



Roadmap for Cooperation between the EUAA and Albania (2024 –2027)



Roadmap for Cooperation between the EUAA and Albania

(October 2024 – September 2027)

Strengthening the asylum and reception systems in line
with the Common European Asylum System and EU
standards



Manuscript completed in October/2024

Neither the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) nor any person acting on behalf of the EUAA is responsible for the use that might be made of the information contained within this publication.

© European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA), 2024

Cover photo/illustration: [jozefmicic], © [Business team and teamwork vector concept. Symbol of cooperation, process, solution. Minimal illustration.]

Reproduction is authorised provided the source is acknowledged. For any use or reproduction of photos or other material that is not under the EUAA copyright, permission must be sought directly from the copyright holders.



The development and implementation of the Roadmap for cooperation between EUAA – Albania (2024-2027): strengthening the asylum and reception systems in line with the CEAS and EU standards is supported through the “EU Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans”, a project funded by the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of EUAA and the Ministry of Interior of the Republic of Albania and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



Acronyms

- APD** – Asylum Procedures Directive;
- ATP** – Access to Procedure;
- BIA/BID** – Best Interest Assessment/Best Interest Determination;
- BMP** – Border Migration Police;
- CEAS** – Common European Asylum System;
- CPU** – Child Protection Unit;
- DAC** – Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship;
- EC** – European Commission;
- EU** – European Union;
- EUAA** – European Union Agency for Asylum;
- EU MS** – EU Member States;
- EU+** – EU Member State and Associated Countries;
- GoA** – Government of Albania
- IOM** – International Organization for Migration;
- IPA** – Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance;
- IPSN** – Identification of Persons with Special needs;
- M&E** – Monitoring and Evaluation;
- MHSP** - Ministry of Health and Social Protection
- MoI** – Ministry of Interior;
- MoJ** – Ministry of Justice;
- NARC**– National Asylum Reception Centre
- NCRA** – National Commission for Refugees and Asylum;
- NGO** – Non-Governmental Organisation;
- QD** – Qualifications Directive;
- RMSA**– Refugee and Migrant Services in Albania;
- SOPs** – Standard Operating Procedures;
- TtT** – Train the trainers;
- UAM** – Unaccompanied minor;
- UNHCR** – United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees;





Introduction and Background

The EUAA¹ has been cooperating with Albania to strengthen its asylum and reception system through the implementation of regional activities within the framework of the “Regional support to protection-sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans and Turkey”, a project co-implemented by the EUAA and financed by the European Union Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance II (Phase I: 2016-mid 2019, Phase II: mid 2019-2021, Phase III 2022-2025). In the phase II of this project, the EUAA has also strengthened its bilateral cooperation with Albania through the development of a first Roadmap, which was implemented from January 2021 until December 2023.

The EUAA and Albania have agreed to further this cooperation and to conclude this subsequent Roadmap for that purpose. The overall objective of this “Roadmap for Cooperation between EUAA and Albania (2024 – 2027): strengthening the asylum and reception systems in line with the CEAS and European Union standards” (hereinafter: EUAA – Albania Roadmap) is to enhance the protection space for applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection in Albania in line with the CEAS and EU Member States’ practices. The present document identifies priority areas where the EUAA support to Albanian authorities has an added value and, where possible, contributes to the accession process and has a direct impact on the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the European Commission’s annual Reports² and in the framework of the accession negotiations related to Chapter 24: “Justice, Freedom and Security”. Furthermore, this Roadmap contributes to an increased harmonisation of asylum and reception systems at a regional level, therefore contributing to one of the objectives of the wider IPA financed project “Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management in the Western Balkans - Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance” – Phase III.

This EUAA – Albania Roadmap has been developed jointly, using a participatory approach, where EUAA and the Ministry of Interior of Albania have been working together in identifying needs for support and drafting areas of cooperation. The Ministry of Interior and the EUAA have included relevant authorities in the design of activities, in line with their responsibilities within the asylum and reception systems. Implementation is likewise planned in cooperation with all relevant institutions, according to their responsibilities.

The implementation period of the EUAA – Albania Roadmap is 36 months from its endorsement by both sides. During the implementation phase, the EUAA and the Ministry of Interior of Albania agree to an open two-way communication to ensure smooth implementation of the EUAA –

¹ On 19 January 2022, the European Asylum Support Office (EASO) became the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA).

² European Commission SWD(2023) 690 final, Albania Report, 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement Policy. https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/ea0a4b05-683f-4b9c-b7ff-4615a5fffd0b_en?filename=SWD_2023_690%20Albania%20report.pdf





Albania Roadmap. The EUAA – Albania Roadmap can be revised, if need arises, upon agreement of the EUAA and the Ministry of Interior of Albania in writing.

The development and implementation of the EUAA – Albania Roadmap is co-financed through the EU funded Programme Regional Support to Protection-Sensitive Migration Management Systems in the Western Balkans and EUAA’s own budget.

The **EU Pact on Migration and Asylum**, which was adopted in May 2024, is a set of new rules managing migration and establishing a common asylum system at EU level. Most of the legislation under the New Pact will enter into application after a two-year transitional period, a timeframe that largely overlaps with the reference period of this Roadmap. As the New Pact will considerably reform the CEAS, and as preparations for its application progress, the implementation of this Roadmap will also take these developments into account as appropriate.

Methodology

a) Needs Assessment and Rationale for the Intervention

The EUAA - Albania Roadmap, is a collaborative effort between Albanian authorities and the EUAA, building upon the evaluation of the first Roadmap of cooperation, joint field assessment on access to asylum procedures and reception conditions (in September 2023) and discussions on priorities and needs during Senior Officials Meeting (in November 2023). The Ministry of Interior of Albania and the EUAA have involved relevant authorities in the identification of new areas for cooperation, aligning with their responsibilities within the asylum and reception systems in Albania. The Roadmap determines the anticipated outcomes and outputs to be realised during its implementation period. It also presents a set of indicative activities designed to contribute to the achievement of the agreed-upon outcomes and outputs.

The Roadmap contributes to the EU accession process and accession negotiations, aiming to develop comprehensive asylum and reception systems in accordance with international and European standards. Considerations have been made regarding the recommendations outlined in the European Commission's annual Albania Report for Chapter 24: "Justice, Freedom, and Security." It identifies elements requiring attention as the country progresses on its European integration path.

Efforts have been invested in consulting and coordinating with international stakeholders to identify synergies and prevent overlap with existing initiatives in Albania, besides FRONTEX, also with UNHCR, UNICEF, IOM, the Council of Europe, as well as projects financed by the European Commission services and EU Member States. Where opportunities for synergies are identified, a collaborative approach with national authorities and international stakeholders has been agreed upon to enhance the outcomes of the Roadmap.





b) Monitoring and Evaluation

In order to ensure that the implementation of the EUAA – Albania Roadmap is monitored and that the agreed outputs are reached, the EUAA and the Ministry of Interior of Albania will systematically collect data and information on the implementation of the EUAA – Albania Roadmap. The Ministry of Interior of Albania and the EUAA will draw up reports on the progress of the roadmap implementation at the end of each year. This will allow the Ministry of Interior of Albania and the EUAA to monitor and evaluate the progress in reaching the specified outcomes.

At the conclusion or towards the end of the implementation period of the EUAA – Albania Roadmap, an evaluation of the EUAA's implementation of the roadmap may be conducted. In that case, the Albanian authorities will be required to cooperate with the evaluators by sharing, amongst others, monitoring data and information, and participating in interviews, workshops, or other means for collecting feedback. The final evaluation report will be shared with the national authorities and will be made publicly available by the EUAA. An updated needs assessment exercise will be conducted at the same time to assess revised needs, with a view to further cooperation.

Regular updates and coordination meetings will facilitate the adjustment of Roadmap activities and implementation to achieve the agreed results and impact.

General Pre-conditions/Assumptions

- All relevant stakeholders from both EUAA and Albania are committed to participate actively in the agreed activities and to implement the agreed commitments in line with the envisaged timeline;
- The EUAA and Albania are committed to adjusting the implementation to leverage the experience and knowledge gained from the activities carried out;
- The EUAA and Albania are committed to maintaining open, two-way communication at the technical level, within the capacity constraints of relevant human resources;
- Both the EUAA and Albania have allocated sufficient financial and human resources to ensure effective and timely implementation.





Summary

The overall objective of the EUAA – Albania Roadmap is to enhance the protection space for applicants for and beneficiaries of international protection by strengthening the asylum and reception system in Albania in line with the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and EU standards.

Based on the evaluation of the previous Roadmap, joint prioritised needs assessment and technical formulation efforts, and with commitment secured from the EUAA and the Albanian authorities, the Roadmap will pursue the following high-level outcomes

- I. Contributing to the strengthening of asylum related legislation, institutions, and systems in line with the CEAS and EU standards,
- II. Contributing to effective asylum procedures
- III. Contributing to an effective reception system in Albania.

The intervention logic is summarised through the following diagram tree and further elaborated in Section VI with a description of indicative activities that will contribute to the achievement of the agreed outcomes and outputs.





Impact

Enhanced protection space for asylum seekers and refugees in Albania

High-level Outcome I
Contributing to the strengthening of the asylum related legislation, institutions and systems, in line with the CEAS and EU standards

Outcome 1: **Asylum-related legislation and system aligned with CEAS and EU practices**

Output 1.1. **Enhanced functioning and alignment of the asylum system with the CEAS and EU standards**

Output 1.2. **Authorities exchange knowledge and information with EUAA and EU+ countries' policy and practices**

Outcome 2: **Contingency planning and crisis response capacities aligned with EU standards and EU MS practices**

Output 2.1. **Revised contingency plan**

High-level Outcome II
Contributing to effective asylum procedures

Outcome 3: **Strengthened access to asylum procedures, including the identification of persons with special needs**

Output 3.1. **Enhanced information provision on International Protection and access to the Asylum procedure**

Output 3.2. **Improved systematic identification, vulnerability pre-identification, registration and referral of potential applicants for international protection**

Outcome 4: **Strengthened capacity of national authorities to identify, assess and respond to persons with special needs.**

Output 4.1. **Enhanced framework and interoperability for case management of vulnerable individuals in the asylum process and reception system**

Outcome 5: **Enhanced quality of decision making**

Output 5.1. **Improved operational implementation of key provisions outlined in the Asylum Law**

Output 5.2. **Improved expertise and technical capabilities of asylum case officers in assessing asylum claims**

High-level Outcome III
Contributing to an effective reception system

Outcome 6: **Enhanced reception services and conditions available to unaccompanied minors and vulnerable asylum seekers**

Output 6.1. **Strengthened capacity of national authorities to manage and provide good quality services including to unaccompanied minors**



Areas of priority and Activities

I. Contributing to the strengthening of the asylum related legislation, institutions and systems, in line with the CEAS and EU standards

1. 1. Asylum system strengthened and aligned with CEAS and EU Standards	
Outputs (expected results)	<p>Output 1.1. Enhanced functioning and alignment of the asylum system with the CEAS and EU standards</p> <p>Output 1.2. Authorities exchange knowledge and information with EUAA and EU+ countries' policy and practices</p>
Responsible Authorities/Target groups	<p>Ministry of Interior (Mol) , Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP), Ministry of Justice (MoJ) / Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship; The National Commission for Asylum and Refugees; Border and Migration Police; non-government stakeholders who are partners with the Government of Albania (GoA) in the field of asylum and migration.</p>
Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value	<p>The 10/2021 Law on asylum is largely aligned with the EU acquis. Subsequently, a series of secondary legislations (15 in total) related to asylum legislation, covering areas such as legal aid, accelerated procedures, the functioning of the Asylum Reception Centre, and the appointment of the National Commission on Asylum and Refugees, were issued by the Council of Ministers in 2021 and 2022.</p> <p>The current priorities³ are focused on operationalising the asylum legal framework and enhancing coordination mechanisms among main institutions involved in the asylum process. This includes the Ministry of Interior (BMP, DAC, AC), and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection (including CPU), with a particular emphasis on handling persons with special needs.</p> <p>EUAA will provide support to Albanian authorities in implementing asylum-related legislation by facilitating the drafting of internal guidelines (SoPs) and/or workflows. These documents will help</p>

³ Based on discussions during the Senior Officials Meeting between Albanian authorities and EUAA on the 2nd Roadmap for cooperation, 14-15 November 2023, EUAA HQ, Malta



	<p>regulate procedures and provide guidance to competent authorities, as needed.⁴</p> <p>In addition, national authorities will have opportunity to acquire knowledge and information on EUAA and EU+ countries' policy and practices through their continued and expanded participation to EUAA expert networks and peer-peer exchanges with EU+ and EUAA.</p>
Pre-condition(s)/ Assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant authorities are open and willing to share data and information to review the functioning of the Asylum System. • All relevant authorities and stakeholders are open and committed to developing effective communication channels and cooperation mechanisms. • A functioning working group is established to monitor/support implementation of the new asylum law and related by laws.
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment report with recommendations on functioning of the Asylum System in Albania. • Operating procedures and workflows related to implementation of asylum legislation are developed/updated. • Albanian authorities informed on and exposed to EUMS discussions/practices on Asylum and Reception.
Description of the activities	<p>Output 1.1. Enhanced functioning and alignment of the asylum system with the CEAS and EU standards</p> <p><i>Activity 1.1.1. Review of the asylum legislation: EUAA support to the national Working Group/s through expert advice on the CEAS, and related review of the national legislation and legislative proposals in view of possible amendments/revisions with the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 1.1.2. Support in developing baselines, SOPs/workflows for implementing asylum legislation.</i></p> <p>Output 1.2. Authorities exchange knowledge and information with EUAA and EU+ countries' policy and practices</p> <p><i>Activity 1.2.1. Participation in specific EUAA thematic networks and other exchange opportunities.</i></p>
Synergies	Close coordination is envisaged with UNHCR under this priority.

⁴ The new national migration strategy 2024-2030 foresees a review of the overall legal framework on migration and determination of the responsibilities of the institutions involved, at the central and local level, which could help/complement the exercise.



2. 2. Contingency planning and crisis response capacities aligned with EU standards and EU MS practices

Expected results (outputs)	Output 2.1. Revised contingency plan
Responsible Authorities/ Target groups	Relevant local and national authorities engaged in the response plan for managing mixed migration flows.
Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value	<p>Albania is currently in the process of updating its contingency plan to ensure its preparedness for a possible mass influx of migrants and asylum seekers, including the allocation of necessary budget and clear procedures for its activation.</p> <p>EUAA and FRONTEX have developed a joint approach and methodology on contingency planning, which was presented to all Western Balkan partners in December 2023. This initiative aims to offer support in developing, reviewing and testing national contingency plans.</p> <p>The effective management of mix migration flows during large influxes is one of the benchmarks outlined in the Action Plan for Chapter 24 regarding migration and asylum.</p> <p>The revision and testing of Albania's contingency plan using the EUAA-FRONTEX methodology will help bring the current response plan closer to EU standards.</p>
Pre-conditions(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a coordination group/unit in charge of implementing the contingency plan. • The cooperation of all relevant actors along the process is ensured (State institutions, local authorities providing reception conditions, NGO, international organisations, notably UNHCR and IOM). • Financial resources for each institution to implement the contingency plan is foreseen (on-going).
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of the contingency plan. • Testing of the contingency plan.
Description of the activities	Output 2.1. Revision of contingency plan



	<p><i>Activity 2.1.1. Review of the contingency plan and feedback based on the review.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 2.1.2. Organisation of series of workshops to revise the contingency plan based on the outcomes of the review and testing exercise.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 2.1.3. Testing and simulation exercise of the updated national contingency plan;</i></p>
Synergies	<p>Cooperation with FRONTEX on contingency planning under the “<i>EU regional support to protection-sensitive migration management systems in the Western Balkans</i>”.</p>



II. Contributing to effective asylum procedures

<p>3. 3. Strengthened access to asylum procedure, including the identification of persons with special needs</p>	
<p>Expected results (outputs)</p>	<p>Output 3.1. Enhanced information provision on International Protection and access to the Asylum procedure</p> <p>Output 3.2. Improved systematic identification, vulnerability pre-identification, registration and referral of potential applicants for international protection</p>
<p>Responsible Authorities/ Target groups</p>	<p>Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Child Protection Agency / Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship; Border and Migration Police; non-government stakeholders who are partners with the GoA in the field of asylum and migration</p>
<p>Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value</p>	<p>Access to International Protection</p> <p>The main tool used to identify those in need of international protection is the pre-screening process, carried out by the Border and Migration Police (hereinafter BMP) at the Border Crossing Point (hereinafter BCP), the Border Migration Station or the Regional Directorate of Borders and Migration.</p> <p>The pre-screening procedure is outlined in the Instructions no 174/2022 and aims to categorize foreigners within 10 hours of interception into appropriate procedures, including refusal of entry, international protection, potential trafficking victims, unaccompanied children (UACs), or removal orders for irregular migrants.</p> <p>Due to limited interpreter availability, pre-screening data collection is often basic, and identifying special needs or vulnerabilities is primarily based on visible factors such as medical conditions or households with children. Identification of unaccompanied minors relies on migrant statements without further assessment.</p> <p>Upon expressing intention to apply for international protection, BMP officers inform central authorities in charge of handling asylum seekers and refugees, including the Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship (DAC) and the National Reception Centre for Asylum (NRCA) in Tirana, as well as the central state authority. Data collected are recorded in the National Electronic Register of Foreigners.</p> <p>The BMP coordinates with Caritas, UNHCR's partners, for vulnerability assessment and transportation of asylum seekers to the NRCA in Tirana.</p>



	<p>Unaccompanied minors are immediately referred to Child Protection Units (CPU) in relevant municipalities.</p> <p>Information Provision on Access to Asylum</p> <p>During joint field visits, gaps were noted in information provision and availability of materials, particularly at borders, BMP premises, and reception facilities. Leaflets distributed during pre-screening by Caritas provide information on access to territory, international protection, voluntary return, and protection pathways for minors and trafficking victims, but they are not always adapted to asylum seekers' comprehension levels or languages spoken.</p> <p>UNHCR and Caritas provide leaflets in Arabic and English, but systematic staff presence trained in proactive information provision, considering potential special needs, is lacking, especially at certain checkpoints (Saranda and Qafë Botë BCP).</p> <p>Limited interpreter availability during and after pre-screening hinders access to relevant information, particularly for illiterate individuals or those with special needs, affecting vulnerability identification quality and effectiveness.</p> <p>Identification of Persons with Special Needs</p> <p>Procedures for vulnerability lack specific tools or mechanisms at the pre-screening level, except for visible health-related vulnerabilities. This limits early identification of special needs, hindering tailored responses.</p> <p>Border Police require enhanced expertise on asylum procedure access and information provision. Clear referral pathways and capacity/knowledge on international protection for social workers, civil society organizations, and local agents working with vulnerable groups should also be reinforced.</p>
<p>Pre-conditions(s)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National authorities open and committed to identify, register, inform and refer asylum applicants.
<p>Deliverables</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 40 first line officers (Border Police, reception officers, local agent, social workers, etc.) upskilled on Asylum procedure and Information provision. • EUAA practical guide on registration is disseminated. • Asylum case officers upskilled through on-the-job coaching session on registration (lodging) and identification of persons with vulnerabilities and/or special cases. • Enhanced and standardised provision of information across the national asylum and reception system.



<p>Description of the activities</p>	<p>Output 3.1. Enhanced information provision on International Protection and access to the Asylum procedure</p> <p><i>Activity 3.1.1. Workshop/s and tailored guidance on Communication and information Provision to asylum seekers.</i></p> <p>Output 3.2. Improved systematic identification, vulnerability pre-identification, registration and referral of potential applicants for international protection</p> <p><i>Activity 3.2.1. On-the-job coaching sessions for first contact officials and asylum case officers taking into account pre-screening instructions and EUAA standards.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 3.2.2. Dissemination/Development of tools to support identification, registration and referral (e.g: SoP, workflow, checklist, forms)</i></p>
<p>Synergies</p>	<p>Synergies with UNHCR and its partner organizations (in particular on information provision) and FRONTEX.</p>

4. 4. Strengthened capacity of national authorities to identify, assess and manage vulnerable cases, particularly unaccompanied minors, across the asylum and reception systems.

<p>Output (expected results)</p>	<p>Output 4.1. Enhanced framework and interoperability for case management of vulnerable individuals in the asylum process and reception system</p>
<p>Responsible Authorities/ target group</p>	<p>Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Child Protection Agency / Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship; Border and Migration Police; non-government stakeholders who are partners with the GoA in the field of asylum and migration</p>
<p>Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value</p>	<p>Unaccompanied Foreign Children in Albania are initially identified by employees of the Border and Migration Department or State Police. Following police procedures, cases are then referred to child protection workers (CPWs) in the respective area, who subsequently inform the State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child. In 2023, Albania recorded 28 cases of unaccompanied foreign children, who are typically placed in emergency centres and provided with necessary care. These</p>



	<p>centres handle both formal and informal requests from the children. Most of them are leaving Albania within one or two months.</p> <p>Several challenges remain in handling cases involving UAMs and vulnerable individuals. These include a shortage of healthcare staff, particularly in mental health and social counselling, a lack of guardianship for UAMs, insufficient dedicated premises at central and local levels (municipalities), a scarcity of certified female interpreters, and a lack of methodology or procedure to define the age of UAMs.</p> <p>To address these challenges, it is important to prioritise the enhancement of skills among staff engaged in the asylum and reception systems, particularly concerning the Best Interests of the Child principle. This would ensure that children receive necessary services promptly and according to their identified needs and level of risk.</p> <p>The development of an age assessment procedure for cases of substantiated doubts regarding stated age, is essential. The national migration strategy 2024-2030 includes plans to draft specialised procedures for age assessment of unaccompanied foreign children. EUAA support in sharing EU MS best practices and methodologies could be considered following the establishment of a dedicated working group.</p>
<p>Pre-conditions(s)/ Assumptions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant authorities share existing framework for the management of vulnerable persons, particularly UAMs, in the asylum and reception systems. • Working group on age assessment established and lead appointed.
<p>Deliverables</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 10 asylum, reception and child protection officials trained on the use of EUAA Vulnerability toolkit identification, Assessment, and referral tools. • At least 10 relevant officials upskilled on the Best Interest of the Child (BIC) and Guardianship. • Vulnerability protocols, workflow and SOPs drafted and disseminated among relevant institutions. • Right compliant age assessment procedure developed.
<p>Description of the activities and indicative timeline</p>	<p>Output 4.1. Enhanced framework and interoperability for case management of vulnerable beneficiaries in the asylum process and reception system</p> <p><i>Activity 4.1.1. Workshop/s on EUAA tools on Identification, Assessment and Referral of Persons with vulnerability and/or special needs.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 4.1.2. Technical guidance and/or peer-to-peer support on processes and tools to streamline activities targeting specific profiles, particularly unaccompanied minors (e.g.</i></p>



	<i>guardianship and foster schemes, and Best Interest Assessment and Determination.)</i>
Synergies	Synergies with UNHCR, its partner organization, UNICEF and FRONTEX (Identification and referral of UAMs by First Contact Officers).

5. 5. Enhanced quality of decision making

Expected results (outputs)	<p>Output 5.1. Improved operational implementation of key provisions outlined in the Asylum Law</p> <p>Output 5.2. Improved expertise and technical capabilities of asylum case officers in assessing asylum claims</p>
Responsible Authorities/Target Groups	Ministry of Interior/– Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship
Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value	<p>The Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship (DAC) oversees the reviewing, logging, and collection of necessary information for asylum applications, comprising the Head of DAC, one Head of Asylum, three asylum specialists (cases officers).</p> <p>Regarding the examination of asylum application, the number of decisions remain low. In 2022, 125 people applied for asylum with the Border and Migration Police, compared to 85 in 2021. In 2022, no applicant was granted refugee status, while 24 were granted subsidiary protection. In 2023, 14 applicants were granted subsidiary protection, no one was granted refugee status. In addition to their regular tasks related to the examination of applications for international protection, DAC focuses on two urgent priorities: the relocation of Afghans and the temporary protection of persons from Ukraine. The relocation of Afghans, especially to Canada, has been ongoing since autumn 2021, while the temporary protection of persons from Ukraine was established by government decision no. 173 on 18 March 2022, granting the right of residence in Albania, for a period of up to one year without the need for a residence permit, or the right to request temporary protection status for refugees from Ukraine.</p> <p>In the next period, the decision-making process should be further enhanced by strengthening the knowledge and technical capacity of case officers through the dissemination of core EUAA practical guides</p>



	<p>(e.g: Personal interview; Evidence assessment; Qualification for international protection; Exclusion), provision of on-the-job coaching on key technical skills and participation to EUAA trainings (as per results of the regional training needs assessment). Additionally, support for the development and dissemination of tools (e.g: checklists and/or SoP on examination, workflow, etc.) will aid in the overall management of cases and quality review.</p> <p>Administrative appeals may be lodged with the National Commission for Refugees and Asylum, with the Administrative Court serving as the third instance authority. Strengthening the technical capacity of the Asylum Commission Members and Administrative Court Judges on key legal concepts in the field of international protection is essential to ensure thorough examination of appeals (substance vs process) and overall improvement in the quality of the decisions. Considering the low number of complaints to 1st instance decisions, support to appeal bodies will be proposed at regional level.</p>
Pre-conditions(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National authorities are committed to enhancing the decision-making process
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development/Dissemination of tools (e.g: checklist(s) and/or SoP on examination, workflow, etc.) • Dissemination of the EUAA practical guides: Guide on personal interview, Guide on evidence assessment, Guide on Qualification for international protection. • 3 DAC staffs completed on-the-job coaching on technical skills: interview techniques, evidence assessment, decision writing, decision assessment and use of COI, using EUAA guidance and practical tools.
Description of the activities	<p>Output 5.1. Improved operational implementation of key provisions outlined in the Asylum Law</p> <p><i>Activity 5.1.1. Development of tools (e.g: workflow, checklist, SoP) aimed at supporting the case officers in their day-to-day work and overall case management and quality review of decision-making.</i></p> <p>Output 5.2. Improved expertise and technical capabilities of asylum case officers in assessing asylum claims</p> <p><i>Activity 5.2.1. On-the-job coaching on technical skills (interview, evidence and risk assessment, decision writing, decision assessment, use of COI) using EUAA guidance and practical tools.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 5.2.2. Participation to EUAA trainings/capacity building activities organised at national and regional level based on training needs assessment (s).</i></p>





Synergies	<p>As part of its regional approach that complements the bilateral Roadmaps for Cooperation, the EUAA will develop a regional training plan and deliver regional trainings and national roll-outs of core EUAA Modules for case officers. This will be complemented by a COI regional plan, COI briefings, and dedicated COI support activities. In addition, the mapping of second instances (appeal systems) in the Western Balkans will lead to dedicated workshops for judges on international protection at the regional level.</p> <p>EUAA will maintain close coordination with UNHCR, in provision of asylum capacity building activities towards the asylum division and NCR members, to support the quality of decision-making in Albania.</p>
------------------	--





III. Contributing to an effective reception system

6. Enhanced reception services and conditions available to unaccompanied minors and vulnerable asylum seekers	
Expected results (outputs)	Output 6.1. Strengthened capacity of national authorities to manage and provide good quality services including to unaccompanied minors
Responsible Authorities/Target Groups	MoI, MHSP/DCA
Description and assessment of the situation/ EUAA added value	<p>In July 2023 a new Temporary Reception Centre was inaugurated in Qafë-Botë. The total capacity of all reception facilities, including temporary reception centers at the borders, detention center, and the national asylum center, amounts to approximately 570 beds. Albania does not have separate facilities for unaccompanied minors.</p> <p>Persons identified as potential applicants for international protection are transferred to the National Reception Centre for Asylum in Babrru, Tirana, to proceed with the next steps in their asylum process. However it is important to note that there are no dedicated facilities available for persons with vulnerabilities/special needs or for unaccompanied minors.</p> <p>The National Asylum Reception Centre (NARC) in Tirana employs one social worker, one psychologist, one finance officer, one procurement officer and a part-time nurse, all of whom are present at the facility on a daily basis. Medical assistance is mostly organised through appointments at regular clinics and hospitals. Security services are provided by personnel from a security company. Additionally, three cooks and one maintenance staff are also working within the reception centre.</p> <p>The facility, with an overall capacity of 220 beds, has been recently renovated. Spaces were adequately distributed, and the overall conditions appear up to standard. In addition to accommodation, with 25 dedicated rooms, the facility includes amenities such as an internet room, a library, a designated space for children, and service rooms. These service rooms include an equipped infirmary, a laundry room, and rooms for meetings with specialised personnel, such as psychologist.</p> <p>In 2023, a total of 256 persons were accommodated in the facility, mainly originating from Afghanistan, Iraq, Ukraine, Somalia and Iran,</p>



staying for 3 to 10 days as average. Allegedly, no unaccompanied children were hosted during this period.

Upon arrival, applicants receive basic information from RMSA, with limited support material available only in English and Arabic. Additionally, their medical conditions are assessed to detect cases requiring immediate medical attention. Children can be enrolled to the nearby school.

No comprehensive vulnerability assessment is conducted, due to capacity and staff limitations. Mostly visible vulnerabilities, such as illnesses or disabilities are identified and documented for further treatment. Psychosocial support and personal interviews with the social worker and other services are provided only upon request. Although a complaint mechanism is in place, it has not been used by residents recently.

Reported shortcomings primarily pertain to interpretation services, which primarily cover English with sporadic coverage of other languages. Additionally, the budget allocated for food is extremely low at 330 lek per person per day. The absence of cultural mediators in the center hinders the smooth implementation of the reception process.

Reception capacity/system for unaccompanied minors

Unaccompanied minors in Tirana are currently referred to a Non-Governmental Organization (NGO), Nisma për Ndryshim Shoqëror ARSIS, or to the Community Center in Gjirokastër municipality. ARSIS operates a community centre with a dedicated space for providing emergency residential care to UAMs referred by the Border and Migration Police and the Child Protection Units.

The centre's operations, including the provision of social services, are regulated by bilateral Memorandums of Understanding signed between the organization and Tirana Municipality and the State Police.

In 2023, the centre provided emergency residential care and social services to 4 unaccompanied children, a significant decrease from the 38 accommodated in 2022. Intersectoral meetings on case management are reportedly taking place in Tirana municipality. The major concern identified is a legislative gap in addressing unaccompanied or separated children after the emergency period specified in the law. Most unaccompanied children reportedly disappeared before a long-term solution could be identified.

Although a monitoring mechanism for reception conditions is reportedly in place at the Asylum Centre, it is unclear whether specific monitoring tools and methodology are used and/or whether it is in line with standards and indicators set by EUAA.



Pre-conditions(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National authorities committed to enhancing the standards for reception conditions in line with the EU and EUAA standards on reception conditions. • National authorities identified reception center(s)/safe space dedicated to UAM and vulnerable groups
Deliverables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 2 staff members from NARC are trained on EUAA reception of vulnerable persons and/or children in the asylum process. • Dissemination of EUAA Practical guidance on reception conditions (general, on vulnerability and for unaccompanied children): operational standards and indicators. • Completed on-the-job coaching on Reception and/or Reception of Vulnerable Persons. • NARC staff upskilled on providing information to applicants of international protection.
Description of the activities	<p>Output 6.1. Strengthened capacity of national authorities to manage and provide reception services - including to unaccompanied minors.</p> <p><i>Activity 6.1.1. Participation in trainings, workshops/peer-peer exchanges focusing on Reception Management, Reception conditions, Reception of Vulnerable Persons (including UAM).</i></p> <p><i>Activity 6.1.2. Technical assistance in implementing reception conditions for UAM, such as the establishment of safe space, among other measures.</i></p> <p><i>Activity 6.1.3. Workshop and/or peer to peer on provision of information to applicants of international protection with attention to applicants with specific needs.</i></p>
Synergies	Synergies with UNHCR, its partner organization, IOM and UNICEF



Annex I: Main Stakeholders in charge of border control, access to territory and asylum rights in Albania⁵

National Institution	Responsibilities
Ministry of Interior	The Ministry of Interior through the Border and Migration Department of the Albanian State Police and General Directorate for Asylum and Migration Development have the main responsibility for handling the migration and asylum system in Albania.
The Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship	The Directorate for Asylum and Citizenship works on the basis of the Law for Asylum 10/2021 in the Republic of Albania and is responsible for asylum seekers and refugees. This Directorate is in charge of reviewing, logging, and collecting the necessary information for asylum applications. It is responsible for handling applications, processing, examining and hearing and collecting other data necessary to complete the documentation for any asylum application.
Border and Migration Police	Border and Migration Department is under the supervision of the State Police and is in charge of processing foreigners who enter, transit, or stay on the territory of Albania. It operates at both the national and regional level and is responsible for: preventing and countering illegal migration through integrated border management; controlling the legal residence of foreigners in Albania; ensuring voluntarily returns; releasing eviction orders; preventing illegal foreigners and deporting them to their country of origin and/or last transit country; implementing Readmission Agreements with other countries; conducting pre-screening procedures for foreign nationals at the borders and informing them about integration in Albania; ensuring regional cooperation with other countries by exchanging information and data about illegal migration; identifying potential victims of trafficking and unaccompanied minors.
The National Commission for Asylum and Refugees	The National Commission for Asylum and Refugees is the decision-making authority for all complaints presented by asylum seekers against the decisions of relevant institutions.
Ministry of Health and Social Protection	The MHSP is charged with the responsibility to oversee the running of Albania's healthcare system and social care services in the Republic of Albania. In particular, the MHSP is the main institution responsible for ensuring social care services for re-integration into

⁵ IDM (June 2019) Vulnerable Asylum Seekers and Irregular Migrants in Albania Trends, Challenges, and Policy Solutions



	society of individuals, families and children, as well as the child who enjoys international protection in the Republic of Albania, according to the legislation in force on asylum.
The State Social Service	The State Social Service, subordinate to the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, is responsible for implementing the policies set out by the ministry responsible for economic assistance, disability and social care services.
State Agency for the Protection of Children's Rights	This institution is responsible for protecting the rights of children in Albania, including asylum seeking and migrant children.
CSO	Responsibilities/Project
Refugee and Migrant Services in Albania	This NGO provides social and legal service to refugees and asylum-seekers in Albania.
CARITAS Albania	Caritas Albania has been working in collaboration with the Albanian border and migration police on the border crossing points of Greece, Montenegro and Albania, to ensure humane treatment of people on the move, while providing basic assistance in the form of food packages, medical help and asylum applications. It ensures that migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are informed about their rights.
Tirana Legal Aid Society (TLAS)	TLAS provide legal aid services for specified target groups of people in need and publish information on important legal and human rights problems that have been brought to the attention of TLAS and where appropriate, lobby the Albanian government and other institutions to tackle these problems. https://www.tlas.org.al/en



