

PROGRAMME OF COOPERATION FOR
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2017-2021

Progress Report 2020



REPUBLIC OF ALBANIA
COUNCIL OF MINISTERS



UNITED NATIONS
ALBANIA



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FOREWORD

In our capacity as the Co-Chairs of the Joint Executive Committee of the Government of Albania and the United Nations in Albania, we are pleased to present the Annual Progress Report of the fourth year of our Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (PoCSD) 2017–2021. This penultimate year of implementation and reporting on the PoCSD provides an occasion to reflect on the achievements made, recognise challenges and identify future programmes that will improve Albania’s post-earthquake and Covid-19 derailed development.

The year 2020 was a significant one for Albania and the United Nations. The country celebrated its 65th anniversary of membership to the organisation and, supported by the UN in Albania, improved living conditions for poor and vulnerable people in the country, strengthened equitable and quality service delivery, improved environmental protection and enhanced alignment of Albania’s efforts with the 2030 Agenda. Joint efforts were particularly vested to respond to the needs that arose from both the earthquake and the Covid-19 crisis, supporting the most vulnerable communities in solidarity and leadership for coordinated, multi-lateral action with government and other partners. Much more remains to be done given the unprecedented nature of these crisis, and the risk they pose, both to human life at the present, and to development and the achievement of SDGs, and for years to come.

With regard to post-earthquake recovery, the UN in Albania undertook, jointly with the Government of Albania, the EU and the World Bank, a post-disaster needs assessment (PDNA) to assess damages and to serve as the basis for mobilising the donor community. It also deployed international advisers for the post-disaster emergency response and early recovery efforts, mobilised core relief items, addressed critical child protection and education needs and provided direct services to affected children and families. Recovery initiatives are currently

being implemented in education, economic recovery and resilience, including agriculture, community infrastructure, cultural heritage, child protection, social protection, gender equality, and disaster risk reduction, while seeking to integrate humanitarian and development programming where feasible and appropriate to do so.

On the Covid-19 crisis, the UN family also worked closely with the Government of Albania to identify areas of emergency support, aiming to reduce the impact on the poorest and other vulnerable groups. WHO played an important role in assisting Albania with Covid-19 case management and infection prevention. UN agencies are now working together with government on how to overcome the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. UNCT prepared a Socio-Economic Recovery and Response Plan for Albania that provides a scan of the current situation and sets out the UN’s consolidated offer of socio-economic recovery and response support. We will continue working on long-term strategies to battle the virus until its eradication and to be able to better cope with similar challenges in the future.

Our success through the years is founded on solid and long-term partnerships, which aid to mobilise financing towards Albania’s achievement of Agenda 2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals, and the ambition to integrate into the European Union. In 2020, the UN collectively delivered USD 26.7 million through its programmes, of which 80 percent were mobilised by efforts of the country offices. Support for the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund this year not only included our flagship joint programmes—Leave No One Behind (Switzerland) and Eliminating Violence against Women (Sweden)—but also new and renewed programmes between the governments of Albania and Norway. The Fund enlisted EUR 11.65 million in contributions from the governments of Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the UK in support of the Government of Albania’s post-earthquake recovery efforts. Bilateral

agreements, multilateral partnerships, global and regional funding opportunities are also significant contributors to the work of UN agencies in various priority areas in the country, especially the EU’s bilateral support to UNDP and UNOP’s earthquake recovery efforts. Details of partners contributions and the achievements enabled by such support can be found in this comprehensive report!

This year, we also intensified efforts towards further strengthening regional cooperation through implementation of current initiatives such as building momentum and sustainability for the Regional Youth Cooperation Office and preparing applications for a declaration of regional eligibility for the Peace Building Fund (PBF).

The year 2020 was also the second in implementation of the UN’s reform of the Development System, the preparation of the Government of Albania and the United Nations new Programme ‘UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022–2026’, better tailored to Albania’s needs, and the development of the new National Strategy for Development and Integration 2021–2030.

We hope this report informs on the comprehensive work we do in the country and inspires you to join forces together to shape a better future for the citizens of Albania.



Erion Braçe
Deputy Prime Minister
Government of Albania



Fiona McCluney
Resident Coordinator
United Nations in Albania

UNITED NATIONS COUNTRY TEAM IN ALBANIA

Seventeen UN agencies, funds and programmes comprise the United Nations Country Team in Albania, chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator, the designated representative of the UN Secretary General for development operations in the country.

As a family of specialised agencies, UNCT fully supports and works towards the complementary agendas of Albania’s goal of European Union integration and of the national priorities expressed in the National Strategy for Development and Integration, as well as harmonisation and aid effectiveness. These agendas include Albania’s commitment to achieving Agenda2030 and the Sustainable Development Goals.

Merging the comparative advantages of the various UN organisations¹ under the Government of Albania–United Nations Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (PoCSD) 2017–2021, UNCT provides tailor-made support for addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, the disadvantaged and those who are at risk of social exclusion in the country.

The results framework of PoCSD 2017–2021 outlines four Outcomes and 18 Outputs that respond to the country’s needs and make use of the UN’s comparative advantages. The Outputs are made operational through the development of Joint biannual Work Plans (JWPs).

PRIORITY AREAS OF FOCUS FOR THE INTERVENTIONS:

- 1 GOVERNANCE AND RULE OF LAW
- 2 SOCIAL COHESION
- 3 ECONOMIC GROWTH, LABOUR AND AGRICULTURE
- 4 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

Within these priorities, cross-cutting issues of a human rights-based approach, gender equality, social inclusion, specific capacity development for policy formulation and results-based management, and improving the overall evidence base are all being addressed.

UNOPS joined the UNCT Albania in November 2020, cooperating with the other 16 UN agencies that are signatories to PoCSD 2017–2021. Partnering with the government and the EU, UNOPS will facilitate the post-earthquake rehabilitation and reconstruction of key cultural heritage sites and museums.

Also, two new agencies—International Telecommunication Union (ITU) and United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR)—will join UN Albania for the implementation of the new UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework over the period 2022–2026.

Resident UN Agencies



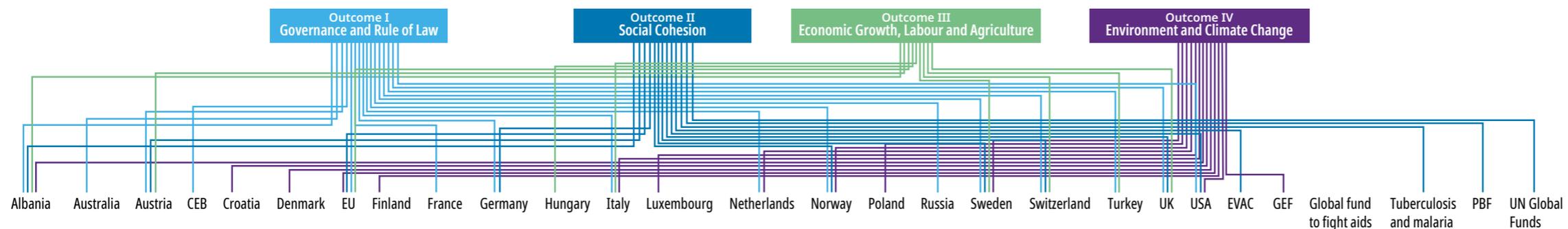
Non-resident UN Agencies



¹ Resident agencies: FAO, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UN Women, WHO, UNOPS; Non-resident agencies: IAEA, ILO, UNCTAD, UNECE, UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNODC.

KEY DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS OF THE UN IN ALBANIA

Partners' contribution to PoCSD Outcomes in 2020



Contributing Partners in 2020



The Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB)
Peace Building Fund
Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria
Global Environment Fund
Global Fund to End Violence Against Children

The key partners of UNCT Albania in the implementation of PoCSD are the government, namely the Deputy Prime Minister's Office and line ministries, independent institutions and local governments, development partners, civil society organisations, and the private sector. The implementation is overseen by four Outcome Results Groups, co-led by the head of two UN agencies and the minister from the key implementing line ministry of the Outcome area and participatory of relevant state and non-state partners, and progress is captured annually in the Annual Progress Reports and in the Mid-Year Reports of the RC that are shared with all partners in the country, made available on the UN Albania website and communicated on the UN Albania social media channels.

During PoCSD 2017–2020 implementation, the United Nations in Albania built very strong relationships with the donor community. PoCSD interventions are mostly donor-driven, as core and regular resources finance less than 20 percent of the resource envelope. In 2020, more than 70 percent of contributions came from the governments of Albania, Germany, Italy, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, and USA, the UN global funds, the EU, and the GEF. In terms of modalities, earmarked project-based interventions are usually the most dominant form of government and donor financing of UN programmatic activities, implemented by individual or joint UN agencies. Mobilisation of the resources

of partners is done either bilaterally by UN agencies or through the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund.

Bilateral agreements support the work of UN agencies and their partners in areas such as labour mediation and gender equality (Sweden), area-based development programming in the north (UK), anti-trafficking (UK), rural women (Italy), legal aid and access to justice (Austria), youth employment (Switzerland), earthquake recovery (EU, Luxemburg, USAID, Switzerland), to name but a few. Multilateral partners, such as the CEB, have supported the expansion of reception capacities for migrants and asylum seekers, and the UN's Peacebuilding Fund is helping the UN to jointly accompany RYCO in its aims. The UN Country Team in Albania has won and is implementing the two first-round grants of the Global Joint SDG Funds on Social Protection and on SDG financing.

The Albania SDG Acceleration Fund is seen as an enabler for "delivering more with less" as it can streamline cooperation between donors with multiple UN agencies. Indicating ownership, the Fund was capitalised with an initial contribution from the Government of Albania to an amount of USD 6.5 million, of which to date the UN has received the first tranche of USD 500,000. Other support to the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund this year included two of our flagship joint programmes—Leave No One Behind (Switzerland) and Eliminating Violence against Women (Sweden)— as well as

funding from new and renewed partners. Contributions of EUR 11.65 million were received from the governments of Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, and the UK in support of the Government of Albania post-earthquake recovery efforts. Meanwhile, in 2021, the EU contribution will be added to the Fund in support of the new project Implementation of the EU Gender Equality *acquis*.

There is a strong alignment of PoCSD with government and international development partner priorities, especially in Outcome 1, 2 and 4, which also mobilised greater resources during 2017–2020 compared to other outcomes. The alignment in Outcome 1 and 2 is consistent with the perceived comparative advantages of the UN's work in the country, as well as with the specialisation and strategic positioning of UN agencies development work vis-à-vis other development agents. Meanwhile in 2020, Outcome 4 - Environment and Climate Change experienced a surge in budgetary commitments to the UN agencies for post-earthquake recovery, following EUR 1.15 billion in pledges for reconstruction and recovery made at the donor conference organised by the EU in February 2020.²

As the financing of PoCSD is heavily dependent upon donor contributions, coordination becomes a key prerequisite for the

² https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pledge_statement_final_0.pdf#page=2

UN, which has played a constructive role through engagement and leadership in coordination forums, such as the Donor Technical Secretariat, Development and Integration Partners, and Integrated Policy Management Groups, as well as bilateral engagement with the EU Delegation, World Bank, International Financial Institutions (IFIs), and EU member states. Some positive examples resulting from stronger coordination and collaboration in 2020 include: (i) the undertaking of the PDNA, prepared jointly by government, the EU, the UN and the World Bank, which enabled significant engagement on the part of partners for post-earthquake recovery support by UN agencies; (ii) coordinating advice on sectoral structural and policy reforms and fiscal and confinement measures related to the Covid-19 pandemic, ensuring that interventions and stimulus packages promote gender equality and support the most vulnerable; (iii) establishment of the Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) task force - UN (RC, WHO, UNICEF), World Bank, European Union and the Government of Albania - and preparations for vaccinations to start in 2021; and (iv) strong engagement in consultations for the preparation of the new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework 2022-2026. Of particular relevance for the coming years is the strengthening of PoCSD's coherence with EU assistance, as the UN agencies have increasingly positioned themselves towards assisting the country's EU accession process, leveraging IFI financing, and approaching non-traditional donors, and the private sector.

CHAPTER 1

KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN ALBANIA AND REGIONAL CONTEXT



KEY DEVELOPMENTS IN ALBANIA AND REGIONAL CONTEXT

Albania is an upper middle-income country on its path to European Union (EU) accession. The National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) 2015-2020 concluded its cycle in 2020 and the Albanian government is in the preparatory phase for the new NSDI III and defining a Vision 2030 for the country.

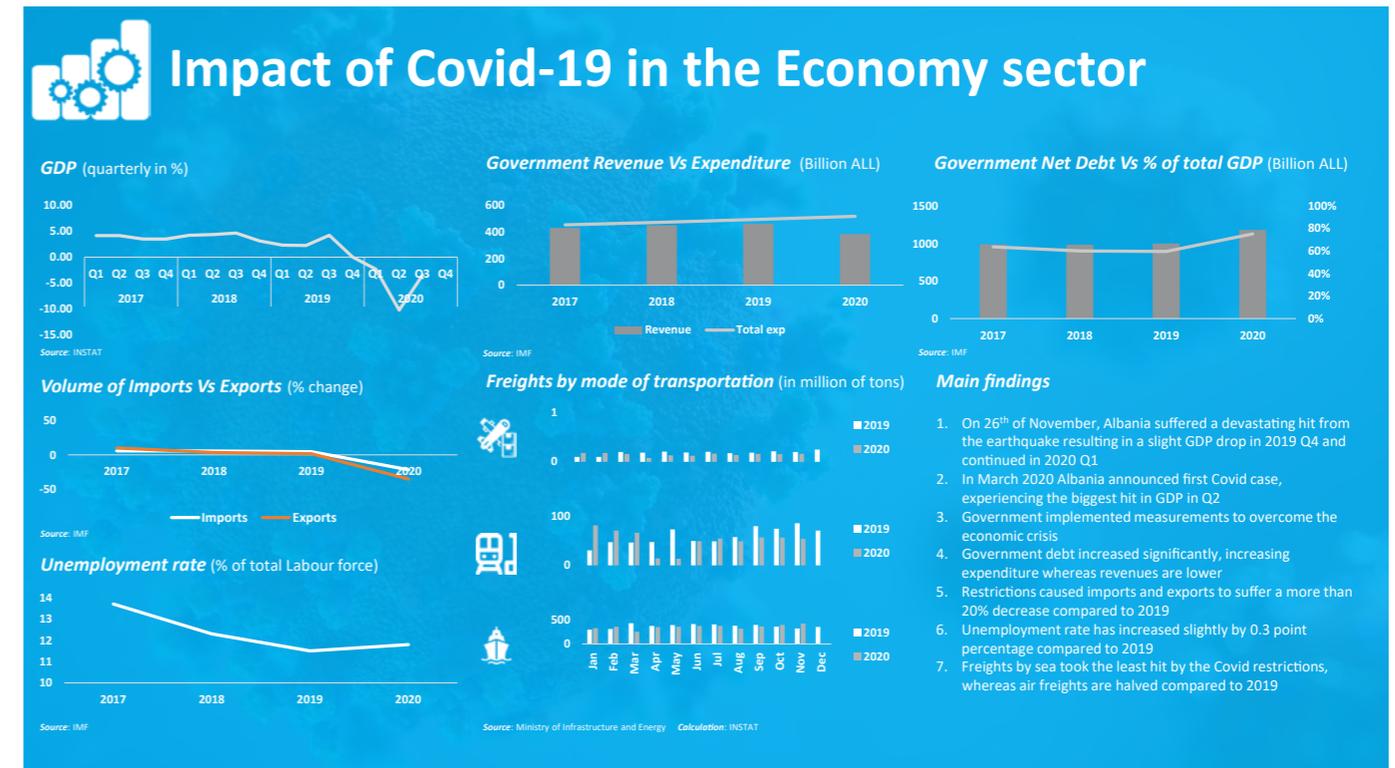
European integration is the main driver of reform in the country and a shared political priority. Albania reached a major milestone in March 2020, when the Council of the European Union agreed to open accession negotiations with the country. To advance the integration process, Albania needs to continue to complete key steps in judicial reform implementation, and make progress in public administration reform, in combating organised crime and corruption, in human rights and in respecting the rights of persons belonging to minorities.³

The political environment in Albania continued to be marked by intense polarisation. Parliamentary activities were affected by the opposition relinquishing their mandates. The political stalemate saw an opening in 2020, when in preparation for the national parliamentary elections (April 25, 2021), the ruling majority and the opposition reached an agreement to take forward the electoral reform.⁴ The subsequent passage of election-related constitutional amendments, without agreement with the opposition, deepened mistrust between political stakeholders, leading to renewed calls from international actors for inclusive electoral reform.

As the Covid-19 pandemic followed the severe earthquake that devastated the country and its economy in November

³ On 9 June 2020, the government presented to an extended meeting of the National Council for European Integration an action plan to address the conditions and priorities set by the March 2020 Council Conclusions on Albania. On 6 May 2020, government nominated the Chief Negotiator and the negotiating team.

⁴ Agreement to gradually introduce a depoliticised electoral administration, in line with OSCE/ODIHR recommendations; introduce electronic identification of all the voters (where technically viable), restructure the Central Election Commission, and for the Electoral College to be comprised of vetted judges.



2019, Albania paid a heavy human and economic toll and had to confront unique challenges such as exacerbating poverty, inequality and vulnerability and increased gender-based violence. At the end of 2019, the economy was projected to grow by 3.5 percent in 2020; instead, the GDP contracted by 8.4 percent,⁵ while the tourism sector suffered significantly and tourist arrivals decreased by 58.5 percent compared to 2019.

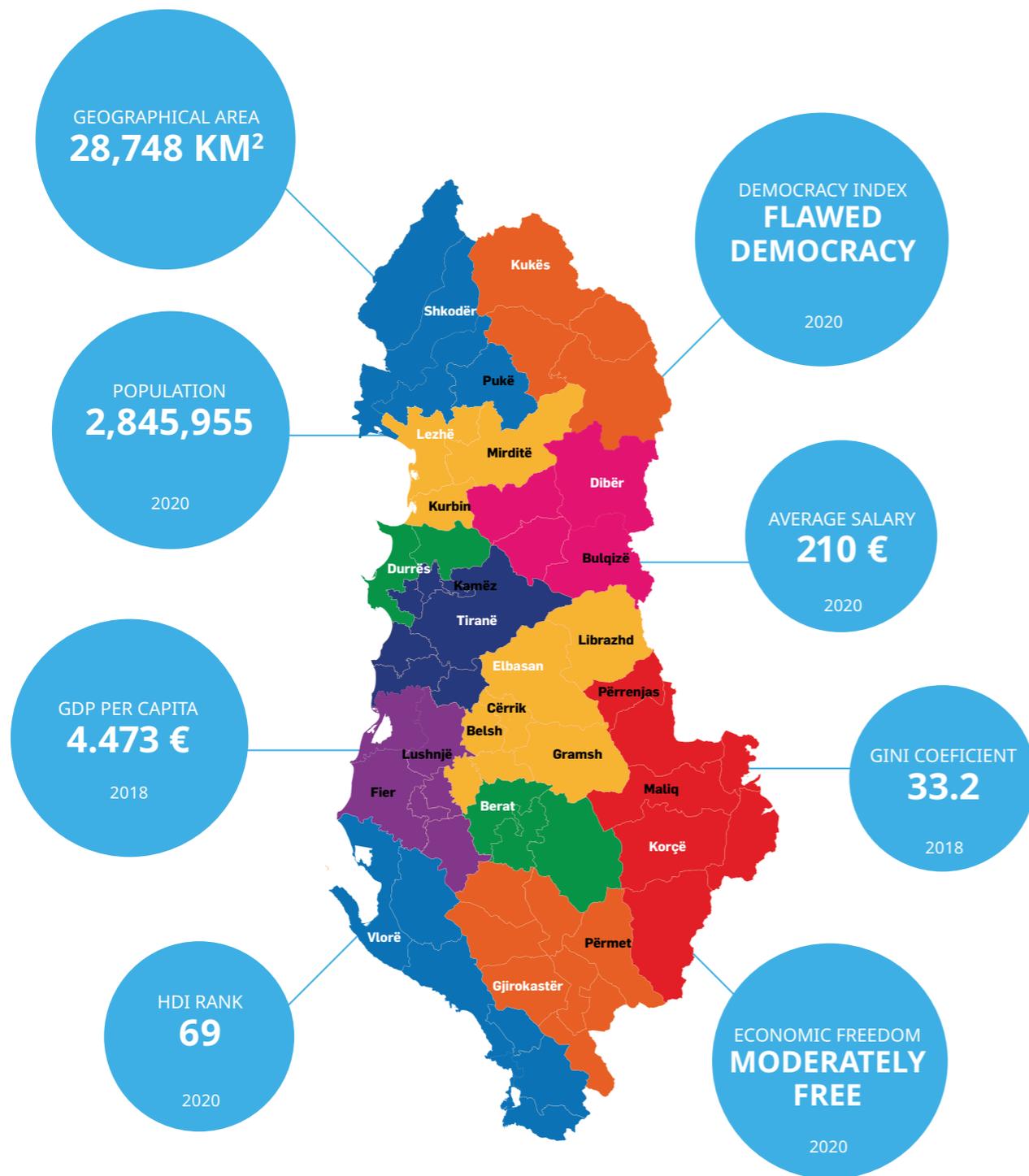
The pandemic has further exposed Albania's social care and protection systems and underlined the need to accelerate SDG implementation in the country. Overall improvements are required to enhance the level and quality of education,⁶ as well as to improve the labour

⁵ World Bank: Western Balkans Regular Economic Report: Fall 2020.

⁶ Children in Albania are expected to complete 13 years of pre-primary, primary and secondary school by age 18. However, when years of schooling are adjusted for quality of learning, this is equivalent to only 8.9 years, leaving a learning gap of 4.1 years and demonstrating that four years of schooling time does not result in learning.



At the end of 2019, the economy was projected to grow by 3.5% in 2020; instead, the GDP contracted by 8.4%, while the tourism sector suffered significantly and tourist arrivals decreased by 58.5% compared to 2019.



SOURCE

INSTAT; UNDP; Worl Bank
Heritage Foundation; Economist Intelligence Unit

2000–2018
mortality continued
to fall, with life expectancy
increasing from



71.4 to 74.4
YEARS FOR MEN,
and from



76.9 to 80.6
YEARS FOR WOMEN.

market relevance of vocational education and training and the provision of work-based learning opportunities to reduce skills mismatch. The unemployment rate (15-64 years), which had declined prior to the pandemic reaching 11.4 percent in 2019, increased in 2020, reaching 12.1 percent in the third quarter⁷. With regard to youth Not in Employment, Education or Training (NEET), Albania has the highest percentage (26.6) in the region (16.4).

The population of Albania on 1 January 2020 was 2,845,955 inhabitants, experiencing a decrease of 0.6 percent compared to 1 January 2019, with around 35 percent thought to live in the county of Tirana. Over the past nearly two decades (2000–2018) mortality in Albania has continued to fall, with life expectancy increasing from 71.4 to 74.4 years for men, and from 76.9 to 80.6 years for women. However, a worrying trend can be seen in the most recent INSTAT data indicating a slight increase in child mortality, neonatal deaths and maternal mortality rates: infant mortality rate (10.3 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2019 vs. 8.9 in 2018), under-5 mortality rate (10.1 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2018 vs. 9.2 in 2017; INSTAT, 2019) and maternal mortality rates (3.4 maternal deaths per 100,000 live births in 2018 vs. 7 in 2019).

⁷ INSTAT Labour Force Survey 2020

Albania is prone to numerous natural hazards, and has witnessed earthquakes, floods, forest fires and landslides within the past twelve months. The need to transition to a green economy and take early actions to address climate change, avoid habitat loss and fragmentation, reduce pollution and improve waste management and infrastructure are urgent priorities that require increased focus and coordinated action. Further work in terms of building back better and greening the economic recovery after the pandemic have become increasingly important, together with the need to integrate environmental and climate considerations into the national regulatory framework.

Strengthening regional cooperation rests at the centre of Albania's foreign policy and leads the country's constructive approach and active leadership in the region. Albania is part of the Regional Economic Area (REA) for the Western Balkans, and Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) for economic development in the region. The country hosts the secretariats of the Regional Youth Cooperation Office (RYCO) and the Western Balkans Fund (WBF), highlighting the belief that neighbourly relations and mutual trust can strengthen the security and stability of the entire region.

CHAPTER 2

UN IN ALBANIA SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES



UN IN ALBANIA SUPPORT TO NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

2.1. Executive Summary

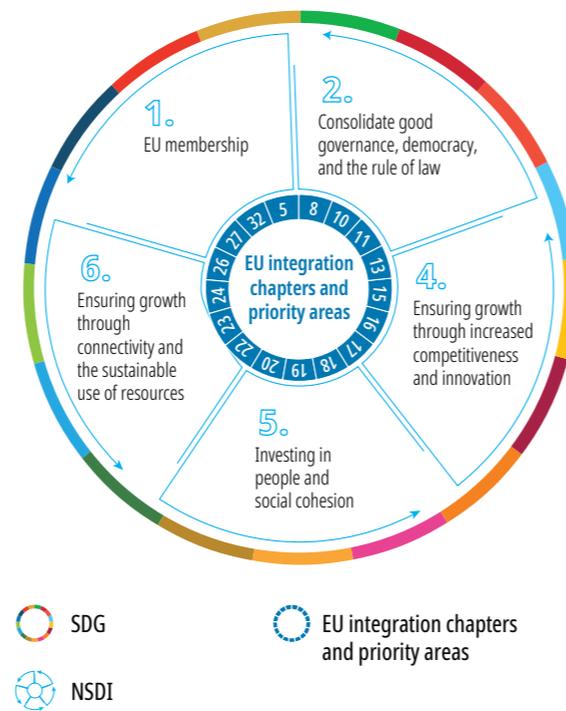
Still reeling from the devastating earthquake of November 2019, Albania faced two back-to-back shocks in 2020 that combined to cause further severe economic and social hardship for the country, as well as a more restricted fiscal space in the context of dwindling global financial resources.

Chapter 2 presents UN in Albania's contribution and results for the year from working with government, civil society and development partners for sustainable development in four areas that represent the outcomes of PoCSD 2017–2021: 1) Governance and Rule of Law, 2) Social Cohesion, 3) Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture, and 4) Environment and Climate Change. This chapter also presents an account of UN in Albania efforts towards post-earthquake (BOX 1) and Covid-19 recovery (BOX 2), implementation details—financial delivery and operations and communications management—and steps taken to accelerate achievement of the SDGs in the country, including through partnership building.

2.2. Overview Delivering Results for Albania

The efforts of the UN in Albania under the four outcomes of the PoCSD support the Government of Albania in achieving five out of six priorities of the National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) 2015–2020, all 17 SDGs and 17 EU integration chapters and priority areas (see figure 1 for reference).

Figure 1

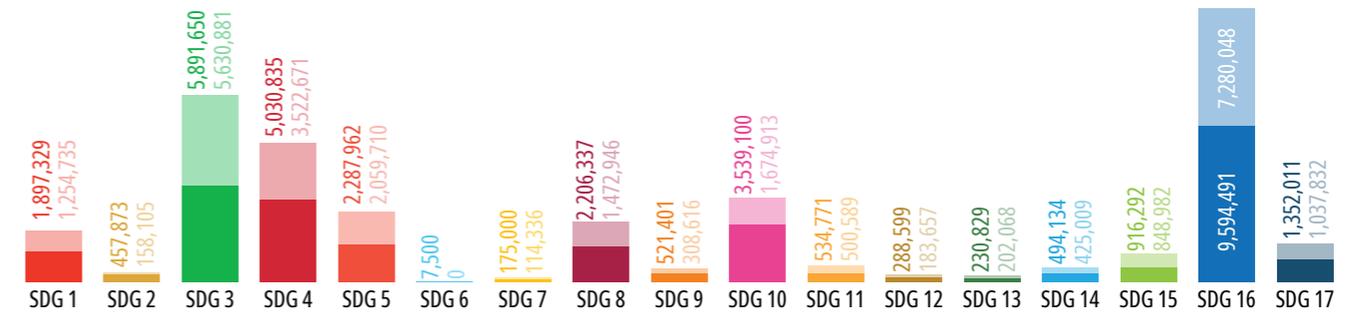


Implementation of PoCSD in 2020 aimed at a budget of USD 35 million, with 83 percent provided by government and development partners in the country, including national, regional and global. By the end of the year, the programme

AVAILABLE BUDGET

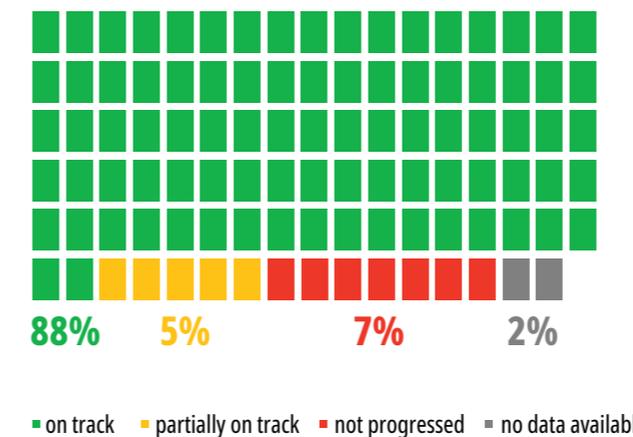


Budget and Expenditure SDGs



achieved a delivery rate of 75 percent, with the balance carried over into 2021. For detailed information, see section 2.6 Financial Overview and Resource Mobilisation.

PoCSD indicators (101) of progress (outcome and output) are 88% on track.

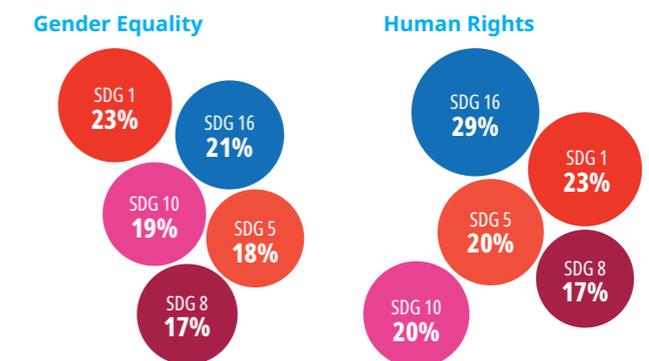


UN in Albania interventions in 2020 are assessed and matched against the SDG goals and targets. Out of the 35 million invested in 2020, almost 75% is focused on driving progress in achieving five SDGs - 27 percent on SDG 16, 17 percent on SDG 3, 14 percent on SDG 4, 10 percent on SDG 10, and 7 percent on SDG 5. Driving progress in achieving SDG 1 and 8 has also been important for UN in Albania, dedicating no less than 5 percent of the budget to each of these SDGs. Meanwhile, the increased focus in 2020 on SDGs 9, 11 and 17 is strongly related to supporting national

efforts to respond to the earthquake emergency. Attention on these SDGs, but not only, is in line with the focus of UN work in Albania, which is on building people centered governance, rule of law and human rights, ensuring quality education for all, reducing inequalities, building sustainable, resilient economic growth and resource management, and effective response and recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Efforts under Outcome 1 and 2 contributed significantly to gender and human rights issues with a strong presence in SDGs 1, 5, 10, 8, and 16.

Gender Equality and Human Rights focused activities in SDGs



A few flagship results, supported by UN in Albania, for each of the four Outcomes are provided below. Reference is made to key SDG targets that these results contribute to achieve.

OUTCOME 1

Governance and Rule of Law

State and civil society organizations perform effectively and with accountability for consolidated democracy in line with international norms and standards



Alignment with SDGs

3
5
8
10
15
16
17



Alignment with National Development Goals

1
2



Alignment with EU Integration Chapters & Priority Areas

5
10
16
17
18
22
23
24

INDICATOR

INDICATOR	Baseline 2016-2017	Status 2020
↑ % women in government ministerial positions	MPs 21% Municipal Councillors, 35% Public Sector, 44.6%	MPs, 29.5% Municipal Councillors, 43.7% Public Sector, 55%
↑ Perceptions of performance of public institutions	Parliament 10% Government 14% Local Government 13%	Parliament, 24.2% Government, 36.4% Local Government, 41.6%
↓ Rate of children in detention (per 100,000 population aged 14–17)	33.3	13.2
↑ No. of seizures by PCU	60%	80%
↑ No. LGUs operating OSS for service delivery	3	59
↑ No of municipal action plans that have a budget line for youth, including education and SRH	0	15
↑ No. LGUs with a physical archiving system and increased capacities, legal knowledge and skills on physical archiving.	0	61
↑ No. LGUs with web pages meeting transparency legal requirements	21	61
↑ No. LGUs implementing the transparency performance measurement system	0	61
↑ No. LGUs publishing Council Decisions online	27	61
↑ Existence of legislation that recognises a child's right to be heard in civil and administrative proceedings that affect them (in line with Article 12 of the CRC)	1 Law	5 Laws
↑ No. Free Legal Aid Centers at District Court level to ensure equitable and unhindered access to justice to the most vulnerable persons	0	8
↑ Extent of gender mainstreaming in the central budgeting process	24 MTBPs	38
↑ No. GoA draft policies, strategies and plans engendered	2	5
↑ No. municipalities adopting and implementing gender-responsive MTBP	3	10
↑ Reception capacities at the border increased, with a differentiated approach for women and children at risk.	1 centre	2 centres established for women and children at risk (at least 15 persons)
↑ No. of measures of Action Plan of National Strategy on Migration Governance implemented	3	10 measures fully implemented, 29 under implementation, 12 partially implemented.

Output 1.1 Human Rights

SDG target: 5.5, 16.2, 16.3, 16.6, 16.9, 16.10, 16.b, 17.18

Two monitoring reports were prepared and submitted on implementation of (i) CEDAW in Albania (CEDAW Fifth State Report and the People's Advocate shadow report to CEDAW); and (ii) National Action Plans 'On Implementation of Resolution 1325' (85.71% of plan achieved) and 'On the Rights of the Child 2016–2020', serving as cornerstones for preparation of the new National Action Plans.



26% INCREASE
in the number of child rights violations cases handled by People's Advocate

NHRIs role was strengthened to oversee application of human rights supported by data collection that focuses on Human Rights, credited to an MoU signed with INSTAT, and INSTAT's publication 'Children, Adolescents and Youth-Focused Wellbeing Indicators', marking the starting point for improvement of official statistics, including those reporting progress with SDG indicators.

Albania's Parliament strengthened governance for children through two dedicated parliamentary hearings with government authorities on the fulfilment of the rights of children, as well as their protection during the pandemic; adoption of the Universal Salt Iodisation law; and approval of amendments to the Domestic Violence Law and to the Anti-discrimination Law, designed to increase remedies, protection and services for victims.



470 PERSONS
at risk of statelessness assisted with administrative and judicial procedures

Albania fulfilled one of its pledges at the 2019 High-Level Segment on Statelessness through Parliament's approval



342
PRO-BONO LAWYERS
trained in prevention and reduction of statelessness.

of the Law on Citizenship, which effectively addresses several remaining legislative gaps that had enabled the risk of statelessness in the country.

Output 1.2 Anti-Corruption and Rule of Law

SDG targets: 3.5, 3.7, 8.7, 16.3, 16.4, 16.6, 16.9, 16.10, 16.a, 16.b

Contributing to achievement of SDG targets 3.5 and 16.4, government strengthened capacities to (i) prevent and fight corruption through the preparation of an Integrity Risk Assessment (IRA) Methodology for central government institutions, piloted with formulation of an Integrity Plan for the Ministry of Justice—the National Coordinator against Corruption—the first such plan at the ministerial level in Albania; (ii) control borders through establishment of an Air Cargo Control Unit (ACCU) at Tirana International Airport and regular operations conducted by the already established Port Control Unit (PCU) in Durres, resulting in combined seizures of 37.55 kg of heroin, 25.5 kg of marijuana, EUR 64,000 undeclared, GBP 70,200 undeclared, 9.52 kg smuggled gold, other; (iii) handle criminal investigations through the development or amendment of standard operating procedures (SOPs) in use by CSI police officers, and the provision of several pieces of individual and laboratory equipment for the CSI officers and ballistic analysis; (iv) reduce drug demand through two Universal Treatment Curriculum (UTC) training workshops,⁸ aimed at building international treatment capacity through training; (v) tackle firearms trafficking through the preparation of amendments to the Criminal Code, and development of a case law report, which identified the challenges in investigation and

8. https://www.issup.net/files/2020-11/202010_UNODC_UTC_Report_WEB.pdf

prosecution of firearms trafficking cases, contributing to harmonisation of court practices in adjudicating firearms-related cases.



Contributing to the achievement of SDG target 16.6, the citizen centric public service delivery advanced with expansion of customer care standards in four additional municipalities, and co-location of services in two Citizen Service Centres (CSCs) established by ADISA. The *2019 Mystery Shopper: Assessment of performance in central government service delivery in Albania*⁹ measured the level of compliance with established quality service standards of 18 key central government institutions and 350 branches, provided recommendations for improvements and identified the winners of the 2019 Public Services Excellence Awards based on the highest Front Office Achievement Scores (FAS) achieved.



9. https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/democratic_governance/mystery-shopper-2019--assessment-of-performance-in-central-gover.html

Output 1.3 Local Governance

SDG targets: 3.7, 16.3, 16.5, 16.6, 16.7, 16.10

The One-Stop Shop Information System (OSSIS) was made operational in 15 additional municipalities,¹⁰ bringing the total number of municipalities with OSSIS to 59. In replication of the first round held in 2017, a second Local Governance Mapping¹¹ was carried out, indicating that out of the four governance dimensions, municipalities fare best in Effectiveness and Efficiency, jumping from 60 to 64 out of 100 in 2020, followed by Transparency and Rule of Law (from 56 to 59/100), while Accountability and Participation, and Citizens Engagement remained at their previous levels (59/100, and 50/100, respectively).

The CSO Youth Voice platform expanded to 15 municipalities and 15 Action Plans and Budget for Youth¹² (reaching 100% of the planned target) were compiled at the municipal level reflecting the Youth Voice Platform advocacy. Monitoring reports were conducted in four municipalities (Durrës, Fier, Korce and Permet) assessing the progress of implementation of the budget plan for youth at the local level, but also measuring and evaluating the approach of the new Law on Youth implemented in local policies. The online Media platform Jo Tabu (<https://jotabu.al/>) on young people's SRH and ICPD issues was further strengthened nationally, reaching out to more than 150,000 young people (6–29 years old), including through a new partnership established in 2020 between UNFPA and Euronews Albania to inform on two issues: (i) Covid-19 regular updated information,¹³ and (ii) Parent-adolescent series Jo Tabu of stories and talks about adolescent SRH and rights.¹⁴

10. Diber, Finiq, Fushe-Arrez, Gjirokaster, Himare, Kelcyre, Kucove, Mirdite, Peqin, Puke, Prrenjas, Roskovec, Selenice, Tirane and Vlore.

11. The Second Local Governance Mapping in Albania is a national survey combining citizens' perceptions and municipal officials' accounts on four Good Governance dimensions: Effectiveness and Efficiency, Transparency and Rule of Law, Accountability and Participation & Citizens Engagement. Local Governance Mapping in Albania 2020 | UNDP in Albania

12. Plans were compiled for Belsh, Diber, Durrës, Fier, Korce, Kruje, Lezhe, Maliq, Permet, Pogradec, Roskovec, Shijak, Shkoder, Tirane and Ura Vajgurore. Albanian: https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/al-Permbledhje-Nev-ojat-e-te-rinjve_Dhjetor2020.pdf. English: https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/en-Summary-Young-people-needs_Dec2020.pdf

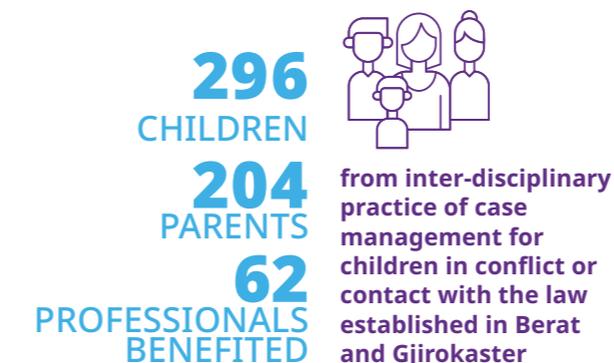
13. <https://euronews.al/al/covid-19/2020/04/01/organizata-jo-fitimprurese>

14. <https://euronews.al/al/search/?keyword=jo+tabu>

Output 1.4 Access to Justice

SDG targets: 5.8, 5.a, 16.2, 16.3

Aiming towards sustainability, thirteen state public agencies¹⁵ signed a Justice for Children MoU committing to inter-disciplinary case management and planning a set of services tailored to children in conflict or contact with the law. Advocating for national replication, the Ministry of Justice organised an online conference, attended by 96 professionals and representatives of public agencies, to share lessons learned from these positive experiences. Moreover, for the first time, government is able to track the cases of children, from the moment they first interact with police, until the last link in the justice chain, and to support inter-agency case management, through the online Integrated System of Data on Criminal Justice for Children (www.drejtisipertemtur.gov.al) set up by the Ministry of Justice and six state public agencies.



Seven out of twelve regional police departments (58%) established a child-friendly interview unit to ensure recording and reduce the number of times children will be interviewed, as part of criminal justice or domestic violence processes, and 20 police officers were trained in the use of the equipment and these spaces. At least 200 attorneys, prosecutors, police officers and other professionals involved in legal processes affecting children were informed and

15. Municipalities of Berat and Gjirokaster; the Regional Police Departments; the Judicial District Courts; the Judicial District Prosecution Offices; the local Bailiffs Service; the Medico-Legal Institute (national); the local Bar Association Branch; the Order of Psychologists (national); the Chamber of Mediators (national); the Public Health Department of Berat and of Gjirokaster; the State Social Services Department; the local Education Department; the Regional Department of Employment and Skills.



Albania increased by
1,091 PERCENT
the number of magistrates tasked
with justice for children cases

capacitated in 2020 on the new normative framework on justice for children. The content of one of largest simulation-based trainings that will engage all actors in the early identification and all the way to court proceedings related to human trafficking was completed and approved.¹⁶ Also, the School of Magistrates developed an in-service training package on International Labour Standards (ILS) and the amicable labour disputes resolution system (ALDR) for judges and labour law practitioners, aiming to strengthen relevant capacities towards a better implementation and enforcement of fundamental labour rights, as well as an effective use of the ALDR system in Albania.

In response to practical difficulties in the identification and referral of unaccompanied and separated children (UASC) at the entry border areas with Greece, a detailed proposal was presented to government authorities for the setting up of a national UASC protection system that would incorporate best interest processes and specialised accommodation. In parallel, the National Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers in Tirana was refurbished to accommodate 30 persons with specific needs (including UASC), as well as a dedicated child-friendly space.

Six FLA centres became operational in Durrës, Fier, Lezhe, Peshkopi, Pogradec and Shkoder, bringing the total number of such centres to eight by the end of 2020, benefiting 1,322 persons¹⁷ in need, with free primary and secondary FLA services in a non-disruptive, inclusive and equal manner, even during the Covid-19 lockdown.

16. The training was developed through the continued guidance of international experts, as well as through in-kind expertise and leadership of the Presence and the OSCE Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings (OSR-CTHB).

17. Persons with low or no income (568) benefited the most, followed by the elderly (199), members of the Roma and Egyptian communities (145) and gender-based and domestic violence victims (40) to mention a few. Some 1,210 persons received primary legal services, benefiting almost equally both genders (women 643; men 679). The top cases demanding free legal aid are divorce, protection orders, birth registrations, alimony benefits, pension benefits, labour disputes, immigration criminal law, social benefits, inheritance cases and property disputes from which a considerable number of women and girls have benefited.

Output 1.5 Mainstreaming Gender and Gender-Responsive Budgeting

SDG targets: 5.1, 5.4, 5.c, 17.18

Contributing to achievement of SDG targets 5.c and 5.4, Albania made outstanding progress in 2020 in mainstreaming the gender perspective into MTBP 2021–2023. Eleven line ministries and two state institutions prioritised gender specific objectives, thus including gender key performance indicators and budget allocations in 38 budget programmes in their MTBP 2021–2023 documents. In addition, the Ministry of Finance and Economy issued its second annual Gender Sensitive Citizen's budget,¹⁸ demonstrating continued commitment to include sex-disaggregated data and gender statistics in the budget and to inform citizens on next year's financial plans.

Data collection disaggregated by sex has also improved in Albania. INSTAT included gender statistics in its 2020 workplan. INSTAT's Women and Men 2020¹⁹ publication included new gender indicators, while a network of gender statistics focal points was established under the leadership of INSTAT to improve the coordination of all stakeholders involved in the production and use of gender-related data. The relationship between INSTAT and National Human Rights Institutions was institutionalised, through the signature of an MoU and capacity development, to produce and report gender statistics on human rights.



¹⁸ <https://www.financa.gov.al/buxheti-i-qytetarit-2/>

¹⁹ <http://www.instat.gov.al/publikimi-interaktiv-burra-dhe-gra/>

Increased annual state budget for gender specific priorities,

**7% IN 2019 TO
9% IN 2020**



150% INCREASE
engenderment of government policies, strategies and plans.



233% INCREASE
the number of municipalities with increased capacities to develop gender-responsive MTBP.



550 PERCENT
increase in SDG gender-related indicators that can be measured in the country.



Output 1.6 Migration and Asylum

SDG targets:

5.2, 8.7, 10.7, 10.b, 16.2, 16.3, 17.16, 17.18

Support to government on implementation of the National Strategy on Migration (2019–2022) and Action Plan and legislation improvement resulted in (i) completion of an in-depth institutional assessment, highlighting the need for ensuring good migration governance in Albania; (ii) starting preparations for the development of a migration governance Training of Trainers (ToT) for government officials and establishment of a Coordination and Monitoring System of Migration Strategy; and (iii) drafting of the new Law on Aliens. By end 2020, the Migration Strategy had 10 measures fully implemented, 29 under implementation, and 12 partially implemented. Improvements in migration data were also supported for use in policy development and implementation. The Household Migration Survey was completed and published and data collection finalised on mix migration flows to Albania at the entry and exit land border with continuous assessment of the situation of mixed movements at the border.

6,165
IRREGULAR MIGRANTS

were provided with Counselling on Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration from Albania to the country of origin



Stakeholders at central and local levels were enabled to address emergency preparedness and response needs, including for Covid-19, within the current refugee and migrant flows. A Registration and Temporary Accommodation Centre (RTAC; 60 person capacity) was established for irregular migrants at Kapshtica, Korce. Reception facilities at two RTACs for irregular migrants were improved. Awareness and understanding of trafficking was strengthened through the campaign 'Strategy Guide on Preventing Unsafe Migration from Albania towards the European Union Member States'. Gaps were identified in the

existing legislation regarding access to services for survivors of violence among mix migration flows and a legal analysis prepared for consideration by the government of Albania.²⁰

The government initiated the consultation and drafting of a Strategy on the Integration and Inclusion of Refugees and Persons Granted Protection in Albania, for implementation in 2021. By the end of 2020, 210 UASC had been supported with child-friendly services, 25 UASC with more long-term accommodation and multiple core services lasting for a few months, and 33 frontline protection workers were capacitated better to deliver services to vulnerable groups of refugees and migrants, with a focus on UASC and Victims of Trafficking. These results directly contribute to SDG targets 5.2, 8.7, 16.2, 16.3 and 17.18.

The government advanced in implementation of its diaspora engagement programme, aiming to bring directly into the country investments from members of the Albanian Diaspora. A Diaspora Mapping and Profile research was completed in five regions of Italy and in Belgium and France. The Connect Albania (CA) Office was established under the Albanian Diaspora Business Chamber and the Connect Albania investment boosting platform²¹ was launched on 18 December, International Migrants Day and National Diaspora day, reaching more than 450,000 Albanian Diaspora members and entrepreneurs, mainly in Italy.

²⁰ Support to the legal and policy framework was carried out both through extensive consultation and expertise sharing with implementing UN agencies, as well as through operational activities on the ground, where discussion with relevant local stakeholders during scoping missions and round-tables revealed a number of legal gaps. In this regard, between September and November 2020 several UN joint field missions were held in the border adjacent areas of Gjirokaster and Korca that assessed the current situation for the identification and referral mechanisms of persons and groups with specific needs, by BMP, as well as the services provided to them by local institutions in the border adjacent area. Findings from the joint missions were used to adapt operational activities and normative support provided to government. One of the findings of the coordinated missions and round-tables organised with local stakeholders in Gjirokaster and Korca revealed legal gaps preventing several categories of migrants from accessing services. This issue was addressed with a thorough legal analysis conducted by the CO and agreed upon with MoHSP. Another important finding from the ground was the lack of female interpreters and psychologists in the border reception centres, which the CO is addressing in consultation with UNHCR and its partner organisations working in the border.

²¹ The 'Connect' idea is based on the central role of the Albanian Diaspora members as development agents, who will mediate and facilitate foreign direct investments (FDIs) into Albania; i.e., will put in contact, accompany and follow up a FDI into Albania. This is the first such programme that will serve directly for potential investments through members of the Albanian Diaspora. <https://www.adbc.al/en/connect-albania-eng/>

OUTCOME 2 Social Cohesion

All women, men, girls and boys, especially those from marginalised and vulnerable groups, are exercising their entitlements to equitable quality services, in line with human rights, while more effective and efficient investments in human and financial resources are being made at central and local levels to ensure social inclusion and cohesion.



INDICATOR

INDICATOR	Baseline 2016-2017	Status 2020
↓ Maternal mortality ratio (per 100,000 deliveries)	32	7
↑ Schoolchildren's learning outcomes (as measured by PISA)	Reading 394 Math 394 Science 397	Math 437 Reading 405 Science 417
↑ No. instruments facilitating implementation of legal framework for Child Protection is in place	0	17
↑ % of Child Protection Units that perform case management of children at risk and need for protection	26%	85%
↑ Number of health-care institutions that have conducted self-assessment on compliance with approved Quality of Care Standards	5 hospitals	12 hospitals and hospital services 6 PHC Centers 4 non-public clinics
↑ Presence of Comprehensive Sexuality Education in all schools at all levels, private and public including 10-18 years of age	20%	50%
↑ No. schools and children reached with Trafficking in human beings' prevention and education interventions	1200	2100
↑ Number of sector-specific policies with explicit social inclusion targets	4	45
↑ No. Roma and Egyptian women and men with improved access to basic social protection services.	357	4500
↑ Number of sector-specific policies with explicit social inclusion targets	4	45
↑ Coordination mechanisms for social protection systems established countrywide	0	6
↓ % Women who have experienced physical violence during their lives	23.7%	18%
↑ No. municipalities with functional CRMs	27	59
↑ No. cases of gender-based violence addressed through CRMs	312	994

Output 2.1 Health

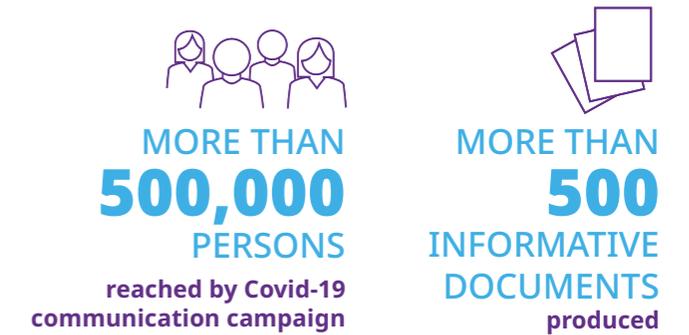
SDG target: 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4, 3.7, 3.8, 3.a, 3.b, 3.c, 3.d, 8.2, 11.6, 16.5, 17.18

UN agency efforts in 2020 were focused on emergency responses, to both earthquake and the Covid-19 pandemic, with WHO playing a substantial role, continuing also interventions in improving people-centred primary health care, integrating health and social care at the community level, and raising investment in the infrastructure of health facilities.



The relevant policy and legal framework advanced through, to name a few, preparation of an evaluation of the Albanian National Health Strategy 2016–2020, to feed into the new Health Strategy 2021–2030; evaluation of the Strategic Document on SRHR 2017–2021 and assessment and outline structure design for the development of a new Reproductive Health Law; HIV and TB National Strategic Documents; revision and approval of the Universal Salt Iodisation (USI) Law ensuring protection from the consequences of iodine deficiency disorders to 30,000 pregnant mothers and new-born.

Work begun on improving the nutrition status for around 500,000 school-age children, as well as nutrition monitoring and reporting: by the end of 2020, 5,265 children under five years were monitored and data registered in the child nutrition monitoring web-based system, and 4,842 mothers were provided with advice on Infant and Young Child Feeding (IYCF) through the PHC service providers.



MoHSP was enabled to respond to Covid-19 through development of three response strategies, the Plan for the Vaccination and Deployment of Covid-19 vaccine, analysis of the health system response to Covid-19,²² several rapid assessments (i.e. availability and access to essential health services), the impact of Covid-19 on NCD Prevention and Early Detection Programmes in PHC and immunisation programme; activation of the Covid-19 phone call green line; setting up of a Public Health Emergency Operation Centre at MoHSP; upgrading of the national Covid-19 Infectious Disease Information System; conducting of a solidarity trial for Covid-19 treatment in which 65 persons participated; scaling up of contact tracing capacities in Albania by providing MoHSP with twelve vehicles (with rent and fuel) for field surveillance teams. Much focus was applied to strengthening of capacities of 17,000 frontline responders to the pandemic, provision of services in emergencies related to mental health, SRH, children and others. Albania became part of the Covid-19 Partners Platform. To strengthen the capacities for management of Covid-19, UN agencies provided more than 490,000 laboratory supplies, diagnostics materials and PPE, 40 patient monitors, ten defibrillators, and ten units of oxygen.

The community was assisted to safely take on the pandemic with around 101,800 children and 50,000 adults from vulnerable families provided with personal and family hygiene supplies to ensure key hygiene practices were implemented at the family and community level in the context of Covid-19. Pre-school institutions in eleven regions were provided with cleaning and disinfection supplies, and 400 creches and kindergartens benefited around 18,200 children with 2,000 hygiene kits.

²² <https://www.covid19healthsystem.org/mainpage.aspx>

Output 2.2 Education

SDG target: 4.1, 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7

UN vigorously positioned itself as the leading partner in the education sector, supporting national efforts around post-earthquake and Covid responses and reimagining a future for education leapfrogging learning outcomes through the development of a visionary education sector strategy.



akademi.al

provided uninterrupted education during Covid-19 - 190,000 virtual classes, **350,000 registered users**, 5,000 videos - and **1,550 teachers trained** (LearnIn, ICT).

It remediated learning gaps for disadvantaged students, with 500 out-of-school students affected by the earthquake benefiting from provision of learning devices, 300 students at risk of dropping out receiving socio-emotional support, and 700 teachers and 61 professional networks benefiting from professional development through operationalisation of the Early Warning System methodology for Drop-out Prevention. By the end of 2020, this system had become officially part of the Albanian Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-university Education (ASCAP)'s inspection guidelines. The UN launched programmes for 21st-century skills (UPSHIFT, Ponder) for children and young people, building the critical foundation skills of Albania's children to succeed in a rapidly changing world, benefiting 875 teachers, 72 school directors and 1,000 students. Ensuring standards for safe return to school UN agencies provided Covid-19 safety packages to students and schools all across the country, with 2,100 schools (100% of school facilities) and 460,000 students provided with Covid-19 awareness materials and safety kits, 170,000 at-risk students provided with textile masks, and the #LearningAtHome campaign reaching 50,000 people through social media and a TV campaign.

The education policy framework and evidence-based generation advanced with the development of a first-class diagnosis of the education system and start of preparations for the new national Education Strategy 2021–2026.

Preparation was undertaken of guidelines for curricula and pre-school principles standards, operationalisation of the recently approved Youth Law, and initiation of the evaluation process of the National Action Plan on Youth 2015–2020 to feed into the development of the new Plan for Youth 2021–2025.

The C4D strategy '#myschool is a safe place', based upon Positive Behaviour Interventions Support (PBIS), reached 500 teachers, 11,000 students and 21,000 parents, changed attitudes of schools and communities towards violence at school, and led to better and more positive classroom management techniques, creative, passionate teaching and engaged, empowered learning.



52 SCHOOLS

implemented methodology to combat violent extremism - increased awareness of **15,000 children**, **25,000 parents** and over **15,000 teachers**

Output 2.3 Social Inclusion and Protection

SDG target: 1.3, 3.7, 4.1, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 10.2, 11.10, 16.6

At the community and local level, vulnerable groups were empowered over their rights and entitlements to social services and participated meaningfully in advocacy forums



44 (72%) MUNICIPALITIES

with costed participatory social care plans, with **37 approved & 6 engendered**

20 developed participatory budget briefs linked to MTBP 2021–2023 &

10 applied GRB within their MTBP

and public consultation mechanisms. Municipal institutional capacities were strengthened in implementing social inclusion policies at the local level and providing inclusive services, while CSOs were enabled in holding municipal authorities accountable for social care services delivery.

**MORE THAN
24,000
VULNERABLE INDIVIDUALS**
received quality social care services



Ten community centres²³ were established and operationalised. Responding to Covid-19, an online network of professionals of community centres became operational in eight municipalities²⁴ to enable provision of online specialised services for PWD, benefiting 117 such children and their parents, and a day centre for older persons was established in Vlora Municipality. A community model²⁵ was established and is active in 18 municipalities,²⁶ reaching 18,224 community members (28% of PWD; 33% of R&E) by the end of 2020. National Social Fund support to LGUs was reinforced with the award of LNB-UNDP Social Fund Resourcing Grant²⁷ benefiting 17 LGUs²⁸ and contributing towards achieving SDG target 1.4. Meanwhile, 27 representatives (all women) of ten CSOs were enabled for the preparation of Gender Budget Watchdog reports in six municipalities,²⁹

²³ Bulqize, Diber, Korce, Lushnje, Maliq, Permet, Pogradec, Sarande, Shijak, Ura Vajgurore.

²⁴ Bulqize, Diber, Lushnje, Permet, Pogradec, Sarande, Shijak, Ura Vajgurore.

²⁵ Stands for the health education teams comprise health-care providers (PHC level) and community volunteers. Health education teams conduct community-based activities on maternal, new-born, child and adolescent health priorities, based on action plans developed by the teams.

²⁶ The community model is established in 18 municipalities: Berat, Devoll, Erseke, Gjirokaster, Gramsh, Këlcyre, Korce, Kucove, Lezhe, Librazhd, Malesi e Madhe, Permet, Pogradec, Puke, Shkoder, Skrapar, Ura Vajgurore, Vau i Dejes.

²⁷ In close coordination with MoHSP, and in line with the grant scheme's regulations for new social care services at the local level, LNB allocated funds to resource the social fund and support social care services at the local level.

²⁸ Proposals for innovative community-based social services at the local level in line with the LNB grant scheme's regulations are being implemented in Belsh, Diber, Durres, Kamez, Klos, Korce, Lushnje, Malesi e Madhe, Mat, Patos, Permet, Pogradec, Prrerjas, Puke, Roskovec, Sarande, Shkoder. Letters of agreement with municipalities are signed and funds were disbursed in October 2020.

²⁹ Devoll, Kamez, Pogradec, Puke, Rrogozhine, Tirane.

while participatory budgeting practices were conducted in eleven municipalities,³⁰ reaching more than 950 women and contributing to progress towards SDG 5.c and 5.4.



**18,224
COMMUNITY
MEMBERS**

supported by community models established in **18 municipalities**

Contributing to achievement of SDG targets 10.2 (10.2.1), 10.3 (10.3.1) and 11.1 (indicator 11.1.1), the policy framework and evidence-based generation advanced with completion of the legal framework on social housing (22 by-laws approved and 8 pending approval) and the Law on Inclusion of and Accessibility for PWD (1 by-law approved and 3 pending approval); adoption of the Protocol on the Functioning of Non-Residential Centres for PWD, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic; monitoring of the implementation of the Social Inclusion Policy Document and the Social Housing Strategy; development of the action plans on PWD and accessibility, and on the Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2021–2025 (with 123 stakeholders—87 females, and 36 males—participating in the first wave of consultations); approval of the National Action Plan on Ageing 2020–2024 on 24 December 2020; and measurement, for the first time in Albania, of SDG indicator 1.3.1, the preliminary findings for which indicated that the proportion of persons effectively covered by a social protection system, including social protection floors was, 61.7 percent³¹ and that the proportion of the population protected in at least one social protection area was 70 percent. Work has initiated to explore the fiscal space and potential to extend the social protection coverage and benefits for the vulnerable at the national and municipal levels.

³⁰ Budgeting practices were facilitated by the UN Women Partner organisation Community Today for the Future in cooperation with local grassroots organisations. They reflected concerns voiced by women and most vulnerable groups participating in these consultative processes. Municipalities involved include: Devoll, Diber, Durres, Elbasan, Kamez, Lezhe, Lushnje, Pogradec, Puke, Rrogozhine, Tirane.

³¹ Draft report on monitoring of SDG 1.3.1.

Output 2.4 Child Protection

SDG target: 1.3, 1.4, 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.5, 8.7, 10.2, 16.1, 16.2, 16.3, 16.9, 16.10, 16.a, 17.6, 17.9, 17.17, 17.18



5,363
CHILDREN

benefited from 24/7 counselling and referrals online and by phone

The national child protection system was able to rapidly address the risks of child violence and abuse exacerbated by the earthquake and Covid-19. The entire workforce of 236 statutory child protection workers was supported through on-the-job and online coaching, while 90 child protection and social workers received in-service training delivered by the Albanian School of Public Administration.



poorly performing Child Protection Units reduced to 8 from 22

180%
increase of cases referred from the health sector &

31%
from the education sector

A remarkable milestone was reached in the overall childcare reform process with the endorsement of the National De-Institutionalisation Action Plan 2020–2022 and the drafting of three key documents substantial to replacing the outdated system of institutional childcare—A model for Child and Family Support Hub; Model guidelines for child–family reunification; A model for an alternative professional Foster Care Service—contributing towards SDG targets 1.3, 1.4, 8.7 and 16.2. Advancements in the prevention of online child sexual abuse include the BiblioTechs initiative, with four public libraries in Tirane turned into tech hubs, benefiting 5,578 children and adults in learning about digital safety, expansion of the Friendly Wi-Fi initiative with 53 additional access points in eight additional public spaces in Tirana city, blocking some 516,000 Internet requests to blacklisted websites.



#TeBesoj (TrustMe) - disclosure and timely reporting of sexual violence on the child - reached more than

52% OF POPULATION

Efforts to end Human Trafficking in and from Albania resulted in the rescue and support of around 200 victims and potential victims, generation of valuable evidence about knowledge, perceptions and attitudes of Albanian youth towards human trafficking, and initiation of a process for the development of a new National Action Plan on anti-Trafficking 2021–2023, contributing to SDG targets 1.3, 1.4, 8.7 and 16.2. Repatriation efforts brought safely back to Albania four children and their mother from the Al Hawl Syria refugee camp, marking the first step along the complex road of further repatriations (at least 50 other children of Albanian origin are caught up in Syria and Iraq). This result directly contributes to SDG target 16.2.

Output 2.5 Gender-Based Violence

SDG target: 5.1, 5.2, 5.3, 5.6, 8.7, 16.1, 16.2

Improved sub-legal DV framework, tailored also to the Covid-19 pandemic situation: This was achieved through three new protocols, three SOPs, a joint ministerial order and policy, and two rules and procedures.



219 %
increase in No. GB-DV cases recorded in REVALB credited to raised awareness

Enhanced and improved national response and public awareness to gender-based and domestic violence and harassment in the workplace (national and local levels): 23 local institutional response mechanisms (CRMs)³² were established and strengthened to prevent and effectively

³² Four established and the remaining strengthened to become 100% operational.

address DV at the local level through a multi-disciplinary and coordinated approach. The Mobile Units identified and referred 33 P/VoT for multi-sectoral service support. The Office of the National Anti-Trafficking Coordinator began the drafting the process for a new National Action Plan on Trafficking 2021–2023. Evaluation and report preparation took place on implementation of key national policies and international treaties, including NSGE 2016–2020, CEDAW and the Istanbul Convention. A unanimous decision of the National Labour Council was taken to authorise MoFE to start the ratification procedure on the global Convention 190 on Ending Violence and Harassment in the World of Work.

Increased engagement of National Human Rights Institutions with human rights mechanisms and improved monitoring, accountability and transparency capacities related to gender equality and GBV: The People's Advocate prepared and submitted an alternative report to the CEDAW Committee in relation to the fifth review of the country by the committee.³³ The PA also conducted a monitoring and analysis of budget planning to address GBV in MTBP 2018–2020 of the central government and five municipalities (informing the CEDAW alternative report).³⁴

Increased role of the Albanian Parliament and the Sub-Parliamentary Committee on Gender Equality in promoting and supervising state authorities' measures in the area of GBV: Six hearings were held on gender equality and GBV, including on measures taken during the Covid-19 health crisis. Meanwhile, the revision process of DCM no. 334/2011 on CRM functionality was put in motion, and amendments were proposed to the Law on Domestic Violence (125/2020),³⁵ including from lessons learned

³³ Women's access to justice and free legal aid, the functioning of the gender equality machinery, violence against women, women's economic and social rights, and situation of marginalised and disadvantaged women groups and rural women.

³⁴ <https://www.avokatipopullit.gov.al/media/manager/website/reports/RAPORT%20MBI%20MONITORIMIN%20E%20BUXHETIMIT%20GJINOR%20PER%20ADRESIMIN%20E%20DHUNES%20ME%20BAZE%20GJINORE%20DHE%20DHUNES%20NE%20FAMILJE%20NE%20SHQIPERI%20NE%20VITIN%202018.pdf>

³⁵ <https://www.parlament.al/Files/Akte/20201020140600ligj%20nr.%20125%20dt.%2015.10.2020.pdf>



59 (97%)
MUNICIPALITIES
with established CRM



25
SEXUAL VIOLENCE
VICTIMS &

475
P/VoTs
benefitted from LILIUM
centre improved integrated
multisector emergencies
services

from the pandemic and the need for better enforcement of protection orders, including during a health crisis.

Improved implementation capacities of local actors and law enforcement agencies: Some 400 judges, prosecutors, local coordinators of domestic violence, and service providers at the local level were trained in two newly approved protocols on managing DV cases by CRM members at the municipal level, while 37 public and non-public service providers were trained in the provision of sheltering services during Covid-19 based on the approved protocol. Meanwhile, 400 police officers and psychologists were trained in the prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace, 32 journalists in standards for reporting on GB-VAW and privacy protection of victims and legal obligations based on national and international standards, and 159 social and health-care professionals in the multi-sectoral response to GBV SOPs.

Challenged gender stereotypes and family power roles: The 16 Days Campaign reached out to more than 2,700,000 persons through multiple online activities, raising awareness of GBV. Meanwhile, technical advice was provided to MoESY to integrate measures addressing child marriage into the new draft National Strategy on Education 2021–2026.

OUTCOME 3

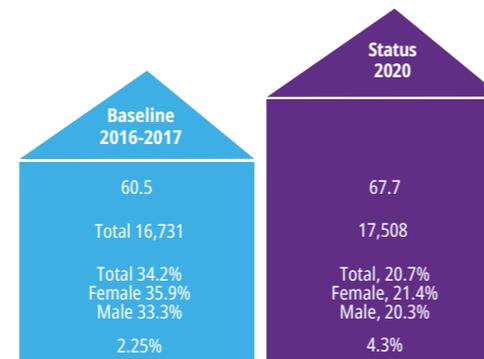
Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture

Economic growth priorities, policies, and programmes of the Government of Albania are inclusive, sustainable, and gender-responsive, with greater focus on competitiveness, decent jobs and rural development.



INDICATOR

↑ Ease of Doing Business (score)
↑ No. new businesses established
↓ Youth unemployment rate (young men and women (15 – 29) who are: without work; available for work; and seeking work)
↑ Growth of agriculture sector 2016 - 2020



In the area of trade facilitation and with reference to SDG 9, aimed at building resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialisation and foster innovation, Albania benefited from capacity building exercises on single window and data sharing in the Western Balkans. Progress was made in further aligning the work to the EU orientation of foreign trade and the European integration perspective of the Western Balkan countries, using the EU SW legislation and the EU Customs Data Model (EU CDM) for customs related and UN-CEFACT's semantic standards and Reference Data Models (RDMs) in the World Bank, CEFTA (SEED+) and UNCTAD Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA).

In the area of employment, the publishing of regular labour market signals³⁶ benefited the work of MoFE and all partners and of the IPMG on Employment and Skills. A comprehensive and integrated monitoring and evaluation (M&E) framework was developed to implement the employment and VET policies, aiding institutions in charge to improve their performance and facilitate monitoring of the NESS 2019–2022 implementation. A comprehensive

³⁶ LFS updates: https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/brief-analysis--labour-force-market.html; Updates from the labour market: https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/policy-brief--updates-from-the-labor-market-in-albania-during-co.html

VET review was finalised,³⁷ a roadmap was designed to achieve the systemic engagement of the private sector in VET, the plan for optimisation of the VET providers was prepared, endorsed and commenced implementation in October, the model for accreditation of (public and private) VET providers in Albania, including roadmap and capacity development plan for NAVETQ and VET providers, was developed and consulted with the key stakeholders. Some 44 public VET providers and NAVETQ implemented the second round of self-assessment, a crucial dimension of quality assurance, supported by an Internet-based platform designed to facilitate the process.

To enable the operationalisation of the industrial relations and labour dispute management system, a customised training programme 2021–2022 and materials for conciliators and mediators on mediation and conciliation skills was developed and a network of 40 mediators capacitated in how to best deliver quality dispute mediation services on labour disputes. Meanwhile, the working infrastructure of public mediators and conciliation offices was upgraded with the provision of IT equipment, the tripartite working group³⁸ drafted a set of recommended changes to the current public ALDR procedures, and a customised manual was developed for employers and workers on preventing and handling labour disputes in the workplace.

In the area of agriculture, smallholders and family farms were supported to access existing investment funds, while capacities of government, farmers associations and other stakeholders were strengthened to boost the rural economy and raise living conditions. By the end of 2020, three farming communities (60 farmers) in the regions of Belsh, Malesi e Madhe and Korce had capacities strengthened with regard to (i) quality and safety in selected value chains (e.g. dairy, fruits and vegetables, MAPs) with

³⁷ The review maps out the current model of VET in Albania and generates a common understanding among all stakeholders about the system set-up, the level of the reforms implementation and governance, and identifies the challenges that hamper the system from responding effectively to the skills demand in the labour market.

³⁸ Established by MoFE Order no. 233, dated 25.09.2020 'On the establishment of the working group for improving public procedures of mediation and conciliation of labour disputes' and composed of representatives from government institutions (MoFE, NAES, SLSSI) and workers' and employers' organisations.



2,822
(68%) BENEFICIARIES
benefited from
re-conceptualised ALMPs

needs³⁹ identified for provision of financial support and production equipment; and (ii) access to finance, land and agricultural value chain skills. Following the development of the e-Agriculture Strategy, submitted to MoARD for adoption, 40 persons from the ministry, local extension services, NGOs and private business had strengthened capacities to implement the strategy for rural, small-scale producers and marginalised communities. Acknowledging the sector's key role in the integration of Albania into the EU and in achieving SDGs in the country, more than 50 technical staff from the ministry, INSTAT and public and private chain actors had capacities strengthened in statistics and policy formulation on EU integration, monitoring of indicators for SDGs 2, 5, 13, 14 and 15. Meanwhile, food quality and safety standards, product quality certification and the national regulatory framework on product quality certification, including geographical indications and organic and traditional products, were developed and endorsed by government. The pilot national school food and nutrition project continued implementation, accentuating the importance of a strong partnership with the private sector in agriculture for connecting producers with consumers, benefiting with improved skills 80 farmers and five private veterinarians on dairy quality and safety.

The culture sector benefited from digitisation of the archive of the National Institute for Cultural Heritage and the establishment of a protocol for emergency evacuation of the archive, resulting in the safeguarding of a rich archive collection for future generations, comprising 4,100 technical dossiers of various monuments and sites, 47,700 negatives of films and microfilms, 256,000 photographs in colour and in black and white, and 28,500 materials in various formats in colour and in black and white.

³⁹ Such as equipment, training in equipment use and in quality and safety standards and marketing of products.

OUTCOME 4

Environment and Climate Change

Government and non-government actors adopt and implement innovative, gender-sensitive national and local actions for environmental sustainability, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and disaster risk reduction.



INDICATOR

INDICATOR	Baseline 2016-2017	Status 2020
↑ Extent to which comprehensive measures - plans, strategies, policies, programmes and budgets - are being implemented to achieve low-emission and/or climate-resilient development objectives	34.22% RES in energy portfolio	34,86%
↑ % of farmers accessing disaster early warning system	0%	5% Female, 30 %
↑ Number of hectares of land that are managed sustainably as protected areas under a conservation, sustainable use or access- and benefits-sharing regime	9,424 ha	Total 76,284 ha - Butrinit 9,424 ha, Prespa 27,750 ha, Divjaka 22,230 ha, Dajti 3,300 ha, Llogara 1,010 ha, Karanburun - Sazan 12,570 ha
↑ No. of sites, including World Heritage sites, with costed DRR plans/ interventions, that are gender-sensitive	0 (UNESCO) sites	3
↑ Categories of Protected areas and Biosphere reserves with working, sustainable financial and legal mechanisms	0	3
↑ Presence and quality of the First Biennial Update Report of Albania to the UNFCCC that is gender sensitive.	0	Final Draft of BUR under peer review process NDC under revision
↑ Number of financial mechanisms and 'pipelines' developed to access climate finance, including GCF	0	National GCF country programme developed, identifying 6 pipeline programs
↑ No of targeted children and parents/care givers benefiting from child protection in emergency services.	500	2,120 children and 1,350 adults
↑ No of targeted child protection professionals capacitated to deliver quality protection services in emergency settings	0	281
↑ Number of teachers skilled in Disaster Risk reduction strategies and other inclusive methodologies	500	1,200
↑ Number of children (boys and girls) accessing online learning (in schools or via other distan learning opportunities	300,000 children of all ages and cycles of pre-university education.	350,000 registered users 900,000 clicks daily
↑ No. of schools, community infrastructure facilities revitalized and refurbished	0	Contracts for construction works are signed for 22 educational facilities, while the works started in 15 of them (six education facilities are being reconstructed - 7.000 m2; nine educational facilities are being repaired - 25.000 m2).
↑ No. of earthquake affected cultural heritage properties are rehabilitated and revitalized, incl. gender sensitive infrastructure/design and socio-economic measures	0	14 historical sites approved, work to start in 2021.

Output 4.1

DRR and Climate Change

SDG target: 7.2, 9.1, 11.2, 11.b, 12.1, 12.2, 13.1, 13.2, 13.3, 15.1, 15.3, 17.9

The environmental legal and policy framework advanced with parliamentary approval of the Climate Change Law, the legal basis that regulates the Nagoya Protocol on access and benefit sharing of genetic resources, and ratification of the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Also, upon request from government, UNDP will lead and coordinate the NDC revision process, taking into account the work already conducted under the first Biennial Update Report (BUR), whose finalisation is expected in 2021Q1. Several strategic documents and policies on DRR at various levels are being reviewed and relevant trainings and consultations conducted on Capacity Assessment and Sendai tools application.

Meanwhile, the Green Climate Fund (GCF) Country Programme has been developed for Albania, utilising the GCF Readiness, and pending endorsement by the government. Aiming to shift from unsustainable to sustainable land use in forestry and pasture by mainstreaming Sustainable Land Management approaches, 2020 results include development of two forestry by-laws: on the criteria for classification of forests, and on the general criteria of professionalism for appointment of employees of the municipal structure responsible for forestry. Capacities of governmental staff (143) and farmers (120 female; 30%) were strengthened on climate change adaptation and mitigation actions, how to access related climate finance instruments, early warning systems, the Climate Smart Agriculture concept and relevant agricultural and landscape interventions, and DRR.

Renewable energies derived from biomass to fight climate change effects were supported through pilot demonstrations installed in nine enterprises, whose application stirred policy actions that led to the development of a pipeline of projects for replication in other sectors.

Output 4.2

Natural Resources

SDG target: 3.9, 3.d, 6.1, 12.1, 12.4, 13.1, 13.2, 14.5, 14.a, 15.1, 15.3, 15.5, 17.9, 17.14, 17.19



100
ACTIONS

in Drini Action Plan aimed at managing water in the Drin River Basin, on which 1.6 MILLION PEOPLE live

Political representatives of Albania, Greece, Kosovo, Montenegro, and North Macedonia signed a political declaration and approved the Strategic Action Plan for the sustainable management of the Drin River Basin. Moreover, as requested by the World Heritage Committee at its 43rd session, a joint World UNESCO Heritage Centre-ICOMOS-IUCN Reactive Monitoring mission reviewed the overall state of conservation of the trans-boundary property Natural and Cultural Heritage of the Ohrid region and progress made in implementation of the previous WHC and the mission's recommendations,⁴⁰ and submitted a findings report to government for consideration and outlining follow-up actions for implementation in 2021.

The Blue Economy Programme was developed, setting out the strategic vision of the government in the maritime sector and an action plan for mid- to long-term interventions, along with 41 legal acts to ensure 100 percent compliance with EU Directives and Regulations. Also, policy packages on medical waste management were developed, including a draft law on Medical Waste.



ALBANIA'S FIRST

- environment IMS operationalized
- experimental field for medicinal and aromatic plants established
- Wild Birds Rehabilitation Centre set up

⁴⁰ Including the recommendations made by the World Heritage Committee in its Decision 43COM 8B.9, when the Committee noted with concern the threats facing the cultural and natural attributes of the property and encouraged the States Parties 'to develop, as a matter of urgency, a joint trans-boundary approach to address these threats to the values, integrity and the serious protection and management issues facing Lake Ohrid.'

Supporting the green economy for sustainable development of Vjosa Valley–Zagori, an assessment of the natural and socio-economic potentials in the area was conducted to provide protection status to the Vjosa River in line with EU and international standards and at the same time support the development of a viable ecotourism offer.

Vulnerability and exposure to climate risks is also being performed downstream in the Vjosa, for current and future climate impacts on agriculture, water resources, health, natural disasters, biodiversity, health, soil erosion and hydrogeology as part of the fourth national communication to UNFCCC. With the aim of identifying the potential for job creation in the green economy, with focus on women and youth in the upper Vjosa, research was conducted applying the Market Systems Methodology (MSA)⁴¹ and an [initiative launched for promoting social entrepreneurship](#) and creating models for inclusive women-owned social enterprises in the area of the upper river basin.

Output 4.3

EARTHQUAKE RESPONSE

SDG target:

1.1, 1.3, 1.5, 2.3, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7, 4.a, 4.c, 5.2, 5.4, 5.5, 5.a, 5.b, 5.c, 8.1, 8.2, 8.3, 8.4, 8.5, 8.6, 8.9, 9.1, 9.2, 9.3, 9.5, 9.b, 10.2, 10.4, 11.4, 13.1, 16.2, 17.3

UN agencies UNDP, UNICEF, UN Women, FAO, UNOPS supported the government in identifying and addressing areas of emergency support and immediate needs, aiming to reduce the impact on the poorest and other vulnerable groups. Key achievements include the following:



CHILD PROTECTION

2,120 children and 1,350 adults (74% more than the planned target) severely affected by the earthquake and still residing in temporary shelters benefited and strengthened their coping abilities through psychosocial counselling, 51

41 ILO_MSA Tourism Sector in Vjosa river region

statutory child protection workers were supported with on-the-job coaching and case management technical assistance, enabling them to open and manage 231 new child protection cases, delivering assistance through six rapid response mobile protection teams, covering 23 administrative units and 50 geographic locations.



EDUCATION

Continuation of the learning process was supported through strengthening of the online platform [akademi.al](#) with focus on the most vulnerable children, those affected by the earthquake, children with disability. Meanwhile, ten Tech-hubs were set up in compulsory schools affected by the earthquake, benefiting 5,000 students with a high-quality blended learning experience. After school lessons (in maths and early literacy), drop-out prevention activities, social emotional skills building and tablets were provided, benefiting 500 students in ten schools affected by the earthquake. Capacities of 1,780 teachers were strengthened in the use of the online platform and implementation of the newly developed ICT standards. A methodology on 'Disaster Risks Reduction and teacher training, children awareness on disasters and preparedness' is being prepared, providing direct support to 22 schools affected by the earthquake.

Under the EU4Schools programme, MoUs were signed with eleven municipalities,⁴² 25 consultation processes took place on schools designs organised with the participation of 900 community representatives, including teachers, children, parents and local authorities. Contracts for construction works were signed for 22 educational facilities, in 15 of which works have started. The transparency and accessible portal [EU4Schools \(ctempurl.com\)](#) has been designed to communicate with and involve the public in all the processes related with implementation of this programme.



2,120 & 1,350
CHILDREN & ADULTS

severely affected by the earthquake
strengthened coping abilities

42 The targeted municipalities to be covered by the EU4Schools Programme are Durres, Kamez, Kavaje, Kruje, Kurbin, Lezhe, Mirdite, Rrogozhine, Shijak, Tirane, Vore.



ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND RESILIENCE

Support was provided to micro and small enterprises affected by the earthquake in Durres Municipality, applying the In Motion methodology,⁴³ resulting in 15 family-run enterprises improving their commercial image and business operations.



CULTURAL HERITAGE

Under the EU4Culture project (2020–2024),⁴⁴ the first project steering committee, held on 15 December 2020, approved fourteen historical sites for rehabilitation or revitalisation, the design and works for which will be conducted in 2021.

In addition, the ongoing digitalization of the National Institute for Cultural Heritage archive aims to safeguard for future generations and provide facilitated access to 4,100 technical dossiers of various monuments and sites, 47,700 negatives of films and microfilms, 256,000 photographs in colour, and black and white, and 28,500 other materials in various formats in colour, and black and white.



AGRICULTURE

Some 54 farming households and six business operators affected by the earthquake re-assessed their business viability to reflect the current needs for financial support. The criteria for grants to 100 beneficiaries (farmers and business operators) were defined based on the identification of eligible investments needed, while the needs for access to micro-finance were assessed to create employment opportunities and increase the resilience of farmers.

43 https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/in-motion-programme--post-earthquake-economic-recovery-.html
<https://fb.watch/39BkyEXvMd/>

44 The project will work towards achieving three main results following good governance and inclusive principles as a cross-cutting aspect: (i) Significant cultural heritage monuments and other cultural buildings or sites will be physically rehabilitated, improving the cultural and economic well-being of Albanian society; (ii) Economic and local development will be supported through cultural heritage revitalisation and valorisation, and improved capacities for its safeguarding, management, and promotion; and (iii) Improved awareness on the role of natural and cultural heritage in building a better future for Albania, through measuring and communicating the impact of culture for sustainable development.

MAIN CHALLENGES

The two major disasters—earthquake and Covid-19—impacted the advancement of work of all institutions in Albania. Following the UN's global commitment to stay and deliver, the UN in Albania reprioritised programming and swiftly implemented business continuity plans for itself and partners and designed a range of communication channels, innovative tools and online platforms to facilitate communication, coordination and implementation of actions and planned interventions.

The pandemic widened the present inequality gaps and highlighted pre-existing challenges of the social protection system. Cash transfers and humanitarian packages were the main measures supporting the poor and vulnerable households. Social care services did not receive additional financing to cope with the pandemic, and access to basic services and social services remained a substantial challenge for the most vulnerable communities. Meanwhile, the existing social services had limited capacities, while specialised services were absent in rural areas. UN maintained persistent communication and coordination with municipalities, ensuring that those most in need received adequate support. The pandemic also led to reprioritisation and budget cuts and re-allocations across sectors. UN supported sector-wide assessments to inform interventions in various areas and adjusted the capacity and training need assessment among LGUs to consider also their capacities for devising responsive measures in the context of Covid-19 to address needs of the most severely affected women and men.

Despite UN and partners progress on mitigating the negative impact of both the earthquake and Covid-19 to vulnerable groups, the continuing uncertainty around economic recovery, due to expected new waves of the Covid-19 pandemic, new variants of the virus and uncertain access to vaccines, calls for continued, coordinated efforts from all stakeholders through enhanced partnerships to scale up and speed up the current achievements during 2021 and beyond. A detailed account of UNCT Albania future work, in line with the agreed UNCT Work Plan and UN Joint Work Plans for each outcome area of the PoCSD, is presented in Chapter 3 of the present report. The national parliamentary elections (April 25, 2021) might affect availability and cooperation of main governmental counterparts at the central and local levels and might lead to government restructuring and potential staff turnover at the central level and counterpart institutions, which might lead to a slow-down in joint activities during 2021. Nevertheless, UN agencies will continue to maintain a sharp focus at the local level ensuring that the planned interventions are delivered accordingly.



41 youth cross-border projects were implemented to promote regional youth cooperation, mobility and exchange, dealing with the past, inter-cultural dialogue and an enabling environment for cooperation by bringing closer together youth and adolescents through around 140 CSOs and secondary schools in the Western Balkans region. Projects were selected under RYCO's second open call for proposals and are co-financed by RYCO and UNDP. UN partners are soon to conduct the final project evaluation, aiming at, among others, to document the impact of these projects upon the lives of young people in the region.

Based on the mapping of best peacebuilding practices, UNICEF developed a training methodology for teachers to address peacebuilding in school settings in the form of a toolkit, so that teachers can engage students in inter-cultural learning and open and respectful dialogue, helping students to discuss safely and effectively controversial issues, on the past and current causes of conflict in the region, and treat classroom as a safe space, while students explore issues of their concern freely and safely. Teachers from 23 schools in the region were trained to implement the toolkit, and their feedback will be incorporated into the final methodology. Trained teachers now form a pool of excellence, so that RYCO can engage them in replicating the know-how to other teachers in their local communities and across the region. Meanwhile, UNICEF is exploring ways to adapt the toolkit as an open-source online training package and to share it for wider use in the Western Balkans.

In a very participatory process, UNFPA finalised adaptation of the Y-peer peacebuilding methodology and training manual in close cooperation with RYCO, UNFPA country offices in the Western Balkans and PETRI Sofia, to ensure that the final product has a regional perspective, reflects young people's personal development aspects and their experiences in the context of Western Balkans, and incorporates information and contextual stories, based on specific and dominant peacebuilding issues in each of the countries. The strong engagement of RYCO in this process ensured ownership so that RYCO can make this instrument applicable in the long run for youth training in the Western Balkans region. A group of 30 young people from Western Balkans were trained as peer trainers and rolled out their knowledge and skills through 15 local workshops in their respective communities with 300

hard-to-reach young people from various national, ethnic, gender, economic and social groups, including Roma and Egyptians, LGBTI, young girls and women.

Based on the recommendations of the micro-assessment report carried out by UNDP in 2019, and considering the rapid growth of RYCO as an institution, UNDP invested considerably in 2020 in enhancing the institutional capacities of RYCO office and staff, through providing technical expertise to develop a number of internal RYCOs guidelines, regulations and procedures that are aimed at strengthening RYCO as a structure, but also to support it in achieving its mission. Alongside the documents produced, capacity building activities took place to lead RYCO staff to a smooth implementation of the newly developed rules and procedures. In addition, the UNDP investments were extended in strengthening and consolidating RYCO's small grant facility scheme and enhancing RYCO staff skills in financial grant monitoring. Evaluation of RYCO grants is being conducted, aiming to document the lessons learned from the round of open calls for implementation in future calls.

The component on regional advocacy and research into youth perceptions of peace and security in the Western Balkans region brought together a group of 23 young people from the Western Balkans, to serve as a co-design team of the research methodology and survey for quantitative data collection. A two-fold approach was employed in working with the youth group, so that they were trained in peacebuilding, conflict analysis, dealing with past, gender equality and gender-sensitive peacebuilding and advocacy, while in parallel they contributed to the research process. Whereas the quantitative and quantitative research data collection process is soon to be finalised, informed by the research findings, the young people already involved in this project will be engaged to contribute in identifying the key advocacy messages and in implementing the visibility and advocacy initiatives related to the research.

The project results are expected to be promoted in spring 2021 through implementation of an innovative communication and advocacy campaign, currently being designed by RYCO with the support of UNFPA and inputs of other UN implementing agencies.

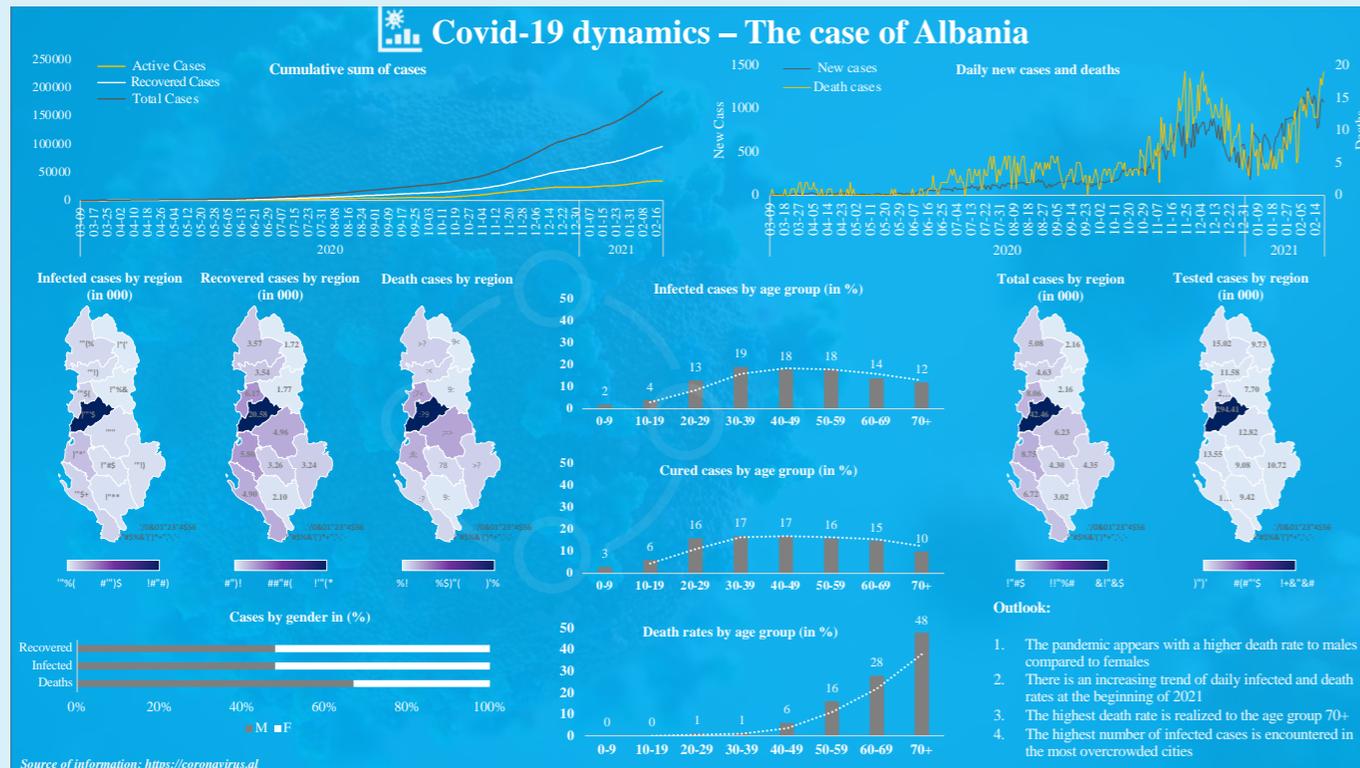
BOX 1
SUPPORTING THE WESTERN BALKANS COLLECTIVE LEADERSHIP ON RECONCILIATION:
 BUILDING MOMENTUM AND SUSTAINABILITY FOR THE REGIONAL YOUTH COOPERATION OFFICE, RYCO⁴⁵

The Western Balkans RYCO and UN Albania (UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF) are implementing in partnership a joint UN project, supported by the UN Peacebuilding Fund to an amount of USD 2,999,745, focused on enhancing reconciliation in the Western Balkans countries, as measured by increasing the embracing of diversity and reducing prejudice and discrimination. In late 2019, the joint UN programme was enriched with a regional component of research into youth perceptions of peace and security in the Western Balkans region, in cooperation with UNDP Istanbul Regional Hub and



UNFPA Eastern Europe and Central Asia Regional Office. However, in 2020, twice challenged by force majeure, the massive earthquake that hit Albania in November 2019 and the Covid-19 pandemic, partners adjusted the workplan and implementation to the new situational reality, and a project extension was granted by the UN Peacebuilding Fund, until May 2021. Highlights of activities and achievements in project implementation during 2020 include the following:

45. <https://www.rycowb.org/?p=5425>



**PILLAR 1
HEALTH FIRST**

UN agencies, particularly WHO, played a substantial role in Albania's Covid-19 response management. Operationalisation of WHO-UN recommendations helped the government to make informed decisions on Covid-19 containment and mitigation measures, benefiting more than 130,000 children and 350,000 adults from vulnerable families and more than 10,000 health personnel. Details of support are provided under Section 2.2 Delivering Results for Albania, Outcome 2—Social Cohesion; Health.

Several UN agencies procured various medical supplies. For example, to name a few, UNOPS completed all four deliveries of the EU's EUR 4 million worth of aid for health (#EU4Health), including five fully equipped ambulances, 100 ICU hospital beds, 30 portable mechanical ventilators, 30 pieces of ECG equipment. WHO provided more than 306,000 laboratory supplies and diagnostics materials⁴⁹ and 114,000 items of PPE.⁵⁰ UNICEF provided more than 40 patient monitors, ten defibrillators, ten units for delivery of oxygen, and 400 infra-red no touch thermometers, and UNDP, 31 ventilators.



- 5 FULLY EQUIPPED AMBULANCES**
- 100 ICU HOSPITAL BEDS**
- 60+ VENTILATORS**
- 30+ PIECES OF ECG EQUIPMENT**
- 130,000+ ITEMS OF PPE**
- 320,000+ LABORATORY SUPPLIES AND DIAGNOSTICS MATERIALS**

⁴⁹ Laboratory supplies and diagnostics included 35,868 RT-PCR Tests (or > 32,000 RT-PCR tests), more than 80,000 reagents, 7,508 swab samples, 1,000 pulse oximeters, 182,000 antigen tests (Rapid diagnostic test; RTD) for Covid Lab 1 at the Institute of Public Health, Covid Lab 2 at Tirana University Hospital Centre Mother Theresa, and Covid Lab 3 at Shefqet Ndroqi University Hospital.

⁵⁰ PPE: 2,000 gloves, 55,200 respirator masks, 46,200 medical masks, 1,620 AMR-branded textile masks, 4,000 face shields, 2,600 goggles, 2,200 gowns.

**PILLAR 2
PROTECTING PEOPLE**



Social Protection and Inclusion

UNDP supported establishment and operationalisation in eight municipalities of an online network of professionals for provision of online specialised social services to children with disabilities, benefiting 138 children; production and dissemination of 58 informative videos in sign language, benefiting 61,828 people; and development of the protocol 'On the Functioning of Public and Non-Public, Non-Residential Centres, Providing Services for Persons with Disabilities'.⁵¹ UNICEF piloted a HCT programme in three municipalities,⁵² reaching about 1,700 households with no income, 471 of which were female-headed households. Co-leading the HCT, UNICEF supported development of a joint SOP for HCT and a feasibility report on establishing a shock responsive social protection system, to serve as baseline for the national roadmap to introduce cash transfers in emergency response. A total of 2,300 vulnerable households in twelve municipalities were assisted with emergency assistance (food, hygiene packages and didactic materials) and in accessing public services.⁵³

1700 HOUSEHOLDS reached by HCT programme & **2300** received emergency assistance



Child Protection

UNICEF supported 300 children with hearing impairment, their parents and caregivers, through twelve videos, transparent masks and special books, with information in sign language on seeking help, reporting abuse and violence, and addressing stigma, and SSS to assist 92 caregivers to provide safe shelter and child-care services to more than 300 children without parental care.

⁵¹ Protocol was approved by Order of the Minister of Health and Social Protection no. 381, dated 23.6.2020.

⁵² Durrës, Korce, Shkoder.

⁵³ Such as applying for housing bonus and reconstruction support, cash assistance, online counselling and support services for persons and children with disabilities, and online education for children.

BOX 2

UN ALBANIA SUPPORT TO COVID-19 RECOVERY EFFORTS IN ALBANIA

UN agencies are working together with government on how to overcome the socio-economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Several UN projects and programmes re-oriented the assistance to support the Covid-19 response, including the joint Leave no One Behind Programme 2017–2020, funded by the government of Switzerland, the joint End Violence against Women in Albania Programme 2018–2021, funded by the government of Sweden, the joint Improving Municipal Social Protection Service Delivery Project 2020–2022, funded by the global UN SDG Fund, UNDP's Regional Local Democracy Programme (ReLoaD), and UN Women's regional ERAW programme, both funded by the EU. In addition, several UN agencies integrated gender equality advocacy and programmatic actions into their Covid-19 response, while UNDP updated its programme in support of DRR in Albania to incorporate health and biological risks, ensuring the responsiveness and resilience of governance systems.

The UN in Albania has produced **periodic newsletters**⁴⁶ on the support of UN agencies to recovery efforts. These are available on the UN Albania website.

Following the Secretary General's launch on 4 May of the UN's global framework for immediate socio-economic response to Covid-19, UNCT Albania also completed its **Socio-Economic Recovery and Response Plan (SERP)** for Albania.⁴⁷ The response provides a scanning of the current situation and sets out the UN's consolidated offer of socio-economic recovery and response support. It reported quarterly in 2020 on its contribution to the global SERP indicators through UNINFO.⁴⁸ The SERP is operationalized through PoCSD JWPs, and a brief account of the support to national Covid-19 response in 2020 is provided below:

⁴⁶ <https://albania.un.org/en/46373-un-albania-covid-19-response-issue-1>
<https://albania.un.org/en/46166-un-albania-covid-19-response-issue-2>
<https://albania.un.org/en/51871-un-albania-covid-19-response-newsletter-issue-3>
<https://albania.un.org/en/51875-un-albania-covid-19-response-issue-4>

⁴⁷ <https://albania.un.org/en/86279-un-albania-covid-19-socio-economic-recovery-and-response-plan>

⁴⁸ <https://data.uninfo.org/>

Gender-Based Violence



UNDP, UN Women and UNFPA improved the sub-legal DV framework, tailoring it to Covid-19 (3 protocols, 3 SOPs, 1 joint ministerial order, 2 policies, rules and procedures), and capacitated/reached with information more than 1,200,000 national and local actors. UNDP provided 25,200 masks to victims of GB-DV, all functioning CRMs and members and five functional FLA Centres. It also supported CRMs in Durres, Lezhe and Tirane to provide multiple services to 345 DV victims and capacitated 252 CRM members and social service providers on how to manage DV cases during Covid-19 and under a normal situation. UNICEF informed its implementing partners conducting humanitarian work during the Covid-19 lockdown on Guidelines for Integrating Gender-Based Violence Interventions in Humanitarian Action: A step-by-step Pocket Guide for Humanitarian Practitioners, also downloadable as a mobile phone app. ILO capacitated 60 percent of the labour inspectors in advising *fason* companies (women-dominated businesses) to comply with the government's red protocols and the ILO anti-Covid-19 standards in the workplace. With UNFPA support, a Joint Declaration⁵⁴ was signed by the seven religious leaders and its media coverage reached 454,000 people. UN Women prepared a needs assessment of specialist services for survivors,⁵⁵ the findings of which enacted various policy interventions to ensure uninterrupted access to services, benefiting more than 400 women.

Migration and Asylum



UNHCR distributed multilingual Covid-19 informational materials to the National Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers (NRCAS) and BMP. It also conducted a Covid-19 rapid assessment on refugee household incomes and

54 Condemning VAW as a violation of human rights, expressing their willingness to become part of the Referral Mechanism and cooperating with state institutions and CSOs to train and educate respective communities on strengthening family values, preventing GBV and improving work and services offered to GB-DV survivors.

55 View the full report here: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/impact-of-the-covid-19-pandemic-on-specialist-services-for-victims-and-survivors-of-violence>

job security, provided equipment for the setting up of remote interviewing and two Covid-19 isolation rooms at NRCAS, and with Caritas support distributed to MoHSP 120 blankets, 10,000 medical gloves and 5,000 bars of soap. It also supported more than 913 refugees and asylum seekers with two rounds of cash transfers to meet basic needs, first aid and medical support; tailored psychological support sessions; Covid-19 updates; hot food.

Education



UNICEF promoted educational continuity through designed innovative systems: [academia.al](https://www.unicef.org/albania/academia-al), [LearnIn](https://www.unicef.org/albania/learnin) (350 teachers trained), and [ICT](https://www.unicef.org/albania/ict) (1,200 teacher trained). Some 2,100 schools (100% of school facilities) and 460,000 students were provided with Covid-19 awareness materials and safety kits, while 170,000 at-risk students were provided with textile masks, and the #LearningAtHome campaign reached 50,000 people through social media and TV.

PILLAR 3 & 4

ECONOMIC RESPONSE AND RECOVERY & MULTILATERAL COLLABORATION



Employment

UNDP prepared an analysis⁵⁶ of the labour market performance, tailored employment promotion programmes, and prepared two new ALMPs to support workers laid off during lockdown. ILO supported the State Labour and Social Services Inspectorate in advising private businesses (textile and footwear) to comply with the government's anti-Covid-19 Red Protocols and ILO OSSH standards in the workplace, published briefs, posters and guidance on safe resumption of operations and distributed these to SLI offices and

56 LFS updates: https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/brief-analysis--labour-force-market.html; Updates from the labour market: https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/crisis_prevention_and_recovery/policy-brief--updates-from-the-labor-market-in-albania-during-co.html

companies,⁵⁷ and supported the employers' organisation to conduct and analyse a survey on the impact of Covid-19 upon enterprises⁵⁸ and inform its members on the findings.

Environment and Climate Change



UNDP conducted capacity assessment for preparedness and response to emergencies including biological risks and hazards. UN Women produced an informative video⁵⁹ on women's social entrepreneurship in the Vjosa River upper basin, promoting consumption of women's products, aiming to mitigate the economic consequences due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Gender Equality and GRB



UN Women supported MoFE in conducting a mapping of fiscal stimulus packages, with policy recommendations and guidelines for future gender sensitive budget reprioritisation and engendered emergency response, and prepared a Rapid Gender Assessment of Covid-19.⁶⁰

Self-employed women and men were the most affected by lockdown measures.



The proportion of workers who reduced their working hours

57 ILO Policy Brief on Safe Return to Workplace in Albanian ILO standards and COVID-19
ILO Practical Guidance on Safe Return to Work_10 Actions in Albanian
ILO Covid-19 Guidance for Garment and Footwear Companies in Albanian
ILO Covid-19 Guidance for Employers for Safe Return to Workplace in Albanian
ILO Covid-19 Measures in the Workplace Poster in Albanian

58 Covid-19 Impact on Enterprises Survey

59 <https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/videos?id=ffd-995ed-7dde-4206-9cf3-a5f1e4f9c2ff>

60 <https://albania.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/12/the-impact-of-covid-19>

PILLAR 5

SOCIAL COHESION AND COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

Anti-corruption and Rule of Law

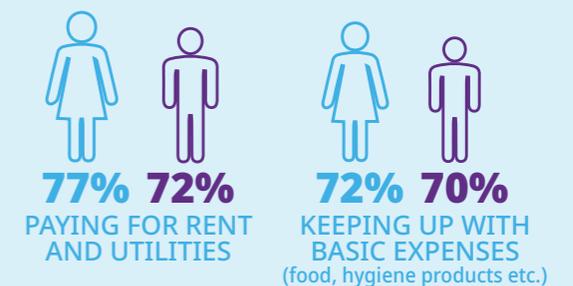


UNODC provided PPE to frontline law enforcement officers at Durres Port PCU and TIA ACCU, disseminated information on parenting⁶¹ for families in coping with the situation and technical guidance documents to ensure continuity and sustainability of health services for people who use drugs.

Access to Justice



UNICEF advocated for a 50 percent reduction in the number of children deprived of liberty, to keep courts operational for cases affecting children, and to issue regulatory acts allowing for online hearings, continue case management (Berat, Gjirokaster) through online communication, transporting professionals to the children and supporting children and families with socio-economic reintegration processes. The agency made available Technical Note Covid-19 and Children Deprived of their Liberty.⁶²

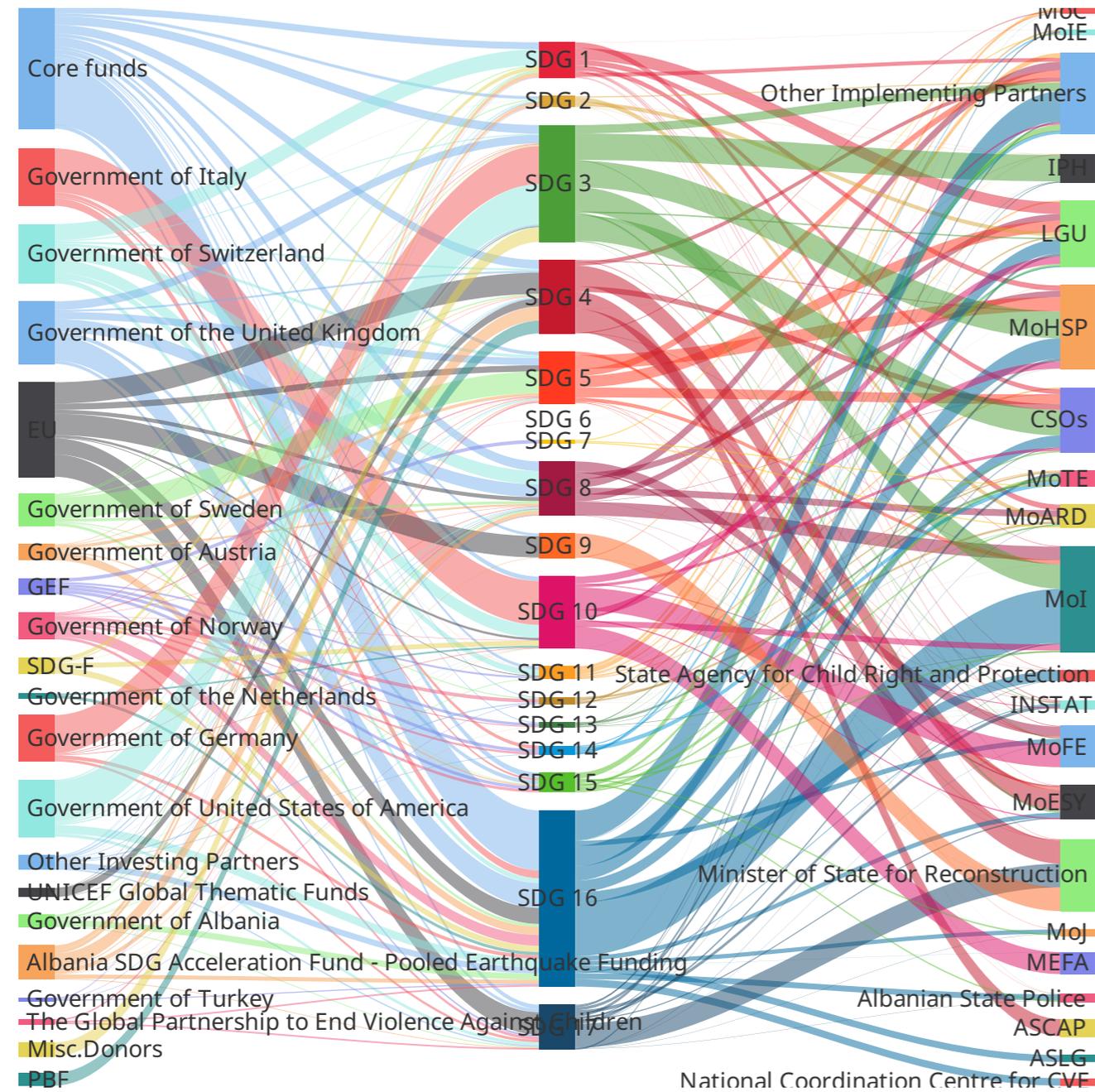


More women than men anticipate difficulties paying essential outgoings if restrictive measures continue.

61 https://www.unodc.org/listenfirst/en/covid_parents.html

62 Albanian version: <https://www.unicef.org/albania/sq/raporte/covid-19-dhe-f%C3%ABmij%C3%ABt-e-privuar-nga-liria>
English version: <https://www.unicef.org/albania/reports/covid-19-and-children-deprived-their-liberty>

2.3. Support to partnerships and financing the 2030 Agenda



In 2020, UNCT intensified its efforts in support of SDG financing, with a special focus on looking at national budget allocations and unfunded mandates.

The Resident Coordinator Office carried out a study to analyse **national financing of the SDGs**, through examining the alignment of the National Strategy for Development and Integration and government budget allocations with the SDGs between 2018 and 2020. The findings of the analysis provide a support tool to enable government to improve the prioritisation, efficiency and effectiveness of all public resources against SDGs and also form an important building block for the development of the SDG Financing Framework.

In the area of social protection, SDG financing related work is being supported by implementation of two UN Joint Programmes, on Strategic Options for SDG Financing, and Improving Municipal Social Protection Service Delivery.⁶³ Extending social protection floors cuts across many SDGs, especially in addressing the social impact of the crisis and alleviating poverty. In this regard, ILO prepared an analysis on the creation of **fiscal space for social spending**, looking at both reprioritisation and reallocation of spending from one sector to another and exploring additional means of domestic resource mobilisation to increase revenues. The report examines direct revenue generating options, improved efficiency and expenditure management and options deriving from non-traditional policy preferences and concludes that Albania may require a combination of strategies to achieve universal social protection coverage progressively over a period of time.

Gender equality has become one of the principles of the Albanian budgetary system, and national plans on spending for gender equality results have increased. UN Women's continued efforts in this regard have resulted in an increase in the **gender-responsive budget** (GRB) elements, which now constitute 7.2 percent of the total annual budget, compared to one percent in 2015, when UN Women started to support GRB in Albania. However, continued efforts are required for continuous

⁶³ Global donors of the Joint SDG Fund include Denmark, EU, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Monaco, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. For more info: <https://www.jointsdgfund.org/>

tracking and increasing information available on actual implementation and execution of gender-responsive budget elements.

The role of **Parliament** is crucial for financing the SDGs, and Albania made progress in 2020 by establishing a dedicated **sub-committee on Sustainable Development**, under the Economy and Finance Commission of Parliament, with a mandate on sustainable socio-economic development and the achievement of SDGs and Agenda 2030. The UN in Albania supported the sub-committee with a specific focus on mainstreaming the SDGs within the parliamentary mechanisms, reviewing legislation through an SDG lens and financing of the Goals. In addition, UN partnered with the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) to enhance SDG preparedness among MPs and exchange best practices.

The twin crises of the post-earthquake recovery and the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted once again the importance of the support provided to the Albanian government by the UN. The extraordinary mobilisation of the domestic and international response to the earthquake and the commitment to **#BuildBackBetter** and as quickly as possible, focused on creating solid partnerships with state and non-state actors, especially at the local level, aiming at ensuring concerted, collaborative and all-inclusive effort to address the multi-dimensional impacts of both crises, and to protect the needs and rights of people, with focus on the most vulnerable groups and those at risk of being left behind.

The mobilisation of contributions to the **SDG Acceleration Fund**, as one of the main mechanisms to enhance partnerships in 2020 and accelerate achievement of the 2030 Agenda in Albania, were complemented by partnership building, including with the private sector, focusing on nationwide awareness-raising efforts. While maintaining and enhancing the long-standing partnership with **traditional donors** such as Switzerland and Sweden, the UNCT re-activated and expanded its partnerships with the governments of Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden and the UK, aiming at strengthening local community infrastructure, social services and economic resilience, protecting children and increasing women's resilience

Amidst Covid-19- and earthquake-related challenges facing the country, the fourth year of implementation of the current Programme, PoCSD 2017–2021, was conducted in close cooperation with government (central and local level) and partners, duly operationalised by four **biennial Joint Work Plans 2020–2021** prepared and signed jointly by the ministers or deputy ministers of the relevant implementing ministries and contributing 17 UN agencies. Under the coordination of the four Outcome Results Groups, co-led by the head of two UN agencies and the minister from the key implementing line ministry of the Outcome area, the initiatives implemented are attributed to advancing progress in four areas (see section 2.2 *Delivering Results for Albania*):

- 1 – Governance and Rule of Law;
- 2 – Social Cohesion;
- 3 – Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture; and
- 4 – Environment and Climate Change.

Implementation was duly conducted by eight resident agencies and nine non-resident agencies, under the PoCSD 2017–2021 framework driven by its own unique objectives and resource strategies, who are strongly committed to working jointly. Indeed, **joint programming** increased by 250 percent, with seven joint projects being implemented by end 2020, compared to two in 2017 (start of current PoCSD implementation), indicating **strengthened UN coherence, coordination and collaboration in Albania**.

Particular focus in 2020 was placed on **recovery efforts** from the **earthquake** and **Covid-19**, with UN agencies being flexible to adjusting or expanding programming and resources to assist with a swift recovery. UNCT vested efforts in the preparation and implementation of the **Covid-19 Socio-Economic Recovery and Response Plan (SERP) for Albania**⁶⁶ following the UN Secretary-General's launch (4 May, 2020) of the global framework for immediate social-economic response to Covid-19. UNCT Albania reported quarterly in 2020 on its contribution to the **global SERP indicators** through UNINFO, available on the global Covid-19 Data Portal.⁶⁷ For detailed information on UN Albania support to Covid-19 recovery, a dedicated piece is included at the end of Section 2.2. Delivering Results

66 <https://albania.un.org/en/86279-un-albania-covid-19-socio-economic-recovery-and-response-plan>

67 <https://data.uninfo.org/>

for Albania. In addition, the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund enlisted by the end of 2020 EUR 11.65 million in contributions from seven partner governments to support the national earthquake efforts. A **new Output—Earthquake Response**, added to PoCSD Outcome 4 – Environment and Climate Change—features planning, monitoring and reporting efforts of UN agencies, allowing for greater accountability and transparency over the use of resources.

Consolidated implementation progress and results were captured in the **Mid-term** prepared in October, and in various reports to contributing donors and funds (local, regional and global), as well as in this **Annual Progress Report**. Results were published on a revamped UNCT Albania website and communicated widely on UN Albania social media channels. As far as possible, programme reviews and reporting contributed to the work of the IPMGs and other government thematic and sector reviews. Reform tools such as **UNINFO** and a **reconfigured UNCT website** were successfully operationalised and adapted vis-à-vis Albania's development context. In addition, demonstrating that gender equality is a primary goal in UNCT's work throughout the year, the agency implemented the **SWAP Gender Equality Scorecard⁶⁸ Action Plan** and started preparations for the **2020 SWAP annual report** to be finalised by the end of January 2021. Also, a **Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) eligibility workshop** was held in Tirana on 3–4 February 2020 as the first major step for the UN family across the sub-region, and in support of the UN's Western Balkan Action Plan, to facilitate applications for a declaration of regional eligibility for the PBF. A steering committee was established and met regularly to coordinate preparatory work on the development of this package. A draft package is now in place, and a number of concept notes prepared. In 2021, the RCs of WB will advance advocacy and consultation with the respective governments to gain approval of the package.

To support PoCSD delivery, Operations Management Team (OMT) initiatives on **harmonising business practices** and establishing common services and premises resulted in

68 <https://albania.un.org/en/46382-unct-swap-scorecard-assessment-results-and-action-plan-united-nations-country-team-albania>

the setting up of common practices in four areas: facility services, procurement, ICT and finance, including HACT. UN agencies benefited from 15 LTAs covering eleven areas of services⁶⁹ and two Memorandum of Agreement for medical services and common premises, resulting in estimated savings of approximately USD 0.914 million from reduction in transaction costs, staff time and prices from economies of scale (larger volumes of procurement). In addition, three UN rosters have been established for three different services: Videography and Editing, Photography and Photojournalism, and Translating, Interpreting and Editing. As of August 2020, the **Business Operation Strategy** transitioned online, made possible thanks to UNDP coordination and leadership as chair of OMT and receiving Quality Assurance from the HQ team, with the Albanian case considered a success story. Another achievement was the expansion of the **UN Common Premises** with the participation of ten UN agencies—UNDP, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNICEF, WHO, UNDSS, UNEP, ILO, UNODC, UNOPS—compared to six in 2012, contributing to an increased level of UN cohesiveness and cost efficiency in programme implementation and operations practices and procedures, including the introduction of more efficient common services.

Albania was one of the countries selected for **Common Back Office** country studies and consultations in the context of advancing common business operations in UNCTs. Taking into consideration the findings from the Common Back Office Synthesis Report,⁷⁰ OMT will identify opportunities to ensure that more common services in various operational areas can be performed jointly, aiming at improving performance and reducing costs. In the next framework cycle (UNSDCF 2022–2026), OMT will focus on key performance indicators (KPI) and the cost of services provided by streamlining the monitoring and evaluation component.

Other important groups that have played a key role in achieving, delivering and promoting results in Albania include the UN Communication Group, UN Gender

69 Banking, travel, logistics, events, security, communications, internet, translation/interpretation, printing, design and video production

70 The report mentioned that a lot of common areas of collaboration are already in place, however, there are areas with limited collaboration, due to the application of various procedures, systems and modalities by the respective Agencies.

Thematic Result Group, UN Resource Mobilisation Group, INSTAT–UN Joint Data Group, and the UN–People's Advocate Group. Recognising the importance of youth to sustainable development, UNCT established in late 2020 a **Youth Advisory Board** to mentor on youth issues in the country, while influencing design of better youth oriented programmes, enhancing engagement of youth with SDGs and building awareness among young audiences.

UNCT Communications Group assumed a coordinative role in joint communications with development partners on Covid-19. Public information campaigns on preventing the spread of the pandemic and the need to increase public awareness of its consequences upon vulnerable groups were addressed through more frequent and more issue-focused communications. A new user-friendly and human-story-based UNCT website (albania.un.org) was successfully developed and activated, **five special newsletters** were produced in addition to the **regular four quarterly UNCT newsletters**, and **UNCT social media channels** reached a wider audience with more than 20 percent increase in followers across all platforms. In addition, **UN's global UN75** conversation received a successful response in Albania, with close to 7,000 survey participants and four public dialogues. A more focused and result-oriented communication approach was applied across issues, especially on promoting gender equality and youth involvement in development.

Besides engaging in the implementation of the current Programme (PoCSD 2017–2021), UNCT Albania started preparation of **a new United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2022–2026**. By the end of 2020, key processes finalised in cooperation with the Government of Albania and UN partners in the country included UNSDCF roadmap, independent evaluation of the current programme, and UNCT management response, Common Country Assessment, draft UNSDCF results framework, strategic consultations with partners (CSOs, academia and think-tanks, NHRIs, and associations for PWDs and R&E, youth network, social partners, private sector and beneficiaries), online survey with youth, and formulation of the first draft UNSDCF narrative document together with a results framework and annexes.

2.5. Evaluations and lessons learned

UNCT started preparations for the new Government of Albania-UNSDCF 2022-2026, under the strategic guidance of the JEC, co-chaired by the UN Resident Coordinator and the Deputy Prime Minister of Albania.

The first step in the process was the undertaking of an independent evaluation⁷¹ of the current PoCSD (2017-2021) to assess: a) relevance, b) coherence, c) results, d) transformation, e) normativity, and f) looking forward. The evaluation, incorporating the feedback received from consultations with a wide range of stakeholders and UNCT in Albania, provides the UN agencies and partners with suggestions how the subsequent UNSDC could continue to support the country in integration with the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs, as well as over the EU integration aspirations of Albania.

The evaluation provided 20 findings, eight conclusions, six lessons learned, and twelve recommendations all agreed by UNCT in Albania. Highlights of the results include the following:

- UNCT collectively prioritises support and contributes to the country's development through PoCSD Outcomes that are relevant in terms of internationally agreed goals and human rights commitments and in line with the national strategic framework as laid out in NSDI II and sectoral strategies.
- PoCSD has made good progress in aligning the Agenda 2030 goals with the national development policies, and in making the SDG framework relevant in the country through its mainstreaming and operationalisation of a set of national indicators.
- Contributions of PoCSD are coherent with other international development partner policies, with consistent inter-linkages and complementarities identified with other partners, most frequently with the EU. PoCSD interventions are mostly donor-driven, as core and regular resources finance less than 15 percent of the resource envelope.
- The UN Resident Coordinator has played an effective role in leveraging the leadership and diverse

⁷¹ <https://albania.un.org/en/89437-evaluation-report-government-albania-and-united-nations-programme-cooperation-sustainable>

expertise of the UN family to improve the relevance and impact of PoCSD. The RC office plays a central role in the fostering of strategic partnerships with government, and in advocacy for key principles and strategic priorities, including for setting national objectives and financing Agenda 2030.

To address the evaluation recommendations, **UNCT Albania prepared a management response⁷²** in September 2020, **identifying 37 actions for implementation in 2020 and 2021.** Both the evaluation and its management response are published on the UN Albania website and shared widely with all partners in the country. By the end of 2020, **70 percent of the actions had been accomplished or are progressing satisfactorily**, with the remainder to be completed within 2021.

Some adjustments, programmatic and other, have been made through implementing the management response actions, including: (i) effectively responding to the Covid-19 pandemic by adopting to the challenges, timely adjustment of interventions and resources towards national recovery needs; (ii) cohesive engagement of all UN agencies and partners in co-creating and co-developing the new programme, UNSDCF 2022-2026; (iii) enhanced strategic coordination at the inter-ministerial level for UNDAF implementation through participation of the leadership of UN agencies in the country's coordination fora (i.e. Integrated Policy and Management Groups); (iv) strengthened strategic partnership between the UN and the EU through implementation of the EU funding provided bilaterally to UN agencies in several outputs, and pursuit of new EU funding opportunities and joint collaboration with the EU in various sectors, processes and coordination fora; (v) donors incentivised to use the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund and increased allocation of funds attained, especially for earthquake recovery; and (vi) increased focus on gender work with implementation of the UNCT Gender Scorecard Action Plan and design of a stand-alone gender outcome in the next UNSDCF (2022-2026).

⁷² <https://albania.un.org/en/99837-management-response-evaluation-government-albania-united-nations-programme-cooperation>

2.6. Financial overview and resource mobilisation

The PoCSD for 2020 had an available budget of USD 35 million (Figure 1), with core resources of USD 6 million (17%) and mobilised resources of USD 29 million (84%). The large proportion of the non-core resources highlights the importance of local resource mobilisation. By year end, the programme had reached a delivery rate of 75 percent, with the balance carried over into 2021.

Seventeen UN agencies-including nine resident and eight non-resident agencies (NRAs)-contributed to PoCSD implementation in 2020. The available budget of the resident agencies comprised 93 percent of the total UN Albania available budget, and that of the NRAs, seven percent (Figure 2).

At the Outcome level (Figure 3), Outcome 2 – Social Cohesion implemented the highest budget (42%), followed by Outcome 1 – Governance and Rule of Law (29%), Outcome 4 – Environment and Climate Change (22%), and Outcome 3 – Economic Growth, Labour and Agriculture (7%).

Figure 1. Budget and delivery (USD), January to December 2020

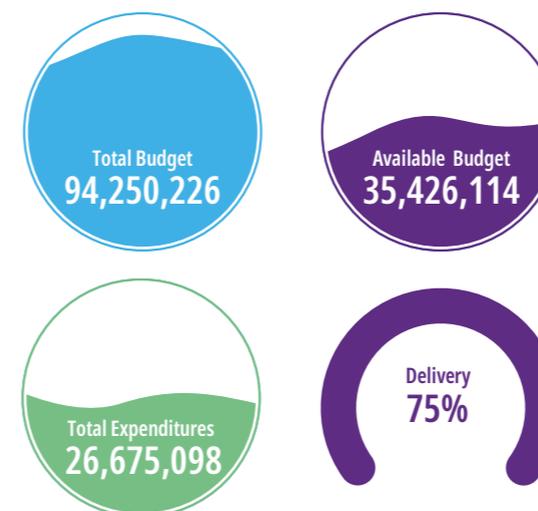
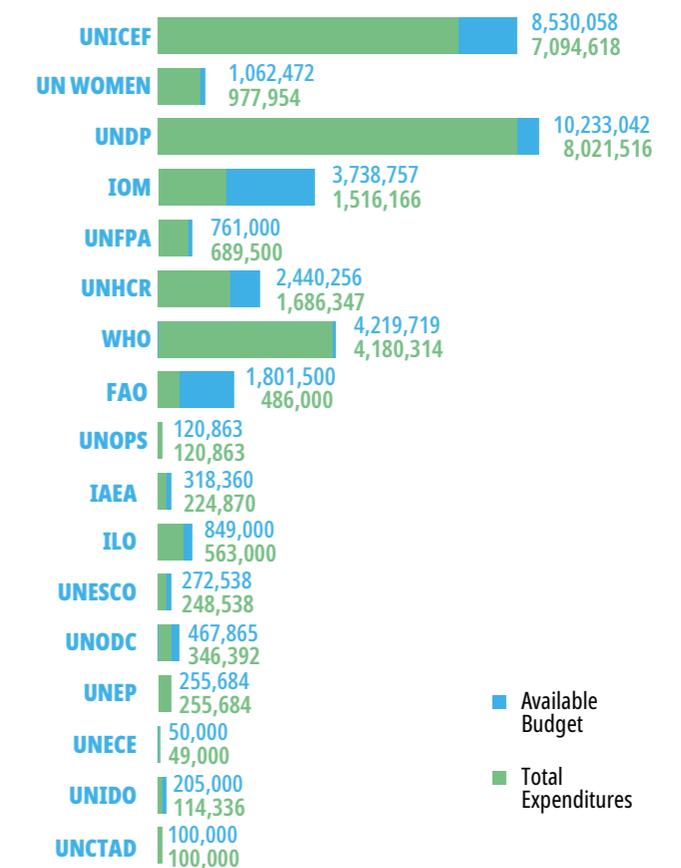
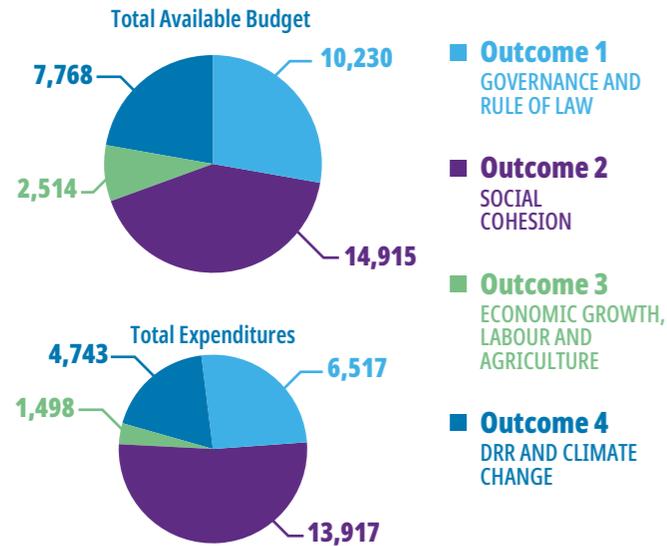


Figure 2. UN agencies budget and delivery (USD), 2020



The high share of resources mobilised towards PoCSD outcome areas 1, 2 and 4 is consistent with the perceived comparative advantages of UN's work in the country, as well as with the specialisation and strategic positioning of the UN agencies development work vis-à-vis other development agents. Under Outcome 1, UN expertise in the areas of anti-corruption and rule of law, local governance, and migration and asylum led to substantial resource mobilisation in 2020 and in previous years. Under Outcome 2, joint programme resources channelled through the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund—such as the SDC-supported LNB programme, the Swedish-supported EAW programme—or new financial flows—such as the UN Joint SDG Fund on social protection as well as on SDG financing—provided useful platforms for consolidation of a sound programme strategy in the respective areas. Likewise, under Outcome 4, the pledges on post-

Figure 3. Outcome delivery (USD million), 2020



earthquake recovery, individual and pooled—channelled through the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund, mobilised in 2020—indicate the trust that donors place in the PoCSD and the UNCT to make the appropriate programmatic choices and division of work toward the expected objectives, in a situation where agile and concerted interventions are deemed necessary.

The UN Albania joint One Fund—Albania SDG Acceleration Fund—is an important element of the mobilised resources (non-core) and contributes to greater UN coherence and efficiency (Figure 4). In the year from Q4 of 2019, the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund received contributions from nine sources in support of various development areas (LNB, GBV, Migration, Human Rights, Social Protection and Service Delivery, Child Protection, DRR and Climate Change, and Earthquake recovery), comprising 42 percent of the UN Albania available budget for the year, as follows:

- USD 2.1 million from the Swiss Confederation (fourth and final tranche) in support of the efforts of UN agencies UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF and UN Women towards social inclusion and protection needs and priorities in line with the project Leave No One Behind. The Swiss contribution is part of a four-year commitment, 2017–2020, of approximately USD 8 million.
- USD 0.5 million from GoA (upon signing of a Standard

Administrative Arrangement, SAA) and commitment of USD 2 million annually for disbursement in 2020–2021. The 2020 allocation focused on improving municipal social protection service delivery, child protection, DRR and climate change, and capacity building for enhancing employability.

- USD 1.1 million from the Embassy of Sweden (second and third tranche) in support of efforts of UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women towards gender needs and priorities of the country in line with the UN Joint Programme to End Violence against Women in Albania. The Swedish contribution comes from a finalised long-term support, 2019–2021, for gender work under PoCSD 2017–2021 to an amount of SEK 32 million (USD 3.5 million), materialised with the signing of an SAA in November 2018.
- EUR 11.65 million from the governments of Denmark (2 million), Finland (0.3 million), Netherlands (3 million), Norway (0.45 million), Poland (2.7 million), Sweden (2 million), and United Kingdom (1.2 million) in support of the Government of Albania post-earthquake recovery efforts.

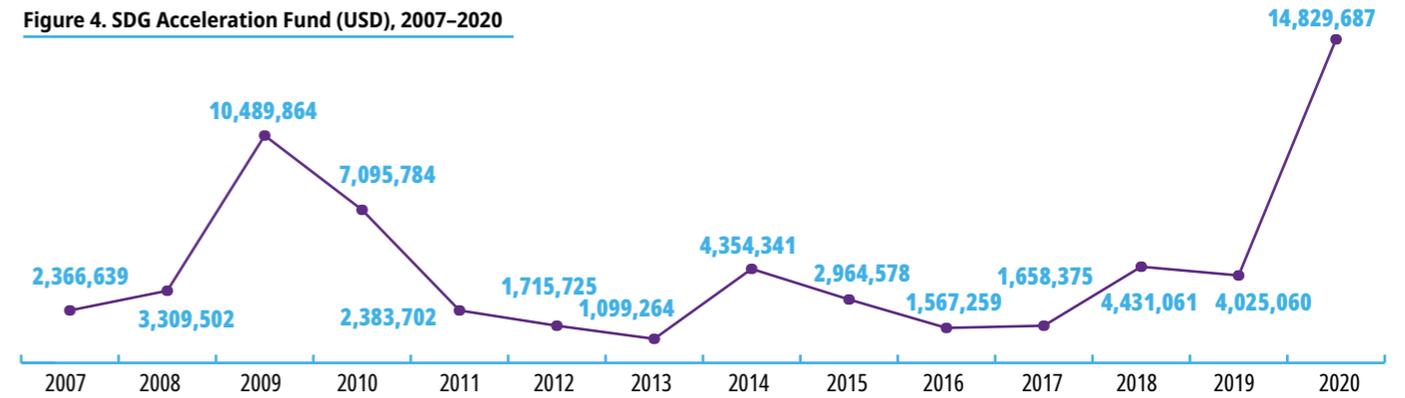
In addition to the contributing partners in the Albania SDG Acceleration Fund, by the end of 2020, individual UN agencies had implemented also bilateral contributions from more than 20 other partners and sources (Figure 5) at the country level and regionally and globally.⁷³

The large proportion (83%) of the non-core resources of the PoCSD highlights the importance of local resource mobilisation. The PoCSD delivery is hence to some extent donor driven. In 2020, the increased coordination and joint collaboration among UN agencies resulted in successful joint programmes' funding, sharing of pipeline plans across agencies, to name a few. UNCT Albania is proud of the following joint projects, whose implementation started in 2020 or will start in 2021:

- A UN Women–FAO project, 2020–2021, focused on rural women's capacity building to engage in tourism

⁷³ The available budget presented in Figure 5 is the amount planned for implementation by UN agencies in 2020 from partners' contributions received during 2019–2020. Any remaining partners' contributions is carried over for implementation in 2021.

Figure 4. SDG Acceleration Fund (USD), 2007–2020

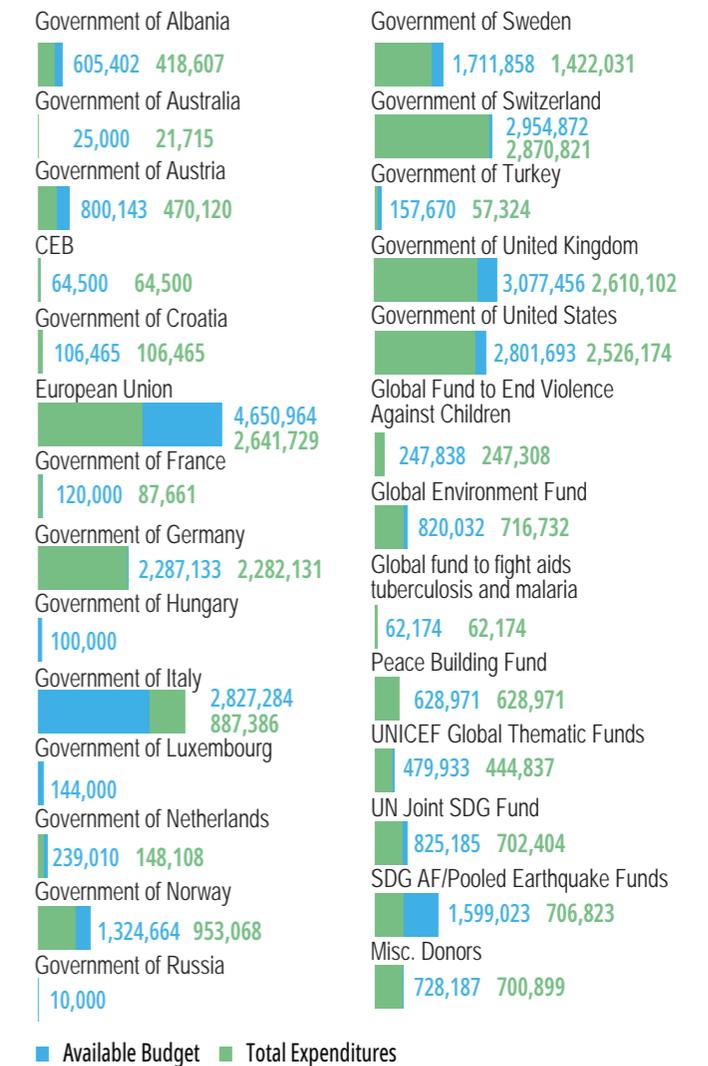


business development (GREAT programme), financed by the government of Italy to an amount of USD 1.35 million.

- A UNDP–UNICEF–WHO–UN Women project, January 2020–January 2022, focused on improving social protection service delivery at the local level, financed by the Joint SDG Fund to an amount of USD 1.5 million. The project will enlist expertise from UNFPA, ILO and UNHCR.
- A UNDP–UNICEF–ILO project, July 2020–July 2022, focused on developing institutional capacities (national and local) to design feasible solutions and identify fiscal space to progressively increase SDG-related spending for women, men, boys and children in Albania, financed by the Joint SDG Fund to an amount of USD 855,000. The project will enlist expertise from UN Women and UNFPA.
- A UN Women–UNFPA project 2020–2022 focused on implementation of the gender equality acquis, financed by the EU.

In 2020, the UN reform and the establishment of a strengthened Resident Coordinator Office enhanced the efficiency and effectiveness of the coordination between UNCT agencies. UN in Albania will continue building long-term partnerships to mobilise financing towards Agenda 2030. The middle-income status of Albania means that increasingly we will need to find entry points to explore government financing of development activities. A further opportunity lies in leveraging UN's resources with financing from IFIs and DFIs, as well as seeking to deepen our engagement with the private sector.

Figure 5. Contributions by Funding Source (USD), 2020



CHAPTER 3

UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR NEXT YEAR

4 SCHOOLS

A woman with long blonde hair, wearing a grey jacket and a white face mask, is holding a young child in a white puffer jacket. They are both pointing their right index fingers towards a banner on the left. The banner has the text '4 SCHOOLS' in large, bold, blue letters. The background shows a building with arched windows and some trees. The entire image has a blue color overlay.

UNCT KEY FOCUS FOR NEXT YEAR

Considering the potential risks (Covid-19, national elections, high risks from natural hazards and weak institutional preparedness capacity, increased inflows of refugees and migrants and outmigration) to cooperation and sustained progress toward achievement of the SDGs in Albania, UNCT Albania's key focus for next year will be as follows:



Leaving No One Behind, Human Rights and Gender Equality in the 2030 Agenda

Next year, UNCT will implement the final year of the current Programme, PoCSD 2017–2021 in close cooperation with government (central and local level) and partners. Focus will be placed on recovery efforts related to the earthquake and Covid-19, with UN agencies being flexible to adjust or expand programming to assist with a swift recovery. The new Cooperation Framework 2022–2026 will also be finalised and signed jointly by the government and UN in Albania within 2021, including a robust Results and Budgetary Framework contributing to achievement of SDGs in the country.

Within both Programmes' priorities, issues of prevention, human rights-based approach, gender equality, social inclusion, specific capacity development for policy formulation and results-based management and improving the overall evidence will be addressed, duly operationalised by annual JWPs⁷⁴. JEC and Outcome Group meetings will continue to be organised to allocate resources from the SDG Acceleration Fund and explore potential areas of collaboration.

⁷⁴ JWPs are prepared jointly and signed by the government and UN in Albania, enlisting contributions from 19 UN agencies, in accordance with their respective mandates and roles, as well as with national development policies, plans, priorities and needs. Indicators for the JWP will be aligned, as necessary, with the UN SERP for the Covid-19 pandemic.

Implementation progress and results will be captured in the UNINFO, Annual Progress Reports, Mid and/or Annual Reviews, and in the various reports to contributing donors and funds, while results will be communicated widely on UN Albania social media channels. During the annual review and reporting exercises, JWPs will be reviewed and adjusted to respond to new and emerging priorities.

The joint group with INSTAT will coordinate effective support for strengthening data monitoring capacities while the group with the People's Advocate will serve to strengthen the role of independent institutions to push forward the human resources agenda in the country.



SDG implementation

Key priorities will include supporting government for formulation of the new NSDI 2021–2030 with SDGs integrated into the document and in the SDG Roadmap and Action Plan for Albania. In addition, government will be supported in finalising the SDG target setting exercise that started in 2020, bringing the SDGs to the local level, as well as in preparing a biennial SDG report 2019–2020. The Ministry of Finance and Economy will be supported for development of a National Investment Framework on SDGs, aiming to ensure that budgets are allocated to priority areas and serve as a tool to be used by development finance institutions at the central level, institutions at the local level, and private sector investors to identify the investments that might work best to support Albania's needs towards the achievement of SDGs. Support to EU integration structures on the negotiation process will be provided, aiming to insert the SDGs into the structures' working agenda.

Work will continue with civil society, academia and Parliament to strengthen their engagement in SDGs and build capacities of INSTAT and line ministries on M&E to improve data availability and quality in the country. Precedence will be given to the national Census preparations.

Nationwide awareness raising will continue, along with partnership building to deepen efforts, including through engagement with the private sector and the mobilisation of contributions to the SDG Acceleration Fund. Engagement with the private sector around SDG 12 will be further sought, jointly with development partners, namely the governments of Sweden and Switzerland, as an opportunity to advance policy issues such as the transition towards a green economy, improved waste management, reduction of food waste and the emergence of a circular economy.



Covid-19 response

UNCT Albania will continue implementing SERP actions in 2021, anchored in the core objectives and principles of saving lives, and protecting people's rights during the pandemic, focusing on the most vulnerable groups and people who risk being left behind, while calling for greater support to mobilise financing, through partnerships, and other means of implementation.



Strategic Financing and Partnerships

Accompanying the new Cooperation Framework, a Resource Mobilisation Strategy and a Communication Strategy will guide and enhance the efforts of UN in Albania in partnership building and resource mobilisation towards achieving sustainable results in the country over the next five years. Recognising the absence of resource financing from several partners (e.g. the private sector, IFIs, government and others), UNCT Albania will explore and promote opportunities for cost sharing and stronger partnerships to unlock such capital and capitalise on

funding opportunities. In addition, new sources of finance will be identified, including options for blended finance and influencing the policy environment to facilitate greater resource flows for SDG-related country priorities.



Sub-regional cooperation

Acceleration across the UN system in the sub-region will take place to enable joint work (requisite of the new UNSDCF) and the sharing of knowledge and practices, while the production, sharing and use of quality data will continue. Taking into consideration the good experience of the UN Peacebuilding Fund support for RYCO, work in exploring regional application for eligibility to access the long-term window of the Fund will continue to be explored in 2021, building on the sub-regional meeting hosted in February 2020 in Tirana. Once achieved, this would be a first-of-its-kind initiative for the Western Balkans, and in partnership with the respective governments, would apply to funding to support various regional projects aimed at advancing peacebuilding and reconciliation efforts in the region.



Business Innovation

OMT will continue implementing initiatives on harmonising business practices and establishing common services and premises. A new Business Operation Strategy will be developed to accompany the new Cooperation Framework 2022–2026, identifying opportunities to ensure that more common services in various operational areas can be performed jointly, aiming at improving performance and reducing costs. A stronger focus will be placed on key performance indicators (KPI) and the cost of services provided by streamlining the monitoring and evaluation component.



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