (2023) *Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania* (CEDAW/C/ALB/5). Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, United Nations. https://www.ohchr.org/documents/treaties/cedaw
444. Human Rights Council. (20 December 2024). *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Albania* (Fifty-eighth session, Agenda item 6); A/HRC/58/
445. UNCT Albania (2024), Submission for the Fourth Universal Periodic Review of Albania, https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/al-un-contributions-s47; UNCT Albania (2022) Confidential Report to CEDAW Committee in view of fifth period review of Albania (not published)
446. UPR 124.131, A/HRC/58/5.
447. CEDAW/C/ALB/CO/5, Recommendation 40 (c).

4

ENTRY POINTS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF EU GAP III IMPLEMENTATION

The EU's commitment to gender equality in Albania is reflected in its strategic support for political, economic and social reforms that align with EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III) and IPA III funding priorities.

Key entry points for EU political and operational engagement include strengthening gender mainstreaming in national policies, enhancing institutional capacities and ensuring gender-responsive budgeting. The table below aligns key recommended actions for Albania with the EU GAP III thematic areas and the EU Roadmap for Women's Rights (2025). This ensures that EU support effectively contributes to Albania's gender equality reforms and EU accession priorities.

Table 11

Key recommended actions for Albania with the EU GAP III thematic areas and the EU Roadmap for Women's Rights

Key action areas	Current & proposed actions (national level)	Eu gap iii thematic area	Eu roadmap for women's rights (2025) objective
1. Political and Institutional Strengthening	- Support the implementation of NSGE 2021-2030, ensuring compliance with EU GAP III. - Strengthen the role of Gender Equality Officers (GEOs) in policy and budget planning. - Enhance the National Council for Gender Equality with better resources and coordination. - Implement Local Gender Action Plans aligned with European standards.	Area 1: Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence (GBV). Area 2: Promoting economic and social rights and empowering women.	Objective: Political Participation and Equal Representation—Strengthening gender balance in decision-making at all levels.
2. Economic Empowerment and Social Inclusion	- Expand programmatic efforts to support women's entrepreneurship and economic inclusion. - Promote financial inclusion and labour market integration for women from vulnerable groups. - Ensure gender-responsive budgeting in IPA III programmes.	Area 2: Economic and social rights, closing the Gender Pay Gap, and promoting female entrepreneurship. Area 5: Addressing challenges in the green transition and digital transformation.	Objective: Equal Pay and Economic Empowerment—Supporting equal access to financial resources, labour market inclusion and pay transparency.
3. Justice and Human Rights	- Strengthen the legal framework on GBV in line with EU standards. - Expand free legal aid services, improving access to justice for women. - Address gender gaps in electoral laws, ensuring equal opportunities for women.	Area 1: Ending GBV through stronger legal protection. Area 3: Strengthening women's voice and participation in decision-making.	Objective: Freedom from Gender-Based Violence—Strengthening laws and enforcement mechanisms against GBV, including online violence.

(continues on the next page)

Key action areas	Current & proposed actions (national level)	Eu gap iii thematic area	Eu roadmap for women's rights (2025) objective
4. Sector-Specific Gender Integration	- Education & Skills: Promote STEM education for girls and integrate gender-sensitive curricula. - Health and Social Protection: Expand sexual and reproductive health services. - Climate & Disaster Risk Reduction: Develop gender-responsive policies for disaster preparedness.	Area 4: Advancing equal participation and leadership in public and private spheres. Area 5: Gender-sensitive policies in climate action and digital transformation.	Objective: Quality & Inclusive Education—Increasing access to STEM for girls and addressing educational gender disparities. Objective: The Highest Standards of Health—Strengthening access to health care and reproductive rights.
5. Operationalizing EU GAP III in Albania	- Ensure gender mainstreaming in all IPA III programmes, incorporating gender-sensitive indicators. - Increase EU funding for gender equality initiatives, particularly in economic empowerment, political participation and GBV prevention. - Strengthen inter-institutional cooperation to ensure a cohesive gender equality framework in Albania.	Cross-cutting principle: Ensuring gender equality as a core focus across all EU financial and political instruments.	Objective: Institutional Mechanisms that Deliver on Women's Rights—Ensuring sustainable funding, monitoring mechanisms and capacity-building.

Annexes

Annex 1. International and national legal frameworks for gender equality in Albania

International Legal Framework

Albania has been ranked in multiple global and regional indices as in recent years. Albania's position in the World Economic Forum 2024[448] (placed 23rd in a worldwide level with a grade of 0.780) shows improvement compared to its 2020[449] position, (placed 20th at the worldwide level with a grade of 0.769). However, in 2024, a small drop occurred compared to 2023[450] (17th position, with a grade of 0.791) and to 2022[451] (18th position, with a grade of 0.787) - particularly in its "Economic participation and opportunities" and "Political empowerment" subindexes. Albania, continues to rank first globally with first grade on key indicators including "Women in ministerial positions," "Enrolment in tertiary education," "Professional and technical workers," and others, surpassing many developed European countries.

With regards to the **SDGs**, the 2024 SDG Index[452] indicates that Albania stands at 42 (of 167 countries) with a score of 75 (above the regional average of 70.6 per cent). In its 2022 rating in the **Global Database of the SDGs**,[453] Albania received a mark of 100 points (out of 100) regarding the extent to which its legal frameworks promote, enforce and monitor gender equality in public life; 88.9 points regarding the extent to which its legal frameworks promote, enforce and monitor gender equality with regard to violence against women; 80 points regarding the extent to which its legal frameworks promote, enforce and monitor gender equality with regard to employment and economic benefits; and 90.9 points regarding the extent to which its legal frameworks promote, enforce and monitor gender equality with regard to marriage and family benefits. The proportion of seats held by women in single or lower houses of parliament increased from 5.2 per cent in 2000 to 35.7 per cent in 2024.[454]

In the **Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Index** 2023/2024,[455] Albania ranked 45 out of 177 countries, an improvement compared with 2021/2022[456] when it ranked 58 out of 170 countries and with 2019/2020[457] when it ranked 57 out of 167 countries.

In UNDP's **Human Development Report** 2023/2024,[458] Albania ranks 74 out of 193 countries, with a change of **-8** in the Human Development Index rank for the period 2015-2022. However, in the same report, the Albania's Gender Development Index (GDI) for 2022 is 0.977 and is classified in Group 1, which includes countries with high equality in human development achievements between women and men.[459]

According to the **Gender Data Compass 2023**,[460] which offers a comprehensive evaluation of a country's gender data system across five key areas—availability, openness, foundations, capacity and financing—Albania has achieved an overall score of 30 out of 100. This score places Albania 95th globally and 8th in the Southern Europe region. To address coverage gaps in gender data, it is essential to publish more data and ensure proper sex disaggregation. The Gender Data Compass found that for Albania, 11 out of 53 assessed indicators were not published on any government website, and seven published indicators lacked sex disaggregation. Gender statistics and sex-disaggregated data are crucial for addressing gender inequalities and supporting effective policymaking. Given this, there is a clear need to produce new gender-related indicators based on both administrative and survey sources.[461]

448. https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2024/
449. https://www.weforum.org/publications/gender-gap-2020-report-100-years-pay-equality/
450. https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2023/
451. https://www.weforum.org/publications/global-gender-gap-report-2022/
452. https://dashboards.sdgindex.org/chapters/part-2-the-sdg-index-and-dashboards
453. https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/dataportal/countryprofiles/alb#goal-5
454. *Ibid.*
455. https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/WPS-Index-full-report.pdf
456. https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/11/WPS-Index-2021.pdf
457. https://giwps.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/WPS-Index-2019-20-Report.pdf
458. https://hdr.undp.org/system/files/documents/global-report-document/hdr2023-24reporten.pdf
459. Group 1 countries have high equality in Human Development Index achievements between women and men: absolute deviation less than 2.5 percent. See: https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/tr/UNDP-TR-EN-HDR-2019-FAQS-GDI.pdf
460. See: https://gdc.opendatawatch.com/
461. See: https://gdc.opendatawatch.com/country-profiles/ALB

Albania has ratified and adhered to several international conventions and agreements that provide a foundation for gender equality. These include:

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)** of 1948, which, although not exclusively about gender, laid the groundwork for international action in women's rights and gender equality, shaping foundational treaties and policies that support equal opportunity and protection for all genders. The UDHR reaffirms the principles of equality, dignity and non-discrimination, and specifically prohibits gender-based discrimination. It assures equal marriage rights, equal pay, education and protection for mothers and children.

- **Convention on the Political Rights of Women (CPRW),** ratified in 1995, which ensures women's equal rights to vote, run for public office, and participate in government.

- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR),** ratified in 1991, which abolishes gender-based discrimination and ensures equality of protection in the law, voting rights, and political rights of women.

- **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR),** ratified in 1991, which ensures equal pay, fair working conditions, maternity protection and access to education for women and girls.

- **Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC),** ratified in 1992, which strengthened the protection of girls' rights to education and health, and protection from child marriage, economic exploitation and gender-based discrimination.

- **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW),** ratified in 1993, and its **Optional Protocol**, ratified in 2003, which created a legal framework to eliminate discrimination in education, employment, health care and marriage while also providing mechanisms for individuals to seek justice for violations of women's rights.

- **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD),** ratified in 1994, which prohibits racial and ethnic discrimination and acknowledges the intersectionality of race and gender-based discrimination.

- **Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT),** ratified in 1994, which compels torture prevention, investigation, and sanctions, such as in the case of gender-based violence.

- **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (BDPfA),** adopted in 1995, which is the most comprehensive and transformative global agenda for the achievement of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls.

- **European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR),** ratified in 1996, which provides protection in law for gender-based violence and discrimination to ensure protection of women's fundamental rights under the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights.

- **United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace, and Security**, ratified in 2000, which acknowledges women's role in peace processes and conflict resolution and insists on their protection in war scenarios.

- **International Labor Organization (ILO) Maternity Protection Convention** (No. 183), ratified in 2004, which ensures protection of employment during maternity leave, job security and protection of working mothers.

- **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICMW),** ratified in 2007, which ensures equal rights and protections for migrant workers, regardless of gender. It addresses gender-specific vulnerabilities, including exploitation, discrimination and access to health care and labour rights.

- **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CPED),** ratified in 2007, which protects individuals from forced disappearances—an issue that disproportionate-

ly affects women as victims and relatives seeking justice. It recognizes the gendered impact of disappearances, including sexual violence and economic hardship, and ensures justice, truth and reparations.

- **ILO Workers with Family Responsibilities Convention, 1981 (No. 156),** ratified in 2007, which promotes gender equality in employment by ensuring that workers with caregiving responsibilities—especially women—are not discriminated against. It calls for workplace policies that support work-life balance, equal opportunities and shared family responsibilities.

- **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**, ratified in 2012, which ensures equal rights and protections for persons with disabilities, with a strong focus on gender equality. It recognizes that women and girls with disabilities face multiple forms of discrimination and calls for equal access to education, employment, health care and protection from violence.

- **Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)**, ratified in 2013, which marked a major milestone in criminalizing DV, strengthening protections of victims and adopting preventive approaches.

- **The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),** joined in 2015, which reaffirm gender equality in national priorities, particularly through SDG 5 to end discrimination, violence, and barriers to women's empowerment.

- **International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention No. 190 on Violence and Harassment in the World of Work**, ratified in 2021, which is the first international legal instrument specifically addressing gender-based violence and harassment in professional environments, recognizing their severe impact on women's safety and economic participation. It establishes obligations for states and employers to prevent violence, protect victims, and provide access to justice, ensuring that workplaces are free from abuse, intimidation and discrimination. The Convention encompasses formal and informal workers, particularly vulnerable groups of domestic workers and those in vulnerable employment.

- **National Legal Framework on Gender Equality and Women's Rights in Albania**

- **Constitutional Provisions**

- The Constitution guarantees gender equality (Art. 18/2) and protects the rights of mothers, children and families (Art. 54).

- **Key Legislation on Gender Equality and Women's Rights**

- **Law No. 9970/2008 "On Gender Equality in Society"** — Establishes gender equality principles and quotas but faces challenges in implementation. A revised version is being drafted.

- **Law No. 9669/2006 "On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations", as ammended** — Provides protection orders and victim assistance, but requires expansion to cover all forms of GBV.

- **Law No. 10221/2010 "On the Protection from Discrimination", as ammended** — Prohibits gender-based discrimination and introduced 2020 amendments extending protection to gender identity, sexual orientation and intersectional discrimination.

- **Recent Amendments and Additional Legislation**

- **2022 Criminal Code Amendments** — Strengthened legal protection against domestic and gender-based violence, criminalizing psychological violence and aligning with the Istanbul Convention.

- **Law No. 81/2020** — Ensures non-discriminatory treatment of women prisoners and protection from GBV.

- **Electoral Code Amendments (2020 and 2024)** — Introduced 50 per cent gender quota for municipal councils and strengthened enforcement mechanisms.

- **Law No. 87/2022** — Expanded state health insurance to unemployed women with three or more children.

- **Law No. 62/2022** — Established the National Registry of Sex Offenders to protect children and women.

- **Law No. 30/2023** — Introduced anti-sexism provisions in media legislation to prevent discriminatory and hateful content.

National Strategies

National Strategies
In addition to the NSGE 2021–2030, there are also other national strategies and action plans focused on gender equality and women's empowerment approved in the last five years, such as:

- **National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022–2030 (NSDEI)** Gender equality is one of the objectives of the NSDEI, and specific interventions contribute to the achievement of the SDGs as well as the 2030 UN Agenda. The vision of gender equality in the NSDEI is "a society that values gender equality and justice as necessary conditions for the sustainable social, economic, and political development of the country, empowers all individuals to enjoy equal rights and opportunities in all areas of life, does not allow anyone to be left behind, as well as relying on the principle of zero tolerance against harmful practices, gender-based violence, and DV, punishing perpetrators and protecting, rehabilitating and reintegrating abused persons." The NSDEI articulates Albania's commitment to gender equality as one of the central aims across different areas. However, the strategy largely outlines general objectives with no specific, measurable metrics or targeted funding models required to achieve gender equality. For instance, the NSDEI alludes to gender equality in the context of EU standard conformity but does not recommend concrete measures in the form of specialized programmes or initiatives to address lingering gender inequalities. This lack of planning and resource allocation could hinder the effective fulfilment of the strategy's gender equality goal.

- **National Action Plan for HIV/AIDS 2020-2025** contributes to the achievement of SDG 5 and especially goal 5.6: "Ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Program of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action." The plan contains concrete measures for HIV prevention in a broader context of gender rights and sexual and reproductive health. It focuses on the most vulnerable and at-risk groups, such as adolescent girls, young women involved in sex work, Roma and Egyptian communities, injecting drug users and the LGBTIQ+ community. In addition, the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV is a key component of the national response to HIV and one of the specific objectives of the National HIV/AIDS Action Plan 2020-2025. Supporting interventions include the promotion and provision of HIV/STI testing to pregnant women through institutional-oriented counselling and primary health care.

- **National Cybersecurity Strategy and its Action Plan 2020–2025** (approved with Decision No. 1084, dated 24.12.2020), focused on: ensuring cybersecurity at the national level through the protection of information infrastructure, and strengthening technological and legal tools; developing a safe cyberspace education programme in the information security field; developing mechanisms required for child safety in cyberspace, while preparing the younger generation to benefit from the advantages of technology and overcome development challenges; and improving national and international cooperation with strategic partners in the cybersecurity field. However, this strategy lacks a gender-sensitive approach and specific measures for women. While it prioritizes cybersecurity education, awareness, and online child protection, it does not address gender-based cyber threats or women's underrepresentation in cybersecurity. Although efforts to promote digital skills and safety may indirectly benefit women, the strategy does not include targeted initiatives to bridge gender gaps in the field.

- **National Social Protection Strategy 2020-2023** aimed at, and had important achievements for, the reformation of social protection policies through:

transitioning the economic aid scheme (EA) into an active scheme that enables social reintegration; revising the disability assessment system; intervening and ensuring the reintegration of children into the family and community, paying special attention to social and biological orphans; and ensuring the provision of integrated social and community welfare services. In addition, the strategy has improved the connections and integration between active employment policies and inclusion and social protection policies. In 2021, several revisions were made to EA amounts for certain categories, such as: doubling the amount of EA for families with three or more children, while an additional 10 per cent was provided for other families, and tripling payment for orphans, victims of trafficking and victims of DV. In 2022, the EA increased again for other categories, including doubling the payment for women heads of families with up to two children and for people over 65 who do not benefit from old-age pension or social pension. The other families on the scheme benefited from a 10 per cent increase from the beginning of 2022. In 2023, for the first time, special support was offered to unemployed women with three or more children up to the age of 18, with a family income of up to 100,000 ALL per month (equivalent to 1,165 USD or 1,020 EUR), supporting them with social and health contributions payments for the period of care for a child up to 5 years old.

- **National Social Protection Strategy 2024-2030** (approved with Council of Ministers' Decision No. 152/2024) was prepared by taking into consideration the European Commission's strategic documents on social care, and in line with the SDGs, specifically SDG 5. One of the strategy's specific goals is to alleviate poverty for every individual in need and improve the living conditions of persons with disabilities through financial support and appropriate, gender-responsive, and transparent benefits for coping with crisis risks. Measures are foreseen for the provision of services for those between retirement and older age, where gender differences between elderly women and men will be taken into consideration, providing services that suit their specific needs.

- **National Strategy on Health 2021-2030** (approved by DCM No. 210, dated 6.4.2022) sets Albania's course towards Universal Health Coverage by improving health care quality, access, infrastructure and public trust. It is a policy document of the Albanian Government that aims to define and achieve the programme objectives for the protection and improvement of the Albanian population's health. The Strategy's main goals are: improving the quality of health care, guaranteeing full access for all persons living in Albania under a sustainable financial system; increasing the number of healthy life years of the population; modernizing infrastructure and improving the safety and quality of hospital care; improving the quality and safety of medicines in accordance with European standards; developing an integrated and better coordinated approach to health care; and increasing transparency and accountability and restoring the trust of the general public in the health care system. It acknowledges the importance of gender equality in achieving sustainable health outcomes, aligning with SDG 5. The strategy includes specific measures for women, such as maternal and reproductive health services, cancer screening programmes (e.g., breast and cervical cancer), and initiatives to address GBV. Additionally, it emphasizes reducing gender disparities in health care access and recognizes the health needs of vulnerable groups, including women and girls. However, while the strategy highlights gender aspects in health, it lacks a comprehensive framework for mainstreaming gender equality across all sectors. Gender considerations are largely confined to maternal and reproductive health, with limited integration into areas like non-communicable diseases, mental health, elderly care and digital health. It lacks clear guidelines and institutional mechanisms to systematically embed gender perspectives in health care policies and programmes. Additionally, sex-disaggregated data collection is not prioritized, and broader gender disparities—such as occupational health risks and chronic disease impact—remain underexplored. The strategy also omits gender-responsive budgeting and mandatory gender training for health care providers, limiting efforts to close gender health gaps.

- **National Strategy for Education 2021-2026** (adopted by DCM No. 621 dated 22.12.2021) aims to create a high-quality, inclusive and equitable education system that supports lifelong learning and

aligns with European standards. Its focus is on expanding access to education, improving teaching quality, promoting digitalization and strengthening links with the labour market. The strategy highlights gender disparities and promotes inclusive education policies, particularly in ensuring equal participation in pre-university and higher education. It emphasizes the importance of gender-sensitive teaching methods, access to STEM education for girls, and addressing GBV in schools. However, while the strategy includes gender-related objectives, it lacks a fully integrated gender-mainstreaming framework across all education levels. There are no explicit measures to eliminate structural barriers for women in education leadership or concrete initiatives to prevent gender-based discrimination and violence within the education system.

- **Strategy for Agriculture, Rural Development, and Fisheries 2021-2027 (SARDF)—approved by Decision No. 460, dated 29.6.2022**—is a national policy with a cross-sectoral approach. This policy outlines actions to sustainably and effectively develop the agriculture, food, livestock and fisheries sectors based on innovation and digitalization. The aim is to enable these sectors' resilience to national and international market pressures, as well as to challenges related to climate change, biodiversity loss, and the transition to a green economy. By ensuring the sustainable management of natural resources, the policy also aims to improve the quality of life for residents and support inclusive rural development. It incorporates gender equality as a horizontal theme aligned with EU policies and the Gender Action Plan 2021–2025. It acknowledges women's economic and social rights, promoting equal access to funding opportunities, such as higher scores for women applicants in IPARD III grants. However, while the strategy ensures equal participation in rural development programmes, it lacks a comprehensive gender-mainstreaming framework and specific, targeted measures addressing women's challenges in agriculture, fisheries, and rural labour markets. There is no dedicated focus on overcoming structural barriers for women in leadership, entrepreneurship or ownership of agricultural resources.

- **National Agenda for the Rights of the Child 2021–2026 (NARC)—**adopted by DCM No. 659, dated 3.11.2021—was drawn up on behalf of the Albanian Government by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, in coordination with the State Agency for Child Rights and Protection, and in consultation with different stakeholders, partners, CSOs, international organizations, etc. The NARC consolidates and continues the work carried out within the framework of the previous National Agenda for the Rights of the Child (2017–2020), addressing ongoing gaps and new challenges, and reflecting innovative perspectives, especially those related to the Strategy of the European Union for the Rights of the Child. This document takes an intersectoral approach and provides a foundation for the coordination of efforts among ministries and different sectors, and guides the national regulatory framework towards a harmonized and effective strategy for children. The NARC contains four strategic goals: i) Good governance as regards observing, protecting and fulfilling child rights; ii) Elimination of all forms of violence and protecting children; iii) Child- and adolescent-friendly systems and services; and iv) Promotion of child rights in the digital world. This document provides several support measures for the reduction of discrimination and inequalities for girls and adolescents.

- **Intersectoral Community Safety Strategy (ICSS) 2021—2026 and action plan 2021—2023** (approved by DCM No. 1139, dated 24.12.2020). The ICSS clearly identifies priorities through national strategic policies and objectives and outlines the guiding principles that will support cross-sectoral efforts to ensure public safety. The ICSS creates a foundation for building and fostering a collaborative environment in which government and citizens can carry out their respective prevention and protection responsibilities more effectively. The policies and specific objectives of the ICSS are in line with some of the SDGs and the 2030 Agenda, particularly: SDG 3, SDG 5, SDG 11 and SDG 16. It references the need to protect women and girls from violence, trafficking and exploitation, as well as ensure their participation in decision-making processes related to community security. However, the strategy lacks a fully integrated gender-mainstreaming framework across all aspects of community safety. While it acknowledges gender-based challenges, there are no detailed,

concrete measures specifically designed to enhance women's security, increase women's representation in law enforcement, or address gender disparities in access to justice and community safety initiatives.

- **Intersectoral Counter-Terrorism Strategy (ICTS), 2021–2025 and its action plan 2021–2023** (DCM No. 1137, dated 16.12.2020). The ICTS 2021– 2025 represents the fundamental national strategic document in the fight against terrorism. It combines the EU agenda of integration and the obligations of Chapter 24 in the fight against terrorism with the sustainable economic and social development of the country, including the connection with the SDGs. It articulates the national vision for the creation of a society free from terrorist threats, which is known as a safe country with European standards of compliance with fundamental human rights and freedoms. However, this strategy lacks recognition of gender-related security risks, such as the role of women in radicalization prevention, GBV linked to extremism, or the impact of counterterrorism measures on women and girls. It does not outline concrete actions to ensure gender inclusion in counterterrorism efforts or address gender-specific vulnerabilities in conflict zones. Overall, while it provides a robust framework for national security and supports aspirations for integration into the European Union, it does not integrate gender considerations or targeted interventions to enhance the protection and participation of women in counterterrorism policies.

- **National Action Plan (NAP) for the Fight against Human Beings Trafficking 2021-2023** (approved by DCM No. 670, dated 10.11.2021) reflected the best international practices in terms of the driving factors of trafficking and the forms of its occurrence. It acknowledges the disproportionate impact of human trafficking on women and girls and explicitly recognizes women and children, particularly from vulnerable communities, as high-risk groups and incorporates targeted measures for their protection, assistance and reintegration. The plan outlines specialized support services, legal aid, psychological assistance and tailored reintegration programmes for women and girl victims of trafficking. It also integrates a gender-sensitive, victim-centred approach across prevention, protection and prosecution efforts.

- **National Action Plan (NAP) for the Fight against Human Beings Trafficking 2024-2025** maintains those elements assessed as the strongest points in the NAP for the Fight Against Human Beings Trafficking, but is being updated with a new approach in response to evolving needs and context. This Action Plan retains important elements related to the inclusiveness of state and non-state agencies, emphasizing the strengthening of capacities and structures at central and local levels and the measures for the protection of women, girls and children.

- **National Action Plan for LGBTI+ People (2021-2027)**—approved by DCM No. 700, dated 18.11.2021—includes commitments to combat discrimination, improve legal protections, provide access to quality services, and raise awareness about gender and sexual diversity. It references international and national legal frameworks that promote gender equality and non-discrimination. It also highlights challenges faced by LGBTIQ+ individuals, including multiple forms of discrimination, and proposes specific measures to address them. Additionally, it aligns with the National Strategy for Gender Equality (2021-2030) and the European Commission's "Equality Union: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025."

- **National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians in Albania 2021-2025** (approved with DCM No. 701, dated 17.11.2021) is a new commitment of the government that includes both mainstreaming and targeted programmes and actions for the Roma and Egyptian population residing in Albania. It aims to reduce the gap in access to quality public services in comparison to the majority population. The Plan acknowledges the increased risk of social exclusion and discrimination faced by Roma and Egyptian women and includes steps to improve their access to health care, education, work, and legal assistance. Its specific goals are to lower barriers and encourage women and girls' active participation in society by focusing on school enrollment, vocational training, maternal health care, protection from GBV and help with civil registration.

- **National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2021-2025** (approved by DCM No. 276, dat-

ed 12.05.2021) acknowledges various challenges faced by persons with disabilities, including women with disabilities. It promotes policies aimed at ensuring their equal access to education, employment, health care and social services, aligning national efforts with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). While it acknowledges the vulnerability of women with disabilities, it does not fully address their multiple discrimination, economic dependency, and exposure to GBV. The UN Position Paper on Violence Against Women and Girls with Disabilities highlights key gaps, including insufficient legal protections, limited access to justice, and inadequate specialized support services. To strengthen its impact, the Action Plan should explicitly integrate gender-responsive policies, ensure accessible legal and social protections, and allocate dedicated funding for women-led disability organizations. Additionally, enhanced data collection and inter-institutional coordination are essential for inclusive, evidence-based policies that align with international standards.

- **National Action Plan on Aging 2020–2024** (approved by DCM No. 864, dated 24.12.2019) acknowledges Albania's aging population and aligns with international frameworks promoting active aging. While it highlights gender equality as a guiding principle, it lacks sex-disaggregated data, gender-sensitive analysis, and targeted measures to address older women's specific vulnerabilities. Older women face higher poverty rates, lower pension entitlements and greater health burdens due to lifetime earnings gaps and unpaid caregiving responsibilities. Although the plan aims to reduce elderly poverty and expand pension coverage, it does not address the gender pension gap or propose compensation for unpaid labour. Similarly, while committing to universal health care, it overlooks older women's greater prevalence of chronic illnesses, mental health needs and caregiving burdens. The plan also introduces day centres and residential facilities to enhance social inclusion, yet it fails to specify how these services will support older women, particularly those living alone or facing social exclusion. Without gender-sensitive policies, existing inequalities may persist, limiting older women's economic security, health care access and social participation. Strengthening pension reforms, health care services and tailored social protection measures is essential to ensuring dignity and equal opportunities for aging women in Albania.

- **Cross-sectoral strategy "Digital Agenda of Albania 2022-2026"** (adopted by DCM No. 370, dated 1.6.2022) emphasized that artificial intelligence will be placed at the top of the government's agenda to ensure that no one will be left behind in the digital transformation—citizens must have every opportunity to acquire the skills they need, nurturing talent and promoting gender equality and diversity. The process of digital transformation has long started in Albania, and all public and private actors are working hard to change the mindset of citizens regarding this new and inevitable form of communication. From 2020, citizens and businesses apply through the e-Albania platform for a variety of public services, and public administration employees collect all the state documents for services that are used, freeing citizens from the burden of physically collecting them on paper at state counters. However, while this strategy emphasizes digital transformation, innovation and access to technology, it does not address gender disparities in digital literacy, access to ICT or the inclusion of women in STEM fields. There is no mention of gender-specific digital policies, such as ensuring equal opportunities for women in digital entrepreneurship or cybersecurity. Additionally, the strategy lacks targeted actions to address gender-based online risks or initiatives to bridge the digital gender divide. Overall, while the document aims to promote universal digital access, it does not mainstream gender considerations into its objectives and implementation framework.

- **Intersectoral Justice Strategy for Children (IJSCH) 2022-2026** and its action plan (approved with DCM No. 892, dated 27.12.2022) is the second policy document for the justice system for children initiated by the Ministry of Justice, which aims to effectively implement their rights. It incorporates gender-sensitive principles, particularly in safeguarding girls and young women in the justice system, and aligns with national and international frameworks on children's rights and gender equality, emphasizing child-friendly justice and the protection of minors from violence, discrimination and exploitation. However, while

the strategy acknowledges vulnerabilities faced by girls, it lacks specific, targeted measures to address gender disparities within the juvenile justice system. There are no dedicated initiatives to enhance gender-responsive legal aid, rehabilitation or reintegration programmes for girl minors in conflict with the law. Strengthening sex-disaggregated data collection and mainstreaming gender considerations across all justice reforms would enhance its effectiveness.

- **National Strategy for Scientific Research, Technology and Innovation 2023–2030** (adopted by DCM No. 542, dated 20.09.2023) is another important policy document that promotes progress towards ICT and STEM. It aims to: increase the efficiency and sustainability of the system for supporting scientific research—integrated at the international level—across the natural sciences, engineering and technology, medicine, agriculture, social and human sciences; create an environment that facilitates and encourages mechanisms of interaction and transfer of technologies for cooperation among the research, economy and innovation communities and public institutions; and promote the culture of science and innovation in education to ensure a didactic approach with an emphasis on research. It recognizes the importance of increasing women's participation in science and technology and aims to reduce barriers preventing women and girls from entering STEM fields. However, while it acknowledges gender disparities, the strategy lacks a fully integrated gender-mainstreaming framework and concrete measures to ensure the active inclusion of women in research, innovation, and leadership roles within the sector. To enhance gender sensitivity, the strategy should incorporate specific funding mechanisms, capacity-building initiatives and policies addressing gender gaps in scientific research and technological development.

- **National Youth Strategy 2022-2029**, *inter alia,* contains objectives and measures to empower adolescent girls and boys to participate in local decision-making through Youth Councils. The strategy emphasizes gender mainstreaming across youth policies, ensuring equal opportunities and participation in decision-making. Additionally, it addresses GBV, discrimination, and social inclusion by supporting vulnerable groups, including young women from marginalized communities. Various programmes, such as those supporting the creation of Youth Councils, U-Report, Child Friendly Cities, UPSHIFT, PONDER, etc., have supported media and political education, reasoning and debate skills, and dialogue with girls and boys to influence decision-making for issues that affect them. The Group of MPs "Friends of Children" (GDMF) is a non-partisan parliamentary group of 48 MPs, chaired by the Speaker of the Assembly, committed to advancing children's rights. Through meetings with adolescent boys and girls, the group addresses issues such as gender inequality, discrimination, and social exclusion. It promotes the empowerment of young women and girls in education, employment, entrepreneurship, and leadership. GDMF plays a key role in legislative oversight and budgeting, working closely with society and children to ensure their rights are respected and upheld.

- **The National Employment and Skills Strategy (NESS) 2023-2030** (DCM No. 173, dated 24.03.2023) aims to create quality jobs and opportunities for employment and skills throughout the country, quality education and training for women and men including young women and men, promoting inclusion and social cohesion, and strengthening the work and qualifications system in the market. "Increasing the inclusion of women in the labour market" is a priority measure of NESS 2023–2030, focusing on the integration of inactive women through gender-responsive training policies, flexible employment and self-employment, and providing specific support to their activation. For this purpose, mechanisms will be built to identify the needs and profiles of inactive women through administrators/social administrators and gender equality officers at the local level, as well as mechanisms to provide training and employment opportunities in various economic sectors, including care sectors. In addition, programmes will be designed and implemented to increase the participation of women in the rural and agricultural labour market by informing and supporting them to access and benefit from funds for rural development, agrotourism, etc. Institutions will support inactive women with entrepreneurship and the social economy, production of local prod-

ucts, online business activities, and assessment of the possibility for fiscal incentives in these sectors. The strategy acknowledges caregiving as a barrier but does not explicitly address Albania's significant unmet childcare needs—one of the main factors driving women's unemployment, inactivity and informal work.

- **The Youth Guarantee Program (YGP) 2023-2027** (DCM No. 173, dated 24.03.2023) focuses on promoting the employment of young women and young men as one of the priorities of the Albanian government. It contains measures to provide a decent offer of employment, training, or education to every young woman/man (aged 15-29) within four months from their identification, in accordance with EU recommendations. This commitment is in line with SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 4 (Quality Education). The target group is young women and young men not in education, employment, or vocational training (NEEVT), since the percentage of unemployment among this group is very high. The YGP pilot began in 2023 with the support of NEEVT young people registered at the Labour Offices who benefited from an offer of employment/vocational training/education within four months of losing their job or leaving vocational training. The program consists of two phases: the pilot phase (year 2023–2024) includes measures such as the organization and operation of the local strategy to raise awareness and register NEEVT young people; development and testing of the NAES IT system to record entries for the Youth Guarantee; reforming the criteria for the implementation of employment promotion programmes; and necessary legal changes for youth organization grants. The results of the pilot will guide the expansion of the program—the second phase—in the following years.

- **National Action Plan on the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security 2023—2027,** which aims to improve institutionalization and build capacities to ensure that efforts in the context of the WPS Agenda are sustainable and long-lasting. The application of a gendered approach to addressing humanitarian issues, conflict, and post-conflict situations, crises, or natural disasters is a progressive approach that reflects the principle that everyone has a role to play in contributing to society's all-around sustainable development. The Action Plan is harmonized and complies with SDGs 5 and 16.

- **National Disaster Risk Reduction Strategy (NDRRS) 2023-2030 (DCM No. 94, dated 22.03.2023)** aligns with the Sendai Framework 2015-2030, emphasizing an inclusive, gender-responsive approach to disaster risk management. It acknowledges the heightened vulnerabilities of women, children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and LGBTIQ+ individuals, integrating gender equality principles through a specific objective and recognizing intersectional risks linked to age, sexual orientation, disability and socio-economic status. Key commitments include prioritizing women's needs in disaster planning, promoting their leadership in DRR, integrating gender equality in local action plans, and ensuring gender-responsive budgeting. The implementation of this strategy impacts many SDGs, including SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), reinforcing the role of women in sustainable development. However, its Action Plan lacks concrete activities addressing women's specific needs and gender-sensitive indicators to measure impact. To operationalize these commitments effectively, gender expertise and capacity-building must be strengthened during implementation and monitoring.

- **National Security Strategy of the Republic of Albania 2023-2028** (approved with LAW No. 14/2024, dated 08.02.2024) aims to reflect the main challenges and threats to Albania's national security, as well as include institutional responses to them. The strategy addresses the fight against terrorism and violent extremism, proper management of natural disasters, intensification of the fight against organized crime and corruption, strengthening of the democratic rule of law, creation of a favourable climate for attracting safe foreign investments, and the educational and cultural development of the country. The strategy lacks recognition of gender-related security risks such as GBV, the role of women in peace and security, and the impact of national security policies on women and vulnerable groups. It does not include sex-disaggregated data, targeted initiatives for women's participation in security institutions, or

measures to address gender-specific vulnerabilities. To enhance gender sensitivity, the strategy should integrate gender perspectives into security policies, promote women's leadership in defence and law enforcement, and establish mechanisms to protect women from conflict-related and security threats.

- **National Plan for Civil Emergencies (NPCE)—approved with CDM No.807, dated 28.12.2023** identifies critical hazards with the highest potential to negatively impact the country's development: floods, landslides, earthquakes, dam breaches, massive fires and avalanches. The Plan recognizes gender equality and social inclusion as cross-cutting themes but lacks a fully developed gender-sensitive approach. While it emphasizes protection for vulnerable groups, including women, it fails to address women's and girls' specific risks in disaster response and recovery. The plan omits sex-disaggregated data, does not promote women's leadership in emergency management, and lacks targeted measures for gender-based vulnerabilities. To enhance gender sensitivity, it should incorporate gender-responsive DRR policies, gender training for personnel, capacity-building programmes for women, and mechanisms to ensure women's active participation in emergency planning and decision-making.

- **Intersectoral Strategy for the Prevention of Violent Extremism and Counter Terrorism (ISPVECT) and its action plans 2023–2025** (DCM No. 81, dated 14.02.2023) represent increased attention to the prevention of terrorist acts, radicalization and violent extremism. They aim to create more stable communities and institutions, rehabilitate and reintegrate radicalized persons and returnees from conflict areas and their families, develop strategic communication and prevent online radicalism. The emphasis for achieving the strategy's vision will be placed on the prevention of terrorist acts, using a coordinated response by state institutions in close cooperation with the community. However, the strategy fails to recognize the gendered dimensions of violent extremism, such as the role of women in radicalization prevention, the impact of extremist ideologies on women, and the need for gender-responsive rehabilitation and reintegration programmes. It does not integrate sex-disaggregated data, tailored support for women returnees from conflict zones, or initiatives to promote women's leadership in counter-extremism efforts. Strengthening gender considerations through targeted policies, specialized support mechanisms, and institutional commitments to gender mainstreaming would enhance the strategy's inclusivity and effectiveness.

- **Intersectoral Strategy for the Protection of the Victims of Crime 2024-2030 (ISPVC)—**approved by DCM No.729, dated 13.12.2023—aims to empower the victims of criminal offences, guaranteeing support, protection and a safe environment, so that survivors report the crime. This intersectoral strategy aims to improve access to justice, establish a national compensation scheme, and facilitate access to compensation for survivors, guaranteeing them fair and appropriate compensation. It addresses issues including informing the victim, treating him/her with dignity, preventing secondary victimization and repeated victimization, and supporting and protecting victims at every stage of the process and, when necessary, even after the criminal process has concluded. The gender perspective is integrated into the preparation, drafting, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of the ISPVC 2024-2030 and the expenditure programmes to promote equality between women and men, combat discrimination, and address the issue of women's and men's representation in measures related to the protection of the victims of crime.

- **National Strategy for the Development of Innovative Entrepreneurship 2024—2030** aims to promote entrepreneurship in the country through a new economic model driven by innovation and comprehensive development, especially through the empowerment of women in entrepreneurship. The strategy includes provisions to facilitate and support women entrepreneurs and their advantage in grant qualification points—in cases where points are equal between women and men applicants, priority is given to women, signalling a commitment to gender equality and women's empowerment in Albania's entrepreneurial landscape.

- **The Intersectoral Anti-Corruption Strategy 2024–2030** (approved with DCM No. 859, dated

26.12.2024) aims to strengthen integrity, transparency and accountability in the public and private sectors, focusing on prevention, enforcement and awareness of corruption. Specific Objective 3.4 highlights the importance of increasing women's participation in identifying and combating corruption and addressing its gender-specific forms, including bribery and gender-based violence linked to corruption. The strategy acknowledges the socio-cultural dimension of corruption and the crucial role of women in building a fairer and more sustainable society. It seeks to enhance institutional transparency, strengthen public policies, and collaborate with gender equality organizations for a deeper analysis of corruption's impact on women and girls.

- **National Strategy for Migration 2024—2030 and its Action Plan 2024—2026** (approved with DCM No.271, dated 02.05.2024) acknowledge international recommendations, including those from CEDAW and GREVIO, emphasizing the protection of women's rights. It includes concrete measures for migrant women, such as enhancing their access to financial services, informing them of property rights, reducing barriers to labour market participation (particularly in STEM fields), and improving support services for survivors of GBV and trafficking. Additionally, it prioritizes sex-disaggregated data collection to ensure more informed and equitable policymaking. These efforts collectively aim to promote gender equality, empower migrant women, and eliminate disparities within Albania's migration governance framework.

Annex 2. Detail list of relevant EU Directives by thematic area

Economic Empowerment

- The EU Gender Equality Strategy for 2020–2025, which emphasizes the need to address root causes of gender inequality by tackling the pay gap and segregation in the labour market and by promoting work–life balance.[462]

- The European Pillar of Social Rights, which promotes fair and equal opportunities in the labour market through measures such as more accessible and affordable childcare.[463]

- The EU Roadmap for Women's Rights (March 2025), which is the most recent document reinforcing the European Commission's commitment to gender equality, outlining a long-term vision for progress. The Roadmap builds on the significant progress achieved under the Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and aims to further pave the way for eight key objectives, including: equal pay and economic empowerment; work-life balance and care; and equal employment opportunities and adequate working conditions.

- The European Care Strategy (2022), which aims to ensure quality, affordable and accessible care services across the EU and improve the situation for both care receivers and the people caring for them, professionally or informally.[464]

In addition, several Directives have been adopted at the EU level, which directly aim to protect women's rights in the labour market. These include:

- 'Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the **principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast).'**

- 'Directive (EU) 2023/970 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 10 May 2023 to strengthen the application of the principle of equal pay for equal work or work of equal value between men and women **through pay transparency and enforcement mechanisms.'**

462. European Commission (2020), Commission communication—A union of equality: Gender equality strategy 2020–2025 (COM(2020)
463. European Commission (2019), European Pillar of Social Rights, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/policies-and-activities/european-pillar-social-rights-building-fairer-and-more-inclusive-european-union_en
464. European Commission (2022), European Care Strategy, https://employment-social-affairs.ec.europa.eu/news/european-care-strategy-caregivers-and-care-receivers-2022-09-07_en

- 'Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on **work-life balance for parents and carers** and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU.'

- 'Council Directive 92/85/EEC of 19 October 1992 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in **the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding.'**

- 'Council Directive 79/7/EEC of 19 December 1978 on the progressive implementation of the principle **of equal treatment for men and women in matters of social security.'**

- 'Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the **principle of equal treatment between men and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity.'**

- 'Council Directive 2004/113/EC of 13 December 2004 implementing the principle of equal treatment **between men and women in the access to and supply of goods and services.'**

- 'Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on improving the **gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures.'**

- 'Directive (EU) 2024/1500 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on standards for equality bodies in the field of **equal treatment and equal opportunities between women and men in matters of employment and occupation,** and amending Directives 2006/54/EC and 2010/41/EU'

- 'Directive (EU) 2022/2464 on Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive.'

Women's political leadership and participation

- ***'Directive 2006/54/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the implementation of the principle of equal opportunities and equal treatment of men and women in matters of employment and occupation (recast)'***[465] ensures equal treatment in employment, prohibiting gender-based discrimination and fostering career progression into leadership roles. It also addresses indirect discrimination that could limit women's career advancement into decision-making roles. The Law on Gender Equality in Society (2008) aligns with this directive by guaranteeing equal access to employment, career advancement and leadership roles for women. The Labour Code of Albania prohibits gender discrimination in hiring and workplace conditions. The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD) enforces anti-discrimination policies in employment. However, implementation remains a challenge, with gender pay gaps and underrepresentation of women in executive leadership roles in the private sector.

- ***'Directive (EU) 2019/1158 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 June 2019 on work-life balance for parents and carers and repealing Council Directive 2010/18/EU'***[466] addresses structural barriers by promoting shared parental responsibilities, enabling more women to pursue leadership positions. It supports gender equality by improving paternal leave and work-life balance, helping women advance into leadership roles. Albania has paid maternity leave (365 days, with 80 per cent salary for the first 6 months) and paternity leave provisions. The Labour Code allows for flexible working arrangements for parents and caregivers. However, paternity leave is underutilized, as traditional gender norms discourage men from taking leave. Workplace policies do not strongly encourage shared parental responsibilities, affecting women's career progression.

- ***'Directive 2010/41/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 7 July 2010 on the application of the principle of equal treatment between men***

465. See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2006/54/oj/eng
466. See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2019/1158/oj/eng

and women engaged in an activity in a self-employed capacity and repealing Council Directive 86/613/EEC'[467] ensures gender equality for self-employed workers, including access to maternity benefits, which can impact women's ability to enter decision-making roles. In Albania, the Law on Social Insurance grants self-employed women **access to maternity benefits**. However, women entrepreneurs face barriers to accessing business financing and investment opportunities.

- ***'Directive (EU) 2022/2381 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 November 2022 on improving the gender balance among directors of listed companies and related measures (Text with EEA relevance)'***[468] is a landmark step towards gender-balanced decision-making. It mandates that publicly listed companies ensure that women hold at least 40 per cent of non-executive board positions or 33 per cent of all board seats by **July 2026.** This Directive does not directly apply to politics, but reflects the EU's commitment to gender balance in decision-making. In Albania, the National Strategy on Gender Equality promotes women's leadership in business, but there are no legally binding quotas for women on corporate boards. Women's representation in top executive positions is limited in private companies, and there are no strong penalties or enforcement mechanisms for companies failing to improve gender balance.

- ***'Directive (EU) 2024/1385 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 14 May 2024 on combating violence against women and domestic violence'***[469] highlights the negative impact of cyber-violence on women politicians, and asks for minimum EU rules concerning the offence of cyber-harassment. In Albania, the Law on Domestic Violence, as amended, provides legal protection against gender-based violence, but alignment regarding violence and cyber-violence against women politicians is still required. In addition, specialized training for law enforcement agencies on digital gender-based violence must be planned and delivered.

Climate change

EU institutions recognize the gender differentiated impacts that often leave women with increased risks and vulnerabilities. The following are some of the main EU policy documents on climate change, DRR and gender equality:

- European Council Conclusions on Climate Change and Development (2009) highlights "the human dimension of climate change, including a gender perspective, and that poor people are most at risk, and that their resilience to climate change needs to be strengthened." The document also emphasizes the need to ensure that in developing adaptation strategies, "special attention should be paid to gender equality and women's empowerment."[470]

- Council Conclusions on Gender Equality and the Environment (2012), which state that enhanced decision-making, qualifications, and competitiveness in EU climate change mitigation policy play an important role in the focus assigned to gender issues throughout EU environmental policies.[471]

- European Parliament Resolution on women and climate change (2012) is explicitly concerned with exposing and addressing the links between climate change and gender, and calls on "the Commission and the Council, in order to ensure that climate action does not increase gender inequalities but results in co-benefits to the situation of women, to mainstream and integrate gender in every step of climate policies, from conception to financing, implementation and evaluation … "[472]

467. See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2010/41/oj/eng
468. See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2022/2381/oj/eng
469. See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/eli/dir/2024/1385/oj/eng
470. Council of the European Union (2009). Conclusions on Climate Change and Development. See: https://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/en/ec/108622.pdf
471. Council of the European Union (2012). Conclusions on Gender Equality and the Environment. See: https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/news/council-conclusions-gender-equality-and-environment-enhanced-decision-making
472. See: https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-7-2012-0145_EN.html

- European Parliament Resolution (2012) includes several recommendations regarding gender aspects of the environment and the green economy in general, as well as particular recommendations relating to sustainable consumption, sustainable transport, the welfare sector, 'green' jobs and sustainable policies in international relations.[473]

The EU's most recent Eighth Environment Action (EEA) Programme (2022) recognizes the gender-specific impact of environmental changes. It acknowledges the fact that gender-differentiated roles cause differentiated vulnerabilities of women and men to the effects of climate change, and that climate change exacerbates existing gender inequalities. The EEA Programme specifically requires gender mainstreaming throughout climate and environmental policies, including by incorporating a gender perspective at all stages of the policy-making process.[474]

Annex 3. Analysis of the legislation and policies to respond to GBV

Albania has a dedicated law on DV, and some of the main forms of violence against women have also been criminalized for several years. However, there is still a need for additional improvements to fully harmonize with international requirements and standards and align with EU legislation.

Amendments to **Law No. 9669, dated 18.12.2006 "On measures against violence in family relation"** in 2020 (with Law 125/2020), introduced key changes to strengthen protections against DV. Changes incorporated a gender-sensitive approach, emphasizing special guarantees for women, girls, children, the elderly, and persons with disabilities (Article 1), and mandated the immediate removal of the perpetrator from the household when they share a residence with the victim (Article 10). The decision for removal of the perpetrator from the household is made both by the Court and the Police with a Precautionary Measures of Immediate Protection Order (PMIPO) until the Court issues the Immediate Protection Order or Protection Order, unless the perpetrator is a minor, elderly, or a person with a disability (Article 13/2). The perpetrator's rehabilitation is also highlighted in these amendments (Article 10/1). Some of the 2020 amendments were also designed in response to the need to address DV in civil emergencies, starting from the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (Article 13/1, point 3/1). The obligation to respect the principles enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, CEDAW, the Council of Europe's Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and in the other international instruments ratified by the Republic of Albania is highlighted by this law (Article 3/1).

The **Criminal Code** was also amended in 2020 (Law No. 35, dated 16.04.2020), criminalizing psychological violence and including intimate or former intimate partners—regardless of cohabitation—in the category of victims of DV. Changes align the content of Article 130/a of the Criminal Code with Article 3 of the Istanbul Convention. These amendments also impose harsher punishment for perpetrators of DV. However, the definition of rape in the Criminal Code is still based on the use of force or threats by the perpetrator of violence rather than lack of consent, and it is not aligned with the requirements of the Istanbul Convention.

In the amendments of the **Law No. 10221 dated 04.02.2010 "On protection from discrimination"** in 2020 (amended by Law no. 124/2020, dated 15.10.2020), the concept of "sexual concern" was introduced as any form of unwanted verbal, nonverbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature, with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating or offensive environment. This is in accordance with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention, while the amendments in general are also well aligned with EU anti-discrimination directives, particularly Directive 2000/43/EC (Racial Equality Directive), Directive 2000/78/EC (Employment Equality Directive), Directive 2006/54/EC (Gender Equality in Employment Directive) and Directive 2004/113/EC (Gender Equality in Access to Goods and Services Directive).

473. See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52012IP0321
474. DECISION (EU) 2022/591 OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 6 April 2022 on a General Union Environment Action Programme to 2030. See: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32022D0591&from=EN

In 2021, a **Decision of the Council of Ministers was approved (No.327/2021)—**DCM no. 327, dated 02.06.2021—to enhance the functioning of the Coordinated Referral Mechanism (CRM) for DV cases. This was developed to implement a coordinated multi-sectoral approach to handling cases of DV, based also on GREVIO and CEDAW recommendations. In addition to further clarifying the roles and responsibilities of institutions and professionals for the effective management of cases of DV, this decision creates space for aspects of case management by the CRM to be applied, even in cases of other forms of GBV against women. This DCM also aligns partially with Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and DV; however, addressing online violence against women remains a gap in CRM functioning.

The **Law No. 13/2022, dated 3.2.2022, "On the ratification of ILO Convention 190 on Violence and Harassment,"** which entered into force for Albania on 6 May 2023, provides measures to protect employees from any form of violence and harassment or behaviour that damages, threatens, or offends their dignity, including physical, sexual and psychological violence, in the working environment. This definition covers everyone who is working, including interns and apprentices, employers, the public and private sectors, the formal and informal economies, as well as urban and rural areas. Albania will need to take effective measures so that all victims have safe, fair, and effective access to mechanisms and procedures for reporting and resolving disputes in cases of violence and harassment in the world of work, including GBV.

Law 62/2022 "For the national registry of sex offenders" aimed to increase safety for children, girls and women from sexual assault, by publishing the registry of those convicted of sexual crimes. This law partially aligns with key EU Directives on sexual violence prevention (Directive 2011/93/EU), victims' rights (Directive 2012/29/EU), and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR)—Regulation (EU) 2016/679.

The 2023 amendments in the **Law no. 97/2013 "On Audiovisual Media in the Republic of Albania"** (as amended with Law No. 30/2023) included the definition of sexism in the media and are aligned with Directive 2010/13/EU "Audiovisual Media Directive" amended by Directive 2018/1808 of the European Parliament and the European Council, which has explicitly guaranteed the protection of the fundamental freedoms and rights, as well as respect for human dignity in audiovisual broadcasts.

The third strategic goal of the **National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030** focuses on "Reducing all forms of harmful practices, gender-based violence and domestic violence." The strategy: provides a comprehensive approach to addressing DV and all forms of violence against women; emphasizes the importance of discrimination due to multiple gender affiliation (intersectionality); recognizes the challenges that women and girls from certain groups face not only because of gender, but also because of other factors; and pays special attention to women and girls, *in all their diversity*, especially from rural and disadvantaged areas, ethnic minorities, disabled persons, LGBTIQ+, single mothers, trafficked, elderly, migrants and asylum seekers. Measures foreseen under the specific objectives of this goal cover the improvement of the legislation to its effective implementation; provision of specialist support services for victims / survivors; awareness raising; financial support for specialized NGOs focused on this issue; strengthening and improvement of CRMs' work and effectiveness; improvement of data collection; punishing perpetrators and putting in place rehabilitation programmes; improvement of victims' / survivors' access to justice and their reintegration; provision of quality sexual and reproductive health services, and more. "NSGE 2021–2030" is linked to the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025 and is especially based on the objectives and measures envisaged in the EU Action Plan on Gender Equality (GAP III) 2021-2025, as well as Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and DV.

The **National Action Plan (NAP) for the Fight against Human Beings Trafficking 2021-2023** (approved by DCM No. 670, dated 10.11.2021) and that of **2024-2025** outline specialized support services, legal aid, psychological assistance and tailored reintegration programmes for women and girl victims of trafficking. These NAPs also integrate a gender-sensitive, victim-centred approach across prevention, protection and prosecution efforts. The **NAP 2024-2025** retains important elements related to the inclusiveness of state and non-state agencies and the implementation of the foreseen actions across Albania, emphasizing the strengthening of capacities and

structures at central and local levels and the measures for the protection of women, girls and children. These NAPs are aligned with EU Directives, particularly with Directive 2011/36/EU (EU Anti-Trafficking Directive), Directive 2012/29/EU (Victims' Rights Directive), and Directive 2009/52/EC (Employer Sanctions Directive on Forced Labour). The NAPs also align with the Istanbul Convention and recommendations of the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, reinforcing Albania's progress towards EU membership. However, gaps remain in victim reintegration, enforcement of labour protections and cross-border cooperation. Strengthening these areas will be crucial for full alignment with EU anti-trafficking standards.

Three documents on Standard Operating Procedures approved in 2020 are among the tools for strengthening and increasing the effectiveness of CRMs in the country: Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for health care workers (approved by MoHSW Order No. 101, dated 21.02.2020) address the issues that health care workers should be aware of and the steps that they should follow, regardless of whether they are primary, secondary or tertiary services (although the latter are less likely to encounter or be involved in the treatment of VAW cases). Health care services in this case are members of the CRM for DV cases at the local level.

SOPs for social care workers (approved by MoHSW Order No. 100, dated 21.02.2020), address the issues that social care workers should be aware of and the steps that they should follow, who in this case are seen as members of the CRMs for DV cases at the local level.

SOPs for health care workers to reduce the risk of experiencing DV and GBV in civil emergency situations (approved by MoHSW Order No. 102, dated 21.02.2020) consider the steps that the health sector should follow for planning, monitoring, coordinating, implementing and evaluating basic actions to prevent and reduce cases of GBV in situations of civil emergencies. The principles highlighted in these SOPs are aligned with those in the Istanbul Convention, and partially also with Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and DV.

"The Protocol for the operation of public and nonpublic residential centres providing shelter services to victims of domestic violence and human trafficking during the COVID-19 pandemic" approved in 2020 by MoHSW Order No. 254, dated 10.04.2020, aimed at assisting service providers to operate effectively in compliance with the restrictions resulting from preventive measures. The implementation of the COVID-19 emergency shelter protocol helped shelter staff to provide necessary services to victims of DV and human trafficking without threatening their own health or life or that of the other victims benefiting from the services, their families and the community at large. The minimum operation standards according to the Istanbul Convention and their adaptation to the COVID-19 pandemic emergency were part of this Protocol.

Protocols for the operation of CRMs—during 2020-2021, the MoHSW has circulated three protocols for the approval of CRM members in each municipality, aiming to accelerate the effectiveness of CRM functioning. The Protocol for the functioning of the CRMs aims to standardize the actions that all CRMs' members must take to ensure an immediate, comprehensive and accountable response, in accordance with their legal powers and duties, to protect victims of DV and hold perpetrators accountable. The Protocol for CRM functioning during COVID-19 restrictions aims to assist local authorities at the municipal level—members of the CRMs responsible for prevention and management of DV cases, particularly members of the Multidisciplinary Technical Team—in adequately handling DV cases during the COVID-19 situation. The Protocol for the management of sexual violence cases through CRMs aims to assist local authorities at the municipal level—members of the CRMs responsible for prevention and management of sexual violence cases, particularly members of the Multidisciplinary Technical Team—in adequately handling these cases. The principles highlighted in these Protocols are aligned with those in the Istanbul Convention, and partially also with Directive (EU) 2024/1385 on combating violence against women and DV.

The **Audiovisual Media Broadcasting Code,** approved with Decision no. 60, dated 10.07.2023, contains a special chapter related to the fight against sexism and the portrayal of gender stereotypes in audiovisual media content. The Code was drafted in accordance with the international acts and recommendations, specifically Recommendation Rec (2007)17 of the Committee of Ministers of Member States on gender equality standards and mechanisms, Recommendation Rec (2017) 9 of the Committee of Ministers of Member States on

gender equality in the audiovisual media sector, and the National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030. The Code expressly guarantees the protection and respect of human rights, including the promotion of gender equality, the prevention of gender discrimination and the fight against sexism in audiovisual media.

The **Cooperation Agreement for the Operation of the National Referral Mechanism for Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking**, signed on 26 June 2023, focuses on the victims of trafficking and potential victims of trafficking and their protection, examining each situation on a case-by-case basis. It creates standards accepted by all on the process of identification, referral and protection of victims of trafficking through a "victim-centred" approach. This agreement and the functioning of the National Referral Mechanism for Victims and Potential Victims of Trafficking are well aligned with EU Directive 2011/36/EU (Anti-trafficking Directive), Directive 2012/29/EU (Victims' Rights Directive), and the Warsaw Convention. While challenges remain, such as improving victim reintegration programmes and ensuring effective law enforcement, Albania has made significant progress in bringing its anti-trafficking policies closer to EU standards.

Annex 4. Gender Indicators

Table 12

Gender-specific SDG indicators

	Global SDG gender-specific indicators		2020	2021	2022	2023
Goal 1	1.2.1 Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age (%)	women	22.3	22.5	21.1	20.2
		men	21.4	21.5	20.1	19.3
	Less than 18 years	women	30.1	30.2	28.6	27.3
		men	26.7	26.8	26.3	25.7
	From 18 to 64 years	women	21.7	22	20.5	19.6
		men	21.4	21.7	19.8	18.8
	65 years or over	women	14.5	14.8	14.7	14.5
		men	13	13.1	13	12.9
	1.2.2 Proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions (%)	women	48.1	48.7	na	na
		men	44.2	44.5	na	na
	16-24 years old	women	45.8	47.0	na	na
		men	44.3	44.5	na	na
	25-49 years old	women	43.7	45.3	na	na
		men	40.1	41.4	na	na
	50-64 years old	women	50.1	48.5	na	na
		men	44.7	45.0	na	na
	65+ years old	women	52.5	53.8	na	na
		men	45.6	46.5	na	na
Goal 3	3.1.1 Maternal mortality ratio		3.6	7.3	0	8.5
	3.1.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel		99.98	99.97	99.96	na
	3.3.1 Number of new HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population, by sex, age and key populations	women	0.011	0.016	0.011	na
		men	0.036	0.036	0.036	na
	3.4.1 Mortality rate atributed to cardioviascular disease, cancer, diabets or chronic respiratory disease by sex					
	Diabetes	women	na	3.8	2.3	na
		men	na	5.2	5.4	na
	Respiratory system	women	na	5.7	4.4	na
		men	na	15.8	8.6	na
	Blood circulation system	women	na	156.7	117.3	na
		men	na	337.2	250.2	na
	Tumors	women	na	90.0	84.0	na
		men	na	133.5	131.0	na
	3.7.1 Proportion of women of reproductive age (aged 15–49 years) who have their need for family planning satisfied with modern methods (ADHS 2018)		60.5*	na	na	na
	3.7.2 Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group		13.3	12.1	10.0	na

	Global SDG gender-specific indicators		2020	2021	2022	2023
Goal 4	4.2.2 Participation rate in organized learning (one year before the official primary entry age), by sex	women	84.0	90.6	90.4	na
		men	88.6	95.1	94.9	na
	4.5.1 Parity indices (female/male, rural/urban, bottom/top wealth quintile and others such as disability status, indigenous peoples and conflict-affected, as data become available) for all education indicators on this list that can be disaggregated					
	pre-primary		0.96	0.98	0.97	na
	primary and low secondary		0.94	0.94	0.93	na
	upper secondary		0.93	0.91	0.94	na
	tertiary		1.54	1.48	1.45	na
Goal 5	5.2.1 Proportion of ever-partnered women and girls aged 15 years and older subjected to physical, sexual or psychological violence by a current or former intimate partner in the previous 12 months, by form of violence and by age (VAW 2018)		33.7*	na	na	na
	5.3.1 Proportion of women aged 20–24 years who were married or in a union before age 15 and before age 18 - Early marriges (up to age 19)	women	13.2	11.9	10.7	na
		men	0.7	0.6	0.6	na
	5.4.1 Proportion of time spent on unpaid domestic and care work, by sex, age and location (2010 TUS)	women	24*	na	na	na
		men	3.3*	na	na	na
	5.5.1 a Proportion of seats held by women in national parliaments		29.5	35.7	35.7	35.7
	5.5.1 b Proportion of seats held by women in local governments (municipal councils)		na	na	na	42.2
	5.5.2 Proportion of women in managerial positions		35.4	35.5	34.9	na
	5.b.1 Proportion of individuals who own a mobile telephone, by sex (ADHS 2018)	women	89.2	na	na	na
		men	94.1	na	na	na
Goal 8	8.5.2 Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities (15-64 years old)	women	12.4	12.4	11.7	11.3
		men	12	11.8	10.9	11.1
Goal 10	10.2.1 Proportion of people living below 50 per cent of median income, by sex, age and persons with disabilities	women	15.0	15.5	na	na
		men	13.7	14.4	na	na
	0-17 years old	women	21.8	22.2	na	na
		men	17	18.7	na	na
	18-64 years old	women	8.3	8.7	na	na
		men	6.8	7	na	na
	65+ years old	women	8.3	8.7	na	na
		men	6.8	7	na	na
Goal 16	16.1.1 Number of victims of intentional homicide per 100,000 population, by sex and age	women	0.6	0.8	0.6	na
		men	3.7	3.9	2.9	na
	16.2.2 Number of victims of human trafficking per 100,000 population, by sex, age and form of exploitation	women	4.4	7	5.8	na
		men	1.7	4.3	2.3	na

Data sources: INSTAT, Eurostat

Table 12

Gender-specific EU SDG indicators

EU SDG gender-specific indicators			2020	2021	2022	2023
Goal 1	Severe material and social deprivation by sex	women	41.0	41.3	na	na
		men	36.8	36.7	na	na
Goal 3	Share of people with good or very good perceived health by sex	women	80.9	81.3	na	na
		men	84.7	84.7	na	na
	Self-reported unmet need for medical examination and care by sex	women	11.8	12.3	11.3	na
		men	9.4	9.0	9.1	na
Goal 4	Tertiary educational attainment by sex (25-34 years old)	women	na	na	na	53.0
		men	na	na	na	34.0
	Share of individuals having at least basic digital skills by sex (16-74)	women	na	23.5	na	21.6
		men	na	24.2	na	25.1
	Early school leavers from education and training by sex	women	15.5	17.1	na	na
		men	15.7	17.8	na	na
Goal 5	Gender pay gap unadjusted (SES 2018, 2022)		6.8 (2018)	na	6.7	na
	Persons outside the labour force due to caring responsibilities by sex	women	28.0	30.3	26.3	25.7
		men	1.0	0.9	1.5	0.5
Goal 8	Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex (NEET)	women	30	29.1	27.8	25.6
		men	25.8	23.2	22.6	23.5
	Long-term unemployment rate by sex (15-64)	women	7.3	8.1	7.8	2.8
		men	7.2	7.2	7.4	3.0
	Employment rate by sex (15-64)	women	53.6	53.8	58.9	61.8
		men	67.8	68.2	71.3	72.9
	Self employed	women	24.6	22.7	23.1	21.7
		men	37.8	38.1	37.1	35.1
	Contributing family workers	women	26.1	25.0	26.6	25.7
		men	15.0	12.9	14.8	15.0
	Employees	women	49.3	52.3	50.4	52.6
		men	47.2	49.0	48.0	49.9

Data sources: INSTAT, Eurostat

Table 13
Gender Indices

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Gender Equality Index (GEI)	60.4	na	na	na
Gender Inequality Index (GII)	0.06	0.09	0.06	na
Gender Development Index (GDI)	0.978	0.977	0.974	0.963
Women's Empowerment Index (WEI)	na	na	0.61	na
Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI)	na	na	0.86	na
Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)	0.769	0.77	0.787	0.791
Social Institutions and Gender Index (SIGI)	na	na	na	8.9

Data source: INSTAT, UNWOMEN, UNDP, OECD, WEF

Table 14
Contextual indicators by domains

		2020	2021	2022	2023
2023 Census Population (in thousand)	**total** **women** **men**				**2402.1** **1211.7** **1190.4**
Life expectancy at birth	women	79.6	78.7	80.9	na
	men	75.2	74.4	77.3	na
Gender gap in life expectancy at birth		4.4	4.3	3.6	na
Sex ratio at birth		106.6	107.6	107.4	106.8
Gender ratio at 60+		na	na	na	94.6
Total fertility rate		1.34	1.32	1.21	na
Economy					
Labour Force Participation rate by sex, 15-64	women	61.2	61.4	66.7	69.6
	men	77.1	77.3	80.0	82
Labour Force Participation rate by sex, 25-54	women	76.6	75.1	79.7	82.5
	men	89.7	89.4	90.8	93.3

		2020	2021	2022	2023
Employment rate by economic activity and sex					
Agriculture	women	41.1	40	40.1	37.3
	men	31.8	28.8	33.9	27.9
Manufacturing	women	14.1	13.5	14.7	13.9
	men	8.8	9.4	11.5	8.9
Construction	women	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.8
	men	12.2	14.2	7.6	13.4
Mining and quarrying; electricity, gasand water supply	women	1.1	0.9	0.9	0.8
	men	3.3	4	2.8	3.4
Trade, Trasportation, Accomodation and Food and Bussines and Administrative services	women	21.6	22.3	22.5	25.6
	men	31.7	30.1	27	32
Public administration, Community, Social and other Services and Activities	women	21.2	22.9	21.2	21.5
	men	12.2	13.6	17.2	14.3
Share of part time employment to total employment by sex (15-64)	women	20.2	21.4	19.5	17.6
	men	12.6	11.7	10.5	9.3
Unemployment rate by sex, 15-64	women	12.4	12.4	11.7	11.3
	men	12.0	11.8	10.9	11.1
Inactivity rate by sex (15-64)	women	38.8	38.6	33.3	30.4
	men	22.9	22.7	20.0	18.0
Pupils/students	women	31.2	28.1	29.3	32.4
	men	45.2	42.4	48.7	52.5
In retirement	women	14.3	13.7	10.5	13.5
	men	6.2	5.5	4.2	2.8
Permanently disabled	women	7.9	7.3	8.4	8.9
	men	16.1	17.9	18.7	19.7
Fullfilling domestic tasks	women	28	30.3	26.3	25.7
	men	1	0.9	1.5	0.5
Discouraged	women	7.8	9.3	8.8	4
	men	17.3	17.6	11.9	4.6
Gender pay gap		6.6	4.5	6.2	6.2

		2020	2021	2022	2023
Health					
Abortion rate per 1,000 live births		162	164	170	na
Number of deaths from cervical and breast cancer		404	402	325	na
Number of suicides by sex	women	60	51	59	na
	men	155	167	132	na
Education					
Graduated students in tertiary education by sex	women	66.1	66.3	na	na
	men	33.9	33.7	na	na
Proportion of students graduated in STEM	women	13.8	12.0	14.1	15.3
	men	32.1	31.2	34.1	36.0
Proportion of students graduated in ICT by sex	women	3.4	3.3	3.8	4.5
	men	9.3	10.2	10.5	11.9
Internet use by sex (16-74)	women	72.91	79.11	84.9	84.19
	men	74.96	81.15	86.76	87.07
Decision making					
Share of women as owner/administrator by size of active enterprises		31.4	31.1	31.2	31.2
The proportion of women among the highest-ranking civil servants		45.2	49.7	53.8	53.8
Percentage of women as judges of the supreme court		na	14.3	18.2	20

Data source: INSTAT, Eurostat, EIGE

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