



FINAL STATEMENT

On behalf of the: Child Rights Centre Albania, Albanian Coalition for Education, Albanian National Youth Network, Albanian National Child Rights Network, Albanian National Child Helpline, and ECPAT Albania.

Albania has strived to advance human rights for children and youth. Yet, despite many advancements, wide spread corruption, political infighting, weak public institutions, immense corruption and lack of public investment, has seriously hindered the efforts to protection of the rights for children and youth. Albania has a positive legal framework for protection of children, yet they remain unprotected. There is no legal framework for youth rights in Albania. Most of the public policies for children and young people, yet the institutions lack capacities and budget to implement them.

More than 20% of children in Albania live in absolute poverty. This means that at least 100,000 children, due to poverty cannot attend regularly public education. There is no national programme to support children who live in extreme poverty. Children from the Roma community are the most affected by poverty, discrimination, prejudices, early marriages and migration. 1 in 4 Roma children is out of school.

Albania, in comparison to other countries in Europe, spends less on public education. Public schools are solely funded by the Government. Bullying and violence in schools are widespread. Schools do not have an effective and functioning mechanism where bullying and violence can be reported. Children often complain that teachers use verbal abuse against them. Law on pre-university education system needs to be improved in this regard.

BECAN - the largest study on violence against children in Albania found that 69% were victims of psychological abuse, 59% of physical violence, and 11% of sexual abuse. Lack of protection measures in internet is exposing children and young people towards bullying, violence, hate and exploitation. There is a significant lack of data on child slavery, trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation. Reports estimate that over 5000 children are victims of trafficking and smuggling. Children are subject to sex trafficking, slavery for begging and forced labour within the country, especially during tourist season. Although violence against children and trafficking constitute criminal offences, few legal actions have been taken to report the perpetrators and provide remedies to children.

Child protection system is fragmented and lacks well-trained staff, funding and support from the local and national government. Social care services are almost inexistent and lack Government support both in case management and service provision.

The population of young people in Albania is pursuing an ever-decreasing trajectory. The overall number of girls, because of selective abortions, continues to have a marked difference with the overall number of boys. In 2018 the difference among both groups aged 15-29 is 13,108 persons in favour of boys.

Albanian Youth due to the lack of legislation and policies often feel neglected from their Government. Youth poverty is very common. Nearly 14 percent of the population continues to live in absolute poverty. According to official data (2017), almost 26% of young people are out of the labour market, mostly boys. Almost 50 percent of all criminal offenses are committed by youth. There are no specialised programs and services for children and youth in conflict with the law. Young people's participation in politics and decision-making processes remains extremely very low.

OUR RECCOMENDATIONS

On the rights of the child

- Albania should establish a national programme to support children living in poverty, and take serious measures to fight child slavery, forced labour and commercial sexual exploitation of children;
- Children have the right to education in safe schools. Based on this the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth must urgently address the issue of violence, bullying and discrimination in all education institutions by developing a National Action Plan for the Elimination of Violence in Schools;
- Child protection and other services should be harmonized and support the protection of children and young people from sexual abuse, extreme poverty, slavery, online grooming, bullying and hate;
- Increase share of GDP spent on education in order to ensure free, equitable, quality and inclusive public education for all.
- The state party should target Roma children, especially girls and children with disabilities, to enrol in primary education by providing incentives to their families, as well as to provide free meals for children living in poverty to attend compulsory education.
- Every child should have universal health access and social care provided for free of charge;
- The Ministry of Justice should support already established Legal Aid Offices of civil society organisations, providing free legal aid and protection services for children and youth in conflict with the law;
- Albania should apply new models of administration, restorative justice and diversion measures in the spirit of the new Juvenile Justice Code;

On Youth Rights

- The Parliament should continue to take measures and increase the accountability of the Government regarding the fact that three years after its approval, the National Youth Action Plan remains to be implemented in its entirety.
- Approval of the Youth Law is of paramount importance for the country and to improve considerably the situation of youth rights.
- Albania should increase the participation and representation of young people at all levels of decision-making.
- Albanian Parliament should encourage the Ministry of Economy and Finance and municipalities to increase the number of young people employed nationwide, through the development and implementation of various programs that promote youth employment.
- Albanian Parliament should promote and encourage cooperation between the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, and the Ministry of Economy and Finance, to support youth-led businesses and employment programs.
- The Parliament should prioritize the establishment of the Parliamentary Subcommittee on Youth within the Parliament.