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DELEGATION TO ALBANIA
DELEGACIONI NE SHQIPERI
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Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP Albania

1. Context for EU action gender equality and women's empowerment in the country

In the past years, Albania has made considerable progress regarding the **normative framework** on gender equality by developing a set of laws and policies to promote, enforce and monitor non-discrimination based on sex and gender identity. Reinforcing its national and international commitments to advance gender equality, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP) has recently adopted a new National Strategy on Gender Equality (2021-2030). Despite this progress, the country needs to further step up the processes to strengthen the implementation of its laws and policies. The Law on Gender Equality has not undergone any amendment since its adoption in 2008 despite recommendations to do so.

Gender equality mechanisms at both central and local level lack financial and human resources and technical capacity needed to plan and manage gender equality issues. Limited national/local budgetary allocations for gender equality poses constraints in effective implementation and monitoring of sectoral and cross sectoral strategies and plans. Current gaps in and lack of reliable recent gender-disaggregated data across various sectors poses significant constraints in developing policies and measures that will reduce inequalities and take different needs and opportunities into concern.

The inclusion of gender quotas in the Electoral Code has increased the representation of women in decision-making processes and political parties leading to Albania having the largest proportion (56.3%)¹ of ministerial posts held by women in the region in 2020

The percentage of women Members of Parliament following the national elections in April 2021 is 35.9%. While women's formal representation in political parties and in decision-making has increased, further steps are necessary in ensuring their active participation and engagement in policy making processes will go beyond mere figures.

Violence against women and girls/gender-based violence is widespread and one of the most common forms of violence in Albania with one in two women having experienced gender based violence in their lives. The definition of rape in the Albanian Criminal Code remains a force-based definition. Victims of domestic violence often lack the economic means, and this is a discouraging factor, in seeking justice. Low awareness-raising, lack of country-wide legal clinics, cultural resistance among duty-bearers, multiple forms of discrimination, and unfavourable economic standing contribute to survivors of gender-based violence, Roma and Egyptian, LGBTI+, disabled and elderly women, having limited access to justice, including difficulties in obtaining specialized free legal aid services. Not all forms of violence against women and girls have been prioritized and addressed equally, such as violence against women during elections, online harassment, physical and sexual harassment in public spaces and incest.

The **COVID-19 pandemic**, including emergency measures introduced to curb its spread, has had a negative impact on gender equality, especially when it comes to increased risk of gender-based violence and the burden of unpaid care work, while also limiting access to services. The economic impacts of the crisis are felt

¹ http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2021.pdf

especially by women and girls who are generally earning less, saving less, and holding insecure jobs or living close to poverty.

Although the **employment** outcomes of Albanian women are not significantly lagging behind international benchmarks, gender equality is far from achieved and social norms as well as limited access to childcare continue to keep women at home. The employment rate in Albania is 61.5% for women and 77.1% for men (population age 15-64).² However, the structure of employees shows that 43.3% of women in the labour force are employed in paid positions while 28.6% are engaged in unpaid work mainly in family business.³ Gender gaps in formal employment are particularly high for women in their childbearing age. Albanian women spend more than 6 times as much time on unpaid household chores as men, compared to an unpaid work average ratio of around 2 for regional comparators and the OECD⁴.

There is an increased number of **women led businesses** run by women increased during the last decade, with 25.4% of women owning or managing a business. However, the majority of women's enterprises are under-capitalised micro/small businesses in mostly informal and lower value-added sectors (e.g. in manufacturing and agriculture). Women represent half of the employees in the agricultural sector and are the main workforce on farms but own only 4% of land. Formally, women have equal rights to inheritance and ownership of land and property in Albania but due to pervading gender stereotypes, over 80% of land titles remain in the name of the "head of household" (mainly husbands, fathers-in-law, brothers, fathers, grandfathers), thus limiting women's access to productive resources such as registering a business, credit, and extension services, as well as their options to leave violent relationship.

The percentage of women studying science, technology, engineering or mathematics (STEM) is impressively high in Albania. The largest discrepancy observed among women and girls in STEM in Albania is that, while the country has the highest percentage of women attending these studies, most of it is lost when they enter the labour market. Stereotypes in education, gender differences in the choices made in education and training, as well as the lack of female role models are some of the issues that contribute to less women choosing careers within STEM or other traditionally not seen as 'women jobs'.

Access to **digital networks** is neither widespread nor evenly distributed by gender and geographical location. The difference between men and women in the frequency of internet use is quite small (men 88.0% and women 86.1% in 2019⁵).

Women living in rural and remote areas, Roma and Egyptian women but also LGBTQI+ individuals, face limited access to primary **health care**, and to sexual and reproductive health-care services. The usage of modern contraceptive methods in Albania is among (if not) the lowest in the region and only 10% of the demand for modern family planning methods is currently satisfied.

No information exists on the extent to which gender equality goals have been mainstreamed into the national legal and policy framework on **environment and climate change**. A need to conduct more relevant and detailed analysis on the relationships between gender and the environment and climate change and gender related aspects of natural resource management and environmental pollution is of high importance. Most gender equality efforts in the **security sector** are geared towards increasing the number of women in the armed forces and the state police.⁶ In 2018, Albania developed its first National Action Plan (NAP) on implementing the Women, Peace and Security Agenda 1325.

EU CLIP Methodology

This Country-Level Implementation Plan for Albania (EU CLIP), has been developed on the basis of a detailed and updated gender analysis undertaken for Albania during 2020. It builds on the national gender-related policies and plans, integrates lessons learned from past EU actions, dialogue on gender equality and other

² Women and men in Albania, INSTAT 2021

³ ibid

⁴ OECD data

⁵ Country Gender Analysis (Albania), August 2021

⁶ The 2019 data show that among police officers, classified by rank and gender, 14.5% are women.

undertaken or planned initiatives supported by the EU and EU Member States. The Albania Gender Profile was developed through a combination of qualitative research methods, including a broad desk review, semi-structured interviews with key government institutions responsible for gender equality, and consultation with civil society organisations, as well as with Member States and international organisations in Albania. As with the Gender Profile, the EU CLIP has also been submitted for review and comments by Member States (MS), International Organizations (IOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs). In the Gender profile, several opportunities and recommendations for EU's support to gender equality in Albania have been identified. This includes supporting the implementation of the Gender Equality National Strategy 2021-2030 as well as strengthening leadership, ownership and institutional capacities for coordination and mainstreaming. The actions foreseen in the EU CLIP represent a renewed momentum to strengthen the political dialogue on the gender equality agenda in Albania, catalysing attention and resources on the prioritised thematic areas.

2. Selected thematic areas of engagement and objectives

The **overall objective** of the EU Delegation to Albania action for gender equality and women's empowerment is to support Albania through close cooperation with Member States to eliminating violence against women and girls, strengthening women's economic empowerment and to comply with the national and international gender equality commitments and EU Gender Equality Acquis, in accordance with the EU gender equality agenda and the government of Albania's strategy on Gender Equality.

In Albania, the EU will focus in three priority areas out of six thematic areas of the EU GAP III through its political dialogue and targeted actions. These priority areas are widely consulted and agreed with all key stakeholders.

GAP III Intervention Area	Specific Thematic Objectives
A. Promoting Economic and Social Rights and empowering girls and women	1. <i>Increased access for women, in all their diversity, to decent work, including women's transition to the formal economy and coverage by non-discriminatory and inclusive social protection systems</i>
	2. <i>Increased access for women in all their diversity to financial services and products, and productive resources</i>
	3. <i>Women in all their diversity have improved access to entrepreneurship opportunities, including social entrepreneurship, alternative livelihoods and strengthened participation in the green and circular economy</i>
B. Ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence	1. <i>Women's rights organisations, social movements and other civil society organisations are influential in ending gender-based violence.</i>
	2. <i>Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, are agents of change regarding discriminatory social norms, gender stereotypes, and gender-drivers of conflict</i>
	3. <i>Women, men, girls and boys, in all their diversity, who experience gender-based violence have increased access to essential services (including access to legal aid)</i>
C. Promoting equal participation and leadership	1. <i>Women's organisations, other CSOs and women human rights defenders working for gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment and rights work more freely and are better protected by law.</i>
	2. <i>Equitable social norms, attitudes and behaviours promoting equal participation and leadership fostered at community and individual levels – through civic education, media, education and culture at all levels</i>

Apart from the above listed, certain Member States have listed specific areas of engagement that are of particular interest to them and where opportunities for cooperation between them and EU Delegation to Albania can be found as they have also been identified by the GAP III. These are specifically:

- **Climate change and environment** - Women in all their diversity increasingly participate in and have improved access to jobs, entrepreneurship opportunities in the green economy and the circular economy.
- **Women, Peace and Security agenda**- focused on participation and gender mainstreaming.
- **Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights** – focused on raising awareness and access to services
- **Participation in decision making at local and central level** (supporting parliamentary women, women at local level municipal councils, working with youth and promoting the right to public consultations etc)
- **Digitalization** - Women, men, girls and boys are equally provided with and using equally public digital literacy.

Currently, there are several EU funded ongoing and new programmes which are linked to both the EU identified priority areas and those identified by Member States. EU will closely coordinate with Member States on these areas at the policy dialogue level and potential new programmes in these areas.

Building synergies and strengthening the cooperation with EU Member States and other stakeholders in the country (UN agencies and other development actors) is achieved through the Sector Working Group on gender equality where priorities are shared and discussed and regular consultations are organized on existing and new programs. Close coordination is already established with some Member States on programmes related to violence against women and girls, gender-based violence and in the area of employment and social inclusion.

3. Targeted action(s) supporting gender equality and women's empowerment

Important aspects that are vital to the implementation and monitoring of the progress of priority areas of engagement are the so-called horizontal areas of engagement such as strong institutional mechanisms at central and local level; gender mainstreaming of policies and plans; gender responsive budgeting and production of relevant and recent gender-disaggregated data. The main targeted action for EU's support in Albania is through the support to the UN SDG Acceleration Fund in Albania - *Implementation of the EU Gender Equality acquis funded through IPA II*. This action is implemented by UN Women and UNFPA in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and Prime Minister office and the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs.

This intervention reflects the EU commitment on gender equality as a principle underpinning its external relations within the framework of Albania's accession to the EU and with a focus on the negotiation process. With the overall aim of enhancing transposition of the EU Gender Equality acquis and achieving gender equality outcomes in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (particularly SDG 5), it will focus on strengthening gender and socially responsive governance outcomes at central and local levels, in line with international human rights norms and standards such as CEDAW, the Istanbul Convention, and the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review. The action runs from March 2021 until March 2023, with a funding of 700,000 EUR.

A specific area of targeted action will be the support to the new country strategy on Gender Equality for Albania (2021-2030) which is under discussion under the financial assistance for IPA III. The number of targeted contributions planned or ongoing from MS is relatively high compared to the overall portfolio.⁷ Civil society organisations, in particular women and human rights organisations, are the main partners for Member States in working with gender equality. This will continue in the forthcoming period. Particular focus will be placed on youth and vulnerable groups such as: Roma, disabled and LGBTI+, elderly and victims of violence. Institutions at local and national level are also prioritised in partnerships on programmes related to their leadership in coordination, gender responsive budgeting, fighting GBV, Women, peace and security agenda and economic empowerment.

4. Engage in dialogue for gender equality and women empowerment

The pre- accession process is the key channel for political and policy dialogue to influence progress on gender equality in line with the EU Gender Equality Acquis. Dialogue in the context of Chapter 23 on Judiciary and Fundamental rights is of particular importance, in particular in the area of institutional strengthening of the gender machinery, gender mainstreaming, gender-based violence, empowerment and support to women's rights organizations. Dialogue on Chapter 19 on Employment and Social Policy is another area of particular focus related to social and economic rights.

⁷ Austria, France, Sweden, Germany, Italy etc

The dialogue and collaboration that has been established with the government and relevant stakeholders in the country will be continued and reinforced to include policy dialogue within the identified gender equality priorities. This includes high level dialogue at the level of Heads of Missions, but also dialogue with the National Council for Gender Equality which is the governmental mechanism responsible for coordinating the agenda on Gender Equality in Albania⁸.

Government representatives are also invited for dialogue to the Donor Sector Working Group meetings. Inter institutional coordination in the area of gender equality will be achieved through further strengthening and mainstreaming the discussions through the governmental platform of the Integrated Policy Management Groups (IPMG) and respective thematic groups in areas such as: public administration and public finance, employment and social policies, land management and water, justice and other sectors.

In addition, the dialogue between the EU and the civil society will be organized twice per year with a focus on the implementation of the EU CLIP and engagement of civil society in the national agenda. Consultations with the National Council for Civil Society in Albania will be organized on regular basis as part of the dialogue on the implementation of the Roadmap to Enabling Environment for civil society in Albania. The dialogue with the local government is critical and will be mainstreamed through the National Consultative Council on Local Government. This Council will be engaged in promoting the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life. Regular and structured dialogue with civil society is envisaged as part of the implementation of several programmes related to the priorities identified such as: EU support to Social Inclusion, Civil Society Facility and Media, EU for Youth, EU for good governance etc.

5. Outreach and other communication / public diplomacy activities

Several events related to strategic communication on gender equality as well as high level events are foreseen in the forthcoming period, others might not be included here but the EUD's intends to closely cooperate with the support Member States during any of their events on gender equality. Some planned outreach and communication activities include:

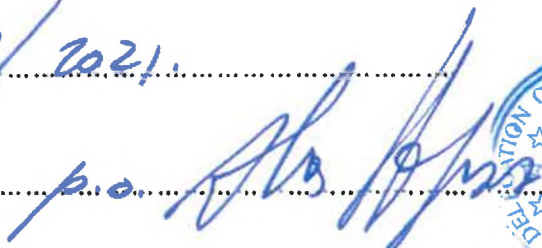
- Policy dialogue through the existing platforms such as, IPMG, budget support programmes, annual reporting, economic reform programmes, sector working groups, etc.
- Engagement in awareness raising and public outreach through joint gender equality campaigns, such as the recent one - I vote, but also 16th days of activism, International Women's Day, Europe day and other dedicated events at local level.
- Women' rights and gender equality are prioritized in the communication plans of Members States featuring success stories, promoting women and girls, men's engagement.
- Local level outreach and dialogue with civil society organisations, human rights defender and youth.
- Research and publications on gender equality such as gender sector analysis are made available online.


6. Technical Facility and/or financial resources allocated to support GAP III implementation

Targeted support is primarily implemented through the project Support to the UN SDG Acceleration Fund in Albania - Implementation of the EU Gender Equality acquis which supports the government of Albania to consistently comply with national and international gender equality commitments and EU Gender Equality Acquis. Financing for this action is 700,000 Euro over 24 Months from April 2021 – March 2023.

A new targeted action under IPA III is under the discussion with the Government of Albania on supporting the implementation of the national strategy on Gender Equality and EU CLIP in Albania.

Date: 3/8/2021

Signature by Head of Delegation: 



⁸ Law 9970/2008 on Gender Equality stipulates the establishment of the National Council on Gender Equality composed by representatives of all line ministries and five representatives of civil society organizations.

