Information gathering template prepared for the Global Education Monitoring Report 2021 - Central and Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia - Inclusion and education: All means all.

Albania

PROFILE PREPARED BY ROZETA HOXHALLARI, GRISELDA ZISI AND ITENA HOXHALLARI CHILDREN ARE THE FUTURE

2021

Introduction

The template for the Profiles was a survey designed to collect information from countries in order to collect structured information to be used as the basis for the GEM Regional Report analysis work.

The survey respondents were specifically requested to not focus exclusively on children with disabilities, but include information on all of the groups considered to be vulnerable to exclusion or at risk of being marginalised, stereotyped or subject to discrimination, including for reasons such as gender, location, poverty, ethnicity, language, beliefs and religion, migration or displacement status, sexual orientation or gender identity expression.

The overall goal for the Profile was that the information provided in relation to each country identifies:

1.challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for the implementation of inclusion in education policies;

2.the ways in which countries monitor inclusion and exclusion in education (at individual and system levels);

3.challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for supporting inclusion in education created by sectors other than education and arrangements needed to co-ordinate work among government sectors, tiers of government and with other stakeholders to overcome overlapping dimensions of exclusion;

4.key policy solutions that are being implemented and key drivers of policy change.

The Profile begins with background information on the people completing the template.

The next section provides a short descriptive overview of the country's system of inclusive education.

This is followed by main sections presenting quantitative and qualitative data linked to each of the seven themes for the report:

1.laws and policies;

2.governance and finance;

3.data;

4.curricula, learning materials and assessment;

5.teachers and support personnel;

6.schools;

7.communities, parents and students.

Each section begins with a key guiding question (marked in italic text) that frames the overall information provided. This is followed by the specific questions on the main issues for the topic that should be answered.

Sections 1 and 2 focus on information relating to legislation and policies.

Section 3 focuses upon available data and the aims and procedures for data collection.

Sections 4 to 7 focus on information relating to policies and policy implementation in practice.

The information provided focuses on compulsory education (i.e. potentially -pre-primary, primary and lower secondary, and possibly upper secondary education). Only specific issues related to inclusion in early childhood education and post-compulsory education were considered when necessary.

Survey reply and respondents

Has the information in this profile been discussed with and validated by a government representative?

No / Yes

If yes, who and what is their professional capacity, role?

No, we were not able to discuss and validate the information with government representatives due to the difficult situation related to COVID-19.

Which other people have been key informants? What is their professional role?

We discussed some of the issues with teachers and school leaders.

What was the main challenge during the preparation of the profile?

One of the main challenges faced during the preparation of the profile was related to specific data collection and disaggregation based on the components required. For example, we could find the total number of a young population of a certain age group, but not the potential population of learners that would, by law, attend compulsory education system in Albania. Various sources were explored, including INSTAT and the sources provided in this report form, but in certain cases, the information required is not provided, and, even if some data exist, they are relatively old or not exactly what has been required.

In addition, due to the challenges caused by COVID-19 pandemic, all schools have been closed and all attention of education authorities has been addressed to dealing with the situation, what made it impossible to contact any policy makers including Ministry representatives and other stakeholders in order to validate the report. However, we have shared some of the questions and answers with people who deal with education in order to double check some of the information provided.

Please list the 5 most informative sources on inclusion in education (academic papers, policy reviews, evaluation studies etc.) for the country published since 2015 and provide links to the originals:

1. Education Policy Review: Issues and Recommendations - Extended Report, UNESCO Section of Education Policy, August 2017 UNESCO Digital Library: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259245

2. Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy 2014-2020 – final report, 2 July 2019 (prepared by: Mike Wort & Dukagjin Pupovci & Ermelinda Ikonomi (consultants), (UNICEF Albania support to the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth in conducting an appraisal of the Strategy of Pre-University Education 2014-2020).

https://www.unicef.org/albania/reports/appraisal-pre-university-education-strategy-2014-2020

3. Report by Dunja Mijatovic, Commissioner of Council of Europe for Human Rights following her visit to Albania from 21 to 25 May 2018. September 2018   https://rm.coe.int/report-on-the-visit-to-albania-from-21-to-25-may-2018-by-dunja-mijatov/16808d2e22

4. EURYDICE: NATIONAL EDUCATION SYSTEMS – Albania Overview https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/albania_en

5. UNICEF Annual report 2018

https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2216/file/UNICEF%20Annual%20Report%20Albania%202018.pdf

If internal, non-publicor working documents were used, please add a note here.

Country system overview

Provide a brief (maximum 1 page) narrative of the country's compulsory educational system. Specifically, provide information about:

a.the different types of schools, institutions and educational provision within the system and the age range / ISCED levels of learners they cater for

Basic education in Albania is free and compulsory. It is divided into elementary/primary education (which includes 5 years, from 1st to 5th grade) and lower secondary education (which includes 4 years, from 6th to 9th grade). Basic education is compulsory for students from 6 up to 16 years old. The students who have not completed basic education and are above the age of 16, may complete it in part-time schools. (Article 22 of Law on Pre-University education).

Basic education is public and private, and it includes general and special education schools. While considerable progress has been made toward inclusion of special education needs children in mainstream schools, there are still special education schools in Albania, which provide a more specialized service including also 2 national institutes, the institute of blind students and institute of deaf students. There is also home education that is provided in exceptional cases, such as: blood feud, illness or other circumstances that prevent students from attending school.

Private Pre-University Education institutions are created and function in the same way as public institutions. Their licensing is done by National Licensing Center based on a decision of Ministry of Education Sports and Youth. Suspension of activities of these institutions is conducted by National Licensing Center based on decision of Council of Ministers. Institutions created, administered or founded by religious groups are opened and closed by decision of Council of Ministers. EURYDICE

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/albania/organisation-private-education_en

b.the different authorities responsible for different types of provision etc.

The main authorities responsible for education at national level are: Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth; National Pre-University Education Council (which is an advisory body to the Ministry); Institute for Development of Education; State Education Inspectorate; and National Education Service Center. Center for School Leaders is a newly established organ at national level (that is described in point c below). The Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (AQAPUE) was established in February 2019 as effective merger of State Education Inspectorate (SEI) and the Institute for Development of Education (IDE) (Appraisal report, 2019). General Directorate for Pre-University Education is another important education authority.

At regional and local level, there are other important authorities with different responsibilities, such as: Regional Education Directorates and Local Education Offices, Pre-University Council at district level, Local Self-Governance Units, as well as Education Institution directorates, School Boards, Parent Councils, Student Governments, Teacher Councils, and so on.

any major external support programmes provided in the past 5 years e.g. bilateral - GIZ (German Society for International Cooperation) and USAID; or multi-lateral e.g. UNICEF, European Union, ADB (Asian Development Bank).

UNICEF Country Program in Albania 2017–2021, reflecting the objectives of UNICEF's Strategic Plan 2018–2021, the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 Agenda for a world where no child is left behind, and the EU integration agenda, with an approach that spans a child's lifecycle and focuses on the most disadvantaged, has been supporting government to progressively realise the rights of all children and reduce equity gaps based on effective child-focused policies, strengthened accountabilities and adequate public resources.

UNICEF country programme is implemented as part of the Government of Albania – UN Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (PoCSD/ UN Development Assistance Framework, UNDAF) 2017–2021. Year 2018 marked the second year of programme implementation based on a well-established partnership mechanism between the UN agencies and government, providing space for joint action planning, monitoring and reporting through UNDAF Output and Outcome Working Groups. (UNICEF Albania Annual Report, 2018)

https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2216/file/UNICEF%20Annual%20Report%20Albania%202018.pdf

UNICEF is working with the government to create a rights-based, comprehensive educational policy and to promote Child Friendly Schools (CFS) that embrace a multi-dimensional concept while addressing the total needs of the child as a learner. Together with the cross-sectorial action (addressing out-of-school factors and barriers of inclusion), these are the major means through which UNICEF advocates for and promotes quality and equity in education. EURYDICE

https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/bilateral-agreements-and-worldwide-cooperation-92_en

Schools as a Community Center is an initiative undertaken by the Ministry of Education and Sports in 2013 with foreign donors (UNICEF, Save the Children, World Vision, Terre des Hommes) and has reached, according to the Minister of Education, Sports and Youth , 270 schools in 2019. It aims to improve the quality and the role of schools in the Albanian education system not only in terms of teaching and learning, but also making them more accessible for the community. 'This initiative is seen as an opportunity to provide a more quality education for all students and embed democratic values, ensure social, emotional, and health welfare of students, engagement and development of the community. The initiative enables possibilities for joint decision-making, respect for diversity, and the use of community resources in supporting the schools". EURYDICE https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/bilateral-agreements-and-worldwide-cooperation-92_en

"Regional Support for Inclusive Education" was a joint European Union/Council of Europe regional project for South East Europe implemented during 2013-2015. It aimed to enhance social inclusion and social cohesion in the region (in line with the Beneficiaries' commitments to European Union accession and Council of Europe standards) by promoting inclusive education and training. The project promoted the concept of inclusive education as a reform principle that respects and caters for diversity amongst all learners, with a specific focus on those who are at a

higher risk of marginalisation and exclusion. EURYDICE https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/bilateral-agreements-and-worldwide-cooperation-92_en

The United Nations' Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (PoCSD) with the Government of Albania 2017-2021.

The United Nations' Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (PoCSD) with the Government of Albania for sustainable development assists Albania achieve its SDG targets by supporting the pursuit of full European integration, as expressed in the National Strategy for Development and (European) Integration (NSDI) 2015-2020, with a rights-based and inclusive approach. (Program of Cooperation for Sustainable Development 2017-2021) P.viii https://www.un.org.al/publications/programme-cooperation-sustainable-development-un-sustainable-development-framework-2017

More specifically, the Government of Albania is supported by the **UN Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (PoCSD) 2017-2021,** guided by a rights-based and inclusive approach and fully aligned to country strategic priorities. One of the four outcomes (Outcome 2) focuses on social cohesion: Health, education, social protection, child protection, and gender-based Violence. ("Leave No One Behind" Project Document, p.14)

https://www.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/Project%20documents/project%20leave%20no%20one%20behing.pdf

Swiss Development Cooperation (SDC) , as stressed in the Leave No One Behind Project Document by UNDP, "is currently one of the major players in supporting social inclusion, the decentralisation and local/regional governance in Albania". (Leave No One Behind Project Document, p.14)

https://www.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/Project%20documents/project%20leave%20no%20one%20behing.pdf

SDC has supported the programme "**Social Care Service Reform in Albania (2013-2016)** to address vulnerability and marginalization of children, women and Roma communities" implemented by UNICEF in the amount of 3.2 Million CHF, which ended in December 2016. The programme helped develop for the first time the architecture and all the legal, administrative and financial instruments for the system of social care services in Albania. The efforts culminated with the approval in November 2016, of a new Law on Social Care Services, which obliges the Local Government Units to establish the directories of Social Protection responsible for both cash and care components of social protection along with the elaboration of social care plans based on the work of the Needs Assessment and Referral Units (NARUs). (Leave No One Behind Project Document, p.19)

https://www.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/Project%20documents/project%20leave%20no%20one%20behing.pdf

SDC has also launched the project "**Strong Municipalities 2017-2022**" continuing the Swiss government support for 61 municipalities in Albania. This intervention focuses on: i) supporting the capacities of Municipal administrations to fulfil their functions and duties in an efficient, effective and inclusive manner based on improved data collection

and analysis according to Eurostat standards; ii) strengthening the representation and oversight function of Municipal councils over local administrations and fulfil their role as key institutions of local democracy; and iii) enhancing the role of citizens from urban and rural areas to co-determine, to use and to contribute to more and better municipal services.

SDC is currently supporting the project "Regional Development Programme in Albania"☐ phase 3 and phase 4 (2016-2018 and 2018-2022) aiming to reduce regional disparities in Albania by supporting the development of strong regions which advance their potentials and provide better social and economic conditions for their citizens. (Leave No One Behind, Project Document, p.20)

https://www.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/Project%20documents/project%20leave%20no%20one%20behing.pdf

The "**Economic and Social Empowerment for Roma and Egyptians** - a booster for social inclusion" (ESERE) project (January 2016-December 2018) is a multi-sectorial and multi-stakeholder EU funded intervention aiming to promote the economic and social empowerment of Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania focusing in the regions of Tirana, Durres, Shkodra and Berat. The project relied on the Roma and Egyptian community led development as well as close cooperation with central and local authorities in the targeted areas. The project supported the Government of Albania in its efforts to achieve the objectives set forth in the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians, 2016-2020, while promoting respect for human rights, gender mainstreaming and intercultural dialogue, as prerequisites for the country's EU integration. (Inception Report p.4-5)

http://www.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/inception_rep%20(8).pdf

"**United Nations Support to Social Inclusion in Albania - UNSSIA**" project funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and implemented by United Nations Development Programme - UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth.

Establishment of the Center for School Leaders (CSL) in Tirana with the support of American-Albanian Development Fund (AADF) is another important initiative. The School of Directors is registered as non-governmental organisation. The AADF pledged $2.9 mil. for 10 years, whereas the Government is providing premises for the School. Instructional leadership will constitute an important aspect of the training programme, and particular attention will be paid to practical training of school directors. (Appraisal of pre-university education Strategy. p.14)

The CSL operates based on the Law No. 48/2018 "On some additions and amendments to the Law No. 69/2012 'On the pre-university education system in Albania'. It includes managerial and administrative training and professional certification as an additional mandatory requirement to exercise the role as a school principal. Based on this law and on the Decision of Council of Ministers No. 540/2018 dt. 19.09.2018 "On the organization and functioning of the Center for School Leadership of Pre-University Education Institutions and their training and certification", the CSL functions since October 2018 and has managerial, administrative, financial and technical independence.

https://www.csl.edu.al/en/bylaws/

Note: Some other projects have been mentioned in 7.1.

Are there specific features of the compulsory education system that impact on inclusion that should be kept in mind when reading the country response?

Area	Yes/No	Description of the feature
Early tracking of learners into a particular educational pathway	No	More than early tracking, there is career orientation that starts from the ninth grade of the basic education level. Article 91 of Normative Provisions on the Students' career orientation states: "1. School directorate of the basic education organizes with students of the ninth grade and with their parents: a) meetings with educational employees of upper secondary schools; b) visits in the upper secondary schools; c) visits in potential employment environments." (Dispozitat Normative per Ligjin e Arsimit Parauniversitar, NENI 91 Orientimi i nxënësve për karrierën e tyre P. 67. (Normative Provisions related to the Law on Pre-University education, Article 91, Student career orientation) Dispozitat normative për sistemin arsimor parauniversitar - Portali Shkollor
'Double-shift' patterns to the school day (i.e. learners attend fir either a morning or afternoon session)	Yes	The double-shift system is applied taking into consideration the Minister's instruction nr.30 dt.12.09.2018 on the number of students per classroom and teachers' workload in the pre-university education institutions. When the number of classes (students) is bigger than the number of classrooms available in a specific school building, the school director (after having informed the Regional Education and Ministry of Education) takes the decision to apply the shift system. This also happens when a certain school building is being reconstructed and its students and pedagogical staff are temporarily moved to another school, where they develop their lesson hours during the afternoon session, after the host school has completed the morning session. Based on discussions with school leaders, teachers, students and parents, the shift system is largely considered as a big obstacle to the development of an effective teaching and learning process and all aspects of school life. (Additional information extracted from the **Minister's instruction** nr.30 dt.12.09.2018 on the number of students per classroom and teachers' workload in the pre-university education institutions: Specific classes in urban areas are established with no fewer than 15 students and in the rural areas, not fewer than 10 students. 2. Division into parallel classes is made according to the following rule: a) two parallel classes when the number of students is 32 - 65, b) three parallel classes when the number of students is 66-99, c) Four parallel classes when the number of students is

		100-133, and d) Five parallel classes when the number of students is 134-167- the link below: UDHËZIM NR. 30, DATË 12.09.2018 PËR NUMRIN E NXËNËSVE PËR KLASË DHE NORMAT E PUNËS MËSIMORE NË INSTITUCIONET E ARSIMIT PARAUNIVERSITAR - Ministria Arsimit Sportit dhe Rinisë
Grade retention	Yes	The grade retention policy is further elaborated in Article 48 of the Law on Pre-University Education System in the Republic of Albania: "Aim, criteria and types of assessment" with amendments 56/2015 and 48/2018, and in the Normative Provisions on Pre-University Education system 2013). Students of 1st grade, 2nd grade and 3rd grade are assessed by words and phrases and do not repeat the class, except for cases when this is requested by their parents. Students of other grades are assessed through grades from 4 to 10, where 5 is the lowest passing grade (Law on Pre-University Education, amended with law nr.48/2018, published on 03.08.2018) https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Pligj-parauniversitari-i-azhornuar.pdf Article 21 of the normative provisions states that a student repeats the class/grade when: a) s/he has failed in at least three core subjects or selected subjects, b) has failed in one subject during the autumn session, c) has got "Poor" behaviour at the end of the academic year. (Normative provisions on Pre-University Education System 2013) http://www.vet.al/files/ligje%20etj/Dispozitat%20normative%202013.pdf
Multiple languages of instruction	N/A	According to Article 9 of Law nr.69/2012 on the Pre-University Education system in the Republic of Albania, amended with Law nr.56/2015 and Law nr.48/2018, the language of instruction/education in the educational institutions of Albania is Albanian language, except for cases defined otherwise in this law. (Note: Please see "Ethnicity or language" section in the table under point 1.1 for more info related to language of minorities)
Policies on access to compulsory education in local schools		The right to education in the Republic of Albania has been sanctioned by Law. Article 5 of the Law on Pre-University education system: "The right to education" states that in the Republic of Albania it is guaranteed the right to education of Albanian and foreign citizens and persons without citizenship regardless of their gender, race, colour, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs, socio-economic status, age, residence, disability, or other reasons determined in the Albanian legislation. Compulsory and upper secondary education in public schools is free.

		Regarding access to education, according to Article 61 "Students' rights and responsibilities" the student has the right: a) to choose a public or private education institution, b) to attend the public educational institution that is within the area determined by the local self-governance unit, c) to be guaranteed quality education service based on his/her needs, interests and abilities, as well as specific support to deal with specific learning difficulties. (Law on Pre-University Education system in the Republic of Albania 69/12 with amendments 56/2015 and 48/2018) https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Pligj-parauniversitari-i-azhornuar.pdf
(others …)		

In the country's system which groups are considered to be vulnerable to exclusion from education? Who has identified these groups as being vulnerable to exclusion?

The Commissioner for Human Rights of Council of Europe, in her report on her visit to Albania (2018) stated that "The children who are most at risk of being out of school in Albania are children with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian children from families engaged in seasonal migration, returnees, children contributing to the family income and early married girls." (Report by Dunja Mijatovic, following her visit to Albania from 21 to 25 May 2018. September 2018 pg.11. https://rm.coe.int/report-on-the-visit-to-albania-from-21-to-25-may-2018-by-dunja-mijatov/16808d2e22

Whereas, according to the Guidelines produced with the support of UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth and implemented by Observatory for Child and Youth Rights (July 2019) children who are most at risk of exclusion from education are: children with disabilities, children returned from emigration, children with different social problems, children from Roma and Egyptian minorities, girls, children who work to support their families, children victims of violence and trafficking, sexually abused children, abandoned children, children not registered in the civil registry office. (Guideline for monitoring of children who are out of education system and children at risk of drop out, July 2019, p.14) (UDHËZUES PËR MONITORIMIN E FËMIJËVE JASHTË SISTEMIT ARSIMOR (FJSA) DHE FËMIJËVE QË RREZIKOJNË TË BRAKTISIN SHKOLLËN, Korrik, 2019)
https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2051/file/Monitoring%20guideline.pdf

Article 2 of the Law on Pre-University Education, related to "Definitions", defines a "Student with disabilities" as the person having long-term physical, mental, sensual, attitude-related deficiency, or a combination thereof, which, in concert, may prevent him from fully and equally participating in its education and social life. (Law on Pre-University Education)

Roma and Egyptian communities, according to UNDP, are among the poorest, most marginalized and socially excluded groups in Albania. Studies show that the level of poverty among Roma is twice as high as the majority population. Low level of educational attainment, high unemployment rate, low monthly incomes, extreme living

conditions and direct and indirect barriers in accessing public services are indicators that prevail in the majority of Roma and Egyptians. (Fact sheet ESERE Project: Economic and Social Empowerment for Roma and Egyptians a booster for social inclusion project –(ESERE) Background: UNDP, 30.09, 2016

https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/fact-sheet--esere-project.html

Please provide a brief (maximum 1 page) narrative overview of the historical development of inclusion of vulnerable groups in education in the country.

The concept of inclusive education was introduced in Albania more than a decade ago through projects of a number of non-governmental I nternational organizations, and it originally referred to accession to and integration in mainstream schools of children with disabilities. This was later on supported by the legal and policy framework including the strategy of pre-university education. The Law on Pre-University Education 69/2012 was a significant step forward toward a new dimension of quality and inclusive education. This Law together with amendments in 2015 and 2018, explicitly outline key principles of inclusion in education, such as: The best interest of the child is a priority in the activity of the pre-university education institutions; Human rights in general and child rights in particular are respected, protected and promoted in the pre-university education system; students and school personnel are offered protection from any kind of discrimination, violence, maltreatment or moral damage; the principle of inclusion of children is applied in the education institutions; every child is guaranteed the right for quality education as well as equal opportunities for education; students from families in need, students with disabilities and students with learning difficulties are offered special care in compliance with this law. (Law on Pre-University Education system in the Republic of Albania 69/12 with amendments 56/2015 and 48/2018)

 https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Pligj-parauniversitari-i-azhornuar.pdf

Law 48/2018 on Pre-University Education System related to some changes and amendments to law 69/2012, replaced the word "full integration (integrim i plotë)" with "inclusion" (gjithëpërfshirje). Whereas point 3 has been changed as follows: students with disabilities in hearing , sight and communication are guaranteed the right for education in the sign language, the right of usage of Brail Technique as well as of specialized didactic materials, supporting their education.

The concept and aim of development of inclusive education have been further developed and promoted through a number of laws and policies extending the scope of inclusion to a larger number of vulnerable groups and emphasizing involvement and cooperation of different stakeholders.

Therefore, the key legal and policy framework of Inclusive Education currently involves: the Law on Pre-University Education 2012 with amendments in 2015 and 2018 and related normative provisions and instructions, the Law on Inclusion and Accessibility of People with Disabilities 2014, the Disability Action Plan 2016-2020, the National Strategy on Pre-University Education 2014-2020, The National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania (2016-2020) and other related provisions.

The work of UNICEF in Albania, and related partners, other national and international organizations, as well as the implementation of the Regional joint Council of Europe/European Union Project "**Regional Support for Inclusive**

Education", where CoE project team, Network of Education Policy Centers (NEPC) and Children Are the Future (CAF) as its member organization in Albania alongside other members in six other beneficiary countries, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Regional Directorates of Education, other institutions and experts, beneficiary schools and other stakeholders promoted a much broader concept of inclusion, addressing the needs and rights of all children with a specific attention to all groups at risk of marginalization and exclusion and an inclusive school culture, policies and practices that make possible involvement and cooperation of all the stakeholders to help each and every child realize his/her full potential.

More specifically, UNICEF education programming covers all groups of children, paying particular attention to children at risk of being excluded from education in line with the Child Right Convention (CRC) and Convention for the Rights of the people with Disability (CRPD), and UNICEF's mission, inclusive education is the approach UNICEF employs to ensure every child receives a quality education. Inclusive education is a process that values the well-being of all pupils and is not an end in itself.

Inclusive education as a broad concept, refers to the right of all learners (including children with disabilities, but also other marginalized groups) to access and benefit from education. Inclusive education applies to learners of all ages, both children and adults. Inclusive education system as a different notion from special education considers the measures it must take to be able to provide an appropriate education with all children learning together. (Making a change in inclusive education in Albania, UNICEF Albania, Tirana, July – December 2016, Author, p.3

https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/421/file/Making%20a%20change%20in%20inclusive%20education%20in%20Albania.pdf

Section 1: Laws and Policies

What is the framework of legislation, policy and guidelines for supporting the development of an inclusive education system?

Have international/UN conventions/declarations to protect the rights of groups who are potentially vulnerable to discrimination and exclusion been integrated into national and/or regional law?

Convention/declaration on on	Law	Comments
Child rights (UNCRC)	Law no.18/2017on the Rights and Protection of the Child (2017)	The Council of Europe commissioner for Human Rights states in her report (2018) that Albania is a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ("the Lanzarote Convention"). She also stresses that in recent years the authorities have made significant efforts to harmonise domestic legislation with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with the parliament enacting in 2017 the Law on the Rights and Protection of the Child, which replaced the 2014 law. This law was approved on 23.2.2017 and entered into force on 9.6.2017. The law recognises the child as a rights-holder and provides for a positive obligation of parents, the authorities and society to care for and protect every child. The law applies to all children on Albanian territory, regardless of their citizenship, as well as to the children of Albanian citizens living outside Albania. Report by Dunja Mijatovic commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe 2018, p.5) ; Law no.18/2017 on the Rights and Protection of the Child.
Disability (UNCRPD)	Law on Inclusion of and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities adopted in 2014,	After ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2012, Albania has made efforts to bring its legislation in conformity with the CRPD's provision. The most important legislation includes Law on "Inclusion of and Accessibility for Persons with Disabilities" (July 2014), and its by-laws on the National Council on Disabilities, on the collection and reporting of disability data and statistics, on the removal of barriers in infrastructure and communication, or the Decision of the Council of Ministers on the Recognition of Albanian Sign Language. (Leave no one behind project document)

	National Action Plan on Persons with Disabilities-2016	The National Action Plan promotes inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Albanian society, outlines ways to prevent discrimination, and eliminate any barriers to accessing public services and the fulfilment of their rights. https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/national-action-plan-persons-with-disabilities-2016-2020.html
Gender (Convention on discrimination against women CEDAW)	Law no. 9970, dated 24.07.2008 "On gender equality in society" National Strategy on Gender Equality and Plan of Action 2016-2020 and the National Action Plan for LGBT persons in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020	Albania adopted a law dedicated to gender equality in 2008, which aims to: provide effective protection from gender discrimination and any other form of behavior that encourages gender discrimination; to define measures for equal opportunities among women and men, in order to eliminate any forms of gender-based discrimination; to define the responsibilities of central and local state authorities for developing and enforcing normative acts as well as policies that support gender equality in the society. https://www.osce.org/albania/36682?download=true This National Strategy and its Action Plan were prepared on behalf of the Government of Albania by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and line ministries, in consultation with representatives of civil society organisations, and national and international organisations working to achieve gender equality and to reduce gender-based and domestic violence in Albania. (National Strategy and Action Plan on Gender Equality 2016-2020)
Ethnicity or language (UN Declaration on Rights of persons belonging to National, ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities)	Law No.96/2017 on Protection of National Minorities in	This law regulates the exercising of the rights of the persons belonging to national minorities in the Republic of Albania, in accordance with the principles of the constitution of Albania, the framework convention of the Council of Albania ratified with Law nr. 8496, dated 3.06.1999 and international agreements in the area of international human rights, where the Republic of Albania is a party.

	the Republic of Albania Law No.69/2012 on Pre-University Education System	Article 10 of the Law on Pre-university education "Education for national minorities" stresses that: 1. Persons belonging to national minorities shall be provided the opportunity to learn and be taught in their mother tongue, to learn their history and culture in accordance with the teaching plans and curricula. 2. The students of the national minorities shall be ensured the conditions to learn the Albanian language and get to know the Albanian history and culture in order to ensure an active and equal participation in the economic, social, political and cultural life of the Republic of Albania. 3. The teaching plans and curricula, as well as the ratio of the use of the mother tongue and the official language in the teaching process are determined by specific acts of the minister.
	Joint instruction of Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth & Ministry of Finance and Economy for Academic Year 2019-2020	In line with the law, the joint instruction of Minister of Education, Sports and Youth (MESY) and Minister of Finance and Economy (MFE) for academic year 2019-2020 emphasizes in point f. the importance of meeting the needs and demands of national minorities for education in their mother tongue in line with the respective conventions and EU legislation. (Joint instruction of the Minister of Education and Minister of Finance - Udhezim i perbashket i Ministrit te Arsimit, Sportit dhe Rinisë dhe Ministrit të Financave dhe Ekonomisë nr. 18, dt.20.08.2019 per vitin shkollor 2019-2020 ne sistemin arsimor parauniversitar) http://arsimiparauniversitar.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/UDH%C3%8BZIM-I-P%C3%8BRBASHK%C3%8BT-NR.-18-DAT%C3%8B-20.08.2019-P%C3%8BR-VITIN-SHKOLLOR-2019-2.._.pdf
Other (e.g. Rights of indigenous people)	N/A	

Provide an overview of general education legislation impacting on the inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups:

Name and link	Year and status (enacted, under preparation etc.)	Description of key content
Law nr.69/2012 on Pre-University Education System in the Republic of Albania with amendments through the Law56/2015 and Law 48/2018	2012 / 2015/2018	Article 5 of the Law No.69/2012 on Pre-University Education system: "The right to education" states that "The right to education in the Republic of Albania is guaranteed to the Albanian citizens, foreign citizens and those without citizenship regardless of discrimination based on gender, race, colour, ethnicity, language, sexual orientation, political or religious beliefs, economic or social status, age, residence, disability or other issues/reasons defined in the Albanian legislation". The law covers all goals, objectives and mechanisms of the pre-university education system in Albania. Its key policy objectives include improvement of governance, leadership and the management capacities of resources of the pre-university education system, quality and inclusive learning, contemporary professional development of teachers and school directors based on standards comparable to EU countries.
Pre-University Education Development Strategy 2014-2020	2014-2020	The Government of the Republic of Albania officially approved the Pre-University Education Development Strategy (PUEDS) in January 2016. The development of the Strategy followed the priorities set in the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020 (NSDI II) and built on previous education strategies. The PUEDS serves as basic policy document for the sector development. The four Pillars are as follows: A. Enhancing leadership, governance, and management of resources and capacities of PUES, B. Inclusive quality learning, C. Quality assurance based on standards comparable to those of EU countries, and D. Contemporary teacher's and school leaders professional development and training.

		The overall goal of the PUEDS is to ensure inclusion and equitable access to education for all. In modernising its education system Albania is creating a platform for social inclusion and striving to improve student achievement at all levels, for example, through introducing a competency-based curriculum, expanding Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education and redesigning teacher education. The government has committed itself to improving levels of equity, equality, vulnerability and non-discriminatory access for children with disabilities and children from minority populations. (Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy 2014-2020 FINAL REPORT, UNICEF 2 July 2019)
Law No. 18/2017 on the Rights and Protection of the Child (2017)	Enacted in May 2017"	This law, based on articles 78 and 83, paragraph 1 of the Constitution, defines the rights and protection that any child is entitled to, the mechanisms and responsible authorities that shall guarantee effective exercise of, respect for, promotion of these rights, and also the special protection of the child. https://observator.org.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/06/Layout-A5-english_18May2017.pdf
The National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI) (2016-2020) https://shtetiweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/NSDI_2014-2020_version_JUne-2013.pdf	2016-2020	The NSDI is aligned by global commitments to SDGs and offers a vision for Albania's national social, democratic and economic development over the period 2016-2020, and its aspirations for European integration. It states the need to pay more attention to the protection of the rights of women, children as well as of people with disability, minorities, Roma, youth and prisoners.

Provide an overview of education policy or guidelines impacting on inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups:

Name and link	Year and status (enacted, under preparation etc.)	Description of key content
Normative provisions related to the Law on Pre-University Education <u>Dispozitat normative për sistemin arsimor parauniversitar - Portali Shkollor</u>	2013 (under implementation)	Normative Provisions for Pre-University Education approved by the Ministry of Education and Science in 2013 is the main document that contains detailed rules on education system related to different levels of pre-university education, curricula and textbooks, pupils' assessment, organization of lesson hours, pedagogical staff, psycho-social services, parents, children rights and responsibilities, and so on. More specifically, Chapter 15 is focused on the education of children with disabilities.
Curricular Framework of Pre-university Education in the Republic of Albania <u>Korniza kurrikulare e arsimit parauniversitar në Republikën e Shqipërisë, 2014</u>)	2014	The Curricular Framework of Pre-university Education, which was developed in 2014 contains key guidelines and instructions for the education goals, content, types of learning and student achievement. As a key document for the organization of the education system, the framework guides education stakeholders and interested groups regarding the main aspects of curricula, as the basis for ensuring quality education for all. (Curricular Framework of Pre-university Education of the Republic of Albania, 2014)
Professional standards of general and subject teacher training/education of lower secondary education and upper secondary education (Standardet profesionale të formimit të përgjithshëm dhe lëndor të mësuesit në arsimin e mesëm të ulët dhe arsimin e mesëm të lartë, përgatitur nga IZHA, 2016 (n Alb)	September 2016	This document was developed by Institute of Education Development in September 2016, aiming to outline a new vision of teaching, focused on meeting individual needs and interests of students for knowledge. The teacher professional standards describe what the teacher is expected to know, understand, master and demonstrate as a specialist in his/her field. It is divided into four main sections: 1. Aim, who the standards are addressed to and their structure,

http://www.portalishkollor.al/instituci on/standardet-profesionale-te-formimit-te-mesuesit-ne-arsimin-e-mesem-te-ulet-dhe-te-larte		2. Professional standards for general teacher training/education, 3. Professional standards according to teachers' profiles, 4. Self-assessment of teacher performance based on these standards
Instruction of Minister of Education, Sports and Youth on assistant teachers for students with disabilities in public institutions of pre-university education (2019)	25.11.2019	This updated instruction outlines the main criteria and procedures for selection of assistant teachers, as well as their main duties. https://arsimi.gov.al/udhezim-nr-26-date-25-11-2019-per-mesuesin-ndihmes-per-nxenesit-me-aftesi-te-kufizuara-ne-institucionet-publike-te-arsimit-parauniversitar/
National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Albania (2016-2020)	Approved by decision of Council of Ministers on 23 December 2015	The National Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Albania introduces measures aiming to increase access to public services for Roma and Egyptians by eliminating barriers and ensuring inclusive education, civil registration and access to rights, better health, increased welfare through formal employment as well as improvement of the housing situation and social care, resulting in the integration of Roma and Egyptian communities. UNDP Website: https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/national-action-plan-for-integration-of-roma-and-egyptians-in-th.html Referring to the field of education and promotion of intercultural dialogue, the action plan aims to: increase the number of Roma and Egyptian students who complete all levels of education; promote intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding through development of school-based communities; strengthen cooperation of school and social services in addressing cases of Roma and Egyptian children with socio-economic problems; promote recognition of identity of Roma and Egyptian communities as an integral part of the cultural heritage of Albania.

		Roma and Egyptian organizations have been actively involved in the whole process. In addition, the project proposals submitted by Roma and Egyptian NGOs to UNDP in the framework of ESERE project cover the priority areas of the National Action Plan for the Integration of Roma and Egyptians 2016-2020 including Education, Civil rights, Employement, Health and Infrastructure).
Social Inclusion Policy Document 2016-2020 Measuring, Monitoring and Reporting for Result-led Policies	The Social Inclusion Policy Paper (SIPP) 2016-2020, approved by Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 87, on 03/02/2016 ,	This document is prepared on behalf of the Government of Albania by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and line ministries in close consultation with representatives of local authorities, international organisations, with the contribution of civil society representatives and of social inclusion experts. Expertise and technical assistance for preparation of the document has been provided by "United Nations Support to Social Inclusion in Albania - UNSSIA" project funded by Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and implemented by United Nations Development Programme - UNDP in partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. The Social Inclusion Policy Paper (SIPP) 2016-2020 is brought forward as an important document of the Albanian Government, which ensures a contemporary and accountable system for assessing social inclusion in various sectoral policies like: social protection, employment and capacity building, healthcare, education, housing and provision of basic needs, and in the social engagement and human rights observation policies as well. P.5.
(Guideline for monitoring of children who are out of education system and children at risk of drop out, July 2019, (Udhëzues për monitorimin e fëmijëve jashtë sistemit arsimor (FJSA) dhe	July, 2019	The Guidelines has been produced with the support of UNICEF and the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth and implemented by Observatory for Child and Youth Rights in the framework of the Leave No One Behind Program. The guidelines support Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of

fëmijëve që rrezikojnë të braktisin shkollën)		Health and Social Protection and all the structures depending on them. https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2051/file/Monitoring%20guideline.pdf

Please describe any specific plans and strategies designed to support inclusion in education (e.g. national strategy on migrant learners):

Name and link	Year and status (approved, under preparation etc.)	Description of the focus
National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020 (NSDI II) / **Strategjia Kombëtare për Zhvillim dhe Integrim** https://shtetiweb.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/NSDI_2014-2020_version_JUne-2013.pdf	2016-2020 (NSDI) Approved by the Council of Ministers on **11.5.2016**	The National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI-II) 2015-2020 is the key national strategic policy document that supports the sustainable social and economic development of the country by ensuring fulfilment of standards and progress in the European integration process. The NSDI is aligned by global commitments to SDGs and offers a vision for Albania's national social, democratic and economic development over the period 2016-2020, and its aspirations for European integration. It states the need to pay more attention to the protection of the rights of women, children as well as of people with disability, minorities, Roma, youth and prisoners.
Pre-University Education Development Strategy (PUEDS) 2014-2020	Officially approed in January 2016 (being implemented)	The overall goal of the PUEDS is to ensure inclusiveness and equitable access to education for all. In modernising its education system Albania is creating a platform for social inclusion and striving to improve student achievement at all levels for example, through introducing a competency-based curriculum, expanding Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education and redesigning teacher education.

		The government has committed itself to improving levels of equity, equality, vulnerability and non-discriminatory access for children with disabilities and children from minority populations. P.4 (Appraisal of the Strategy of Development of Pre-University Education System, 2019, P.4)
National Agenda on Child Rights (Agjenda kombetare per te drejtat e Femijeve) Joint instruction of MESY and MFE, no. 18 Udhëzim i përbashkët i Ministrisë së Arsimit, Sportit dhe Rinisë dhe Ministrisë së Financës dhe Ekonomisë	2017-2020 Adopted by DCM no. 372 on 26.04.2017 dated 20.08.2019	NACR aims to achieve protection and promotion of child rights in the Republic of Albania, by implementing national and international standards in this field and by encouraging an integrated and inclusive approach toward Children's Rights. It represents a multi-disciplinary and systematic framework which should be integrated into all other national and local documents, plans and actions related to children in line with the UN Convention on Child Rights. It is led by the principle of the best interest of the child and has the vision of creation of a favorable environment for the safe and healthy growth of children, development of the highest physical and psychosocial potential of children, social inclusion and active participation in all the fields that impact their life, as well as the guarantee of assessment of the progress of child rights in the main fields of public policies related to children. P.6. The National Agenda on the Child Rights 2017 – 2020 has also been integrated into the joint instructions of Minister of Education, Sports and Youth (MESY) and Minister of Finance and Economy (MFE), nr. 18, dated 20.08.2019, point b.: local education institutions responsible for the pre-university education and the directorates of the educational institutions shall: i. promote respect and promotion of child rights in school and at large, ii. work on elimination of all forms of violence in the educational institutions.
Social Inclusion Policy Document	2016-2020 Approved by DCM No. 87, on 3February 2016	The Social Inclusion Policy Paper 2016-2020 ensures a contemporary and accountable system for assessing social inclusion in various sectorial policies like: social protection, employment and capacity building, healthcare, education, housing and provision of basic needs, and in the social engagement and human rights observation policies as well.

National Social Protection Strategy / Strategjia Kombëtare e Mbrojtjes Sociale	2015-2020	The Social Protection Strategy 2015-2020 (SPS) (supported by UN, with Swiss funding) defines a system of social protection composed of policies and mechanisms to protect all those excluded or in need of protection through preventative and social reintegration programmes at local and national level. It aims at mitigating the impact of poverty for Albanian families, ensuring that social protection measures reach those most at risk by: i) increasing the effectiveness and transparency of the Cash Assistance Scheme (NE) to better target and cover poor families and children in need; ii) improving the position of people with disabilities through cash benefits and proper social services; and iii) developing social care services through a functional system – planning, managing and delivering integrated social care services at the newly established Local Government Units (Leave No One Behind – Project Document, p.10)
National Action Plan on persons with disabilities 2016-2020	Approved by decision of Council of Ministers No.483, on 29 June 2016	The Action Plan on Persons with Disabilities 2016-2020, has been drafted in compliance with the fundamental principles of the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the European Disability Strategy, in the framework of Albania's EU integration process. The aim of this Action Plan of the Albanian Government is to promote the inclusion of persons with disabilities in the Albanian society, prevent discrimination, and eliminate any barriers to accessing public services and the fulfilment of their rights. National Action Plan on Persons with Disabilities was prepared in close collaboration with organisations of people with disabilities, other civil society organisations involved in the area of disability rights, the international community and local government authorities. The Action Plan covers the period between 2016 and 2020. (National *Action Plan on Persons with Disabilities 2016 - 2020* p.10)
Joint instruction of MESY & MFE no. 18	20.08.2019	The national action plan on persons with disabilities 2016-2020 has been also integrated into the joint instruction of MESY and MFE, in point c) according to which the local education

		institutions responsible for pre-university education and the directorates of educational institutions should:
		i. Monitor with priority education of children with disabilities and create conditions for their integration in kindergartens and schools, ii. Work with responsibility for children with disabilities to be evaluated in the respective local education institutions responsible for pre-university education **by multi-disciplinary committees,** and to be treated by teachers, assistant teacher and school psychologist with an Individual Education Plan in accordance with the committee recommendations, etc. Furthermore, instructions emphasize: c. Establishment and functioning of multi-disciplinary committees for children with disabilities, d. Appointment of assistant teachers in the schools where there are children with disabilities, in line with the recommendations given by the multi-disciplinary committee of the local education units responsible for pre-university education, e. Active involvement of their representatives in the child protection units established at municipality level.
National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020	November 2015	This document is prepared on behalf of the Government of Albania by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and line ministries in close consultation with representatives of local authorities, international organizations, with the contribution of civil society representatives including Roma and Egyptian organizations, experts of the area, as well as with the active participation of the Roma and Egyptian experts. Expertise and technical assistance for preparation of the document has been provided by "Supporting Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptian Communities – SSIREC" Project, funded by the European Union and implemented by United Nations Development Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. December 2015 UNDP Albania.... (National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020 - Plani Kombëtar i Veprimit për Integrimin e Romëve dhe Egjiptianëve në Republikën e Shqipërisë (2016-2020)

		https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/national-action-plan-for-integration-of-roma-and-egyptians-in-th.html The National Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Albania introduces measures aiming to increase access to public services for Roma and Egyptians by eliminating barriers and ensuring inclusive education, civil registration and access to rights, better health, increased welfare through formal employment, as well as improvement of the housing situation and social care, resulting in the integration of Roma and Egyptian communities.
Joint instruction of MESY and MFE, no. 18	2016-2020	In connection to the National Action Plan on Integration of Roma and Egyptian Community, the joint instruction stresses provision of quality and inclusive education for Roma and Egyptians and promotion of intercultural dialogue; increase of the number of Roma and Egyptians that complete all levels of education; development of a school community that promotes intercultural dialogue and mutual understanding; appreciation and promotion of recognition of identity of Roma and Egyptians as an integral part of cultural inheritance of Albania

Is there a definition of inclusion in education?

✓ No ☐No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please provide the definition and give the official source:

If no, please give further information:

While inclusion in education or inclusive education in Albania has been considered as a priority in various legal documents, policies, national strategies and action plans, there is not yet a nationally recognized, clearly stated definition. However, even though initially and for many years, inclusive education has been seen as merly access and integration, and later on, inclusion of students with disabilities, after a number of national and international projects and interventions, inclusive education has been developed into a broader concept, including inclusion of all vulnerable children and provision of quality and equitable opportunities for all.

Along with the definitions developed and promoted by UNICEF (as described above) and other national and international organizations, a comprehensive definition was developed through the joint work of NEPC (Network of Education Policy Centers) and several parnter organizations and was promoted in the framework of the joint CoE/EU project **Regional Support for Inclusive Education** Project with 49 schools in the South East Europe countries, including

Albania: *Inclusive schools are the ones in which:* *School staff, students, parents and community members work together in order to help each and every child develop to his/her full potential, in an environment where all feel welcomed, respected and valued, and develop competencies that contribute to social cohesion and to the development of inclusive society.* This concept has been further promoted by our organization "Children Are the Future" (CAF) to other schools of Albania through various projects.

Is there a definition of vulnerable groups?

✓ No ☐No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please provide the definition and give the official source:

If no, please give further information:

Even though various legal documents, strategies and action plans refer to integration, inclusion and development of various vulnerable groups, there is not yet a clearly stated and widely accepted definition.

The Law on Pre-University Education refers to various groups of children that need special care and attention, such as: **students from families in need, students with disabilities and students with learning difficulties,** as well as students from Roma and Egyptian communities and students from national minorities. A report on evaluation of coverage of vulnerable groups in the Albanian media prepared by Albanian Media Institute with the Support of Open Society Foundation for Albania referred to a broad definition of marginalized and vulnerable groups, including *all those groups and persons considered to be in poorer positions than the majority of the population, or needing special conditions and attention*. Thus, there were considered articles and chronicles for juveniles, terminally ill, mentally ill, LGBT, Roma and Egyptian (as among the most discriminated among ethnic minorities), people with disabilities, people benefiting from economic assistance scheme, victims of domestic violence, as well as victims of trafficking. (Report on evaluation of coverage of vulnerable groups in the Albanian media /Raport vlerësimi i Mbulimit të Grupeve Vulnerabël në Median Shqiptare.

Yet, there is no information available about a nationally recognized definiton.

Is there a definition of special educational needs?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please provide the definition and give the official source:

If no, please give further information:

Special educational needs - include students who have physical, sensory or cognitive or other specific disabilities or any combination of these. It might also include students with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties..... (*Mapping policies and practices for the preparation of teachers for inclusive education in contexts of social and cultural diversity*-Albania country report 2010 - A Report prepared by SCIENTER and Centre for Education Policy– in the framework of the ETF regional project promoting inclusive education and training policies and practices in contexts of social and cultural diversity in the Western Balkans and Turkey, p.56)

https://www.etf.europa.eu/sites/default/files/m/C12578310056925BC125772E0029DDCE_NOTE85SAXQ.pdf

Please provide information on any future developments planned for inclusion in education.

In the future governmental plans priority will be given to projects and programs that highlight the interrelation of social inclusion with poverty reduction, with support for education, employment and entrepreneurship, improving healthcare services, housing and other basic needs, and active participation and observation of human rights. Such programs shall target and take special care of vulnerable groups such as: women, persons living in poverty or experiencing violence, persons with disabilities, children, youth and the elderly that suffer social exclusion. (Social Inclusion Policy Document 2016-2020 p.5-6)

Currently, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth in cooperation with UNICEF and other stakeholders are working on the development of the new Strategy of Pre-University Education where quality and inclusive education for all children will be a priority.

The newly established Center for School Leadership will strengthen its training programs for school leaders and teachers drawing a special attention to integration of theory and practice.

Teacher education and continuous professional development in order to be better prepared to successfully implement the new competency-based curricula and meet the demands of the modern child-centered teaching methodology.

A special attention will be paid to the strengthening of school governance and cooperation of schools with local self-governance units, parents and community.

Please provide information on any reports, evaluations and/or reviews of legislation and/or policy relating to inclusion in education, since 2015. This could include official and parallel reports on UNCRPD etc.

The appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy, 2019) emphasizes that "Albania has made steady progress in the last years in developing and aligning its education policies with Europe. In particular, it has articulated the need to ensure inclusiveness and equitable access to education for all in the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020 and in the Pre-University Education Development Strategy" (Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy,p.8) Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy 2014-2020 – Final Report, July 2019 (UNICEF Albania support to the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth in conducting an appraisal of the current Strategy of Pre-University Education 2014-2020

https://www.unicef.org/albania/reports/appraisal-pre-university-education-strategy-2014-2020

In addition, Dunja Mijatovic, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, following her visit to Albania from 21 to 25 May 2018, states in her report (2018) that Albania is a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ("the Lanzarote Convention"). She also stresses that in recent years the authorities have made significant efforts to harmonise domestic legislation with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child with the parliament enacting in 2017 the Law on the Rights and Protection of the Child, approved on 09.06.2017, which replaced the 2014 Law. (**Report by Dunja Mijatovic commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe** following her visit to Albania from 21 to 25 May 2018, p.5)

Report on the implementation of Roma integration public policy in Albania for 2018

A report prepared by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in Albania with the support of the "Roma Integration 2020" project implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council with the financial support of European Union and Open Society Foundations and the "Economic and Social Empowerment for Roma and Egyptians – a booster for social inclusion" (ESERE) project, funded by European Union and implemented by United Nations Development Programme. The data is collected administratively by more than 200 public officials through the web based Romalb system (www.romalb.org). June 13, 2019

www.rcc.int › docs › Albania Final Report 2018.pdf

What are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hindrances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to laws and policies in the country?

Albania has made significant progress regarding legislation and policies for Inclusive Education and has been developing positive practices in cooperation with national and international non-governmental organizations and other partners. As described above, a wide legal and policy framework has been developed and a higher commitment to their implementation has been demonstrated.

The overall goal of the PUEDS is to ensure inclusiveness and equitable access to education for all. In modernising its education system Albania is creating a platform for social inclusion and striving to improve student achievement at all levels for example, through introducing a competency-based curriculum, expanding Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education and redesigning teacher education. The government has committed itself to improving levels of equity, equality, vulnerability and non-discriminatory access for children with disabilities and children from minority populations. (Appraisal 2019, P.4). However, successful "implementation of legislation legs behind in certain aspects due to capacity limitations" (Appraisal 2019, p.17) and limited budget allocations.

Section 2: Governance and Finance

How far are inclusive principles underpinning policies atnational and local levels effectively supported by governance and financing mechanisms?

Is there formal collaboration across ministries on inclusion in education?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, in which areas does this take place and who is involved?

Area	Yes/No	Description: what mechanism, who is involved and how
Policy development, implementation and coordination	Yes	Yes, there is a formal collaboration across ministries regarding different initiatives on inclusive education and other fields. One example of this cooperation is the Cooperation agreement / Memorandum of Understanding no. 7522, dated 12.07.2018 between Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Ministry of Health and social protection and Ministry of Interior "on the identification and enrolment in school of all children of school age". Local education institutions and educational institutions are responsible for its implementation. Another example of cooperation across Ministries on policy development, implementation and coordination is: National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania, 2015-2020. "This document is prepared on behalf of the Government of Albania by Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and line ministries (Ministry of Culture - Ministry of Education and Sports - Ministry of Health - Ministry of Interior Affairs - Ministry of Justice - Ministry of Urban Development and Tourism - Ministry of Local Issues) in close consultation with local authorities, as well as with active participation of Roma and Egyptian experts and the contribution of civil society including Roma and Egyptian organizations. Expertise and technical assistance for preparation of the draft has been provided by "Supporting Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptian Communities – SSIREC" Project, funded by the European Union and implemented by United Nations Development Programme

		in partnership with Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth."(December 2015, P. 1, 7.) A more specific example of this cooperation is the collaboration of Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth with the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) for the provision of quality and inclusive education for Roma and Egyptians and promotion of intercultural dialogue, p.48, etc.
Identification of needs / referral for services	Yes	National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania, 2015-2020. See p. 7. several workshops organized from the Ministry of Welfare and Social affairs with line ministries during 2014 during the designing of the Action Plan.
Data sharing	Yes	National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania, 2015-2020 In this document it has been mentioned the collection and sharing of data from the responsible ministries and institutions.
Monitoring and evaluation	Yes	National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania, 2015-2020 Implementation of the Action Plan is monitored by the Inter-ministerial Committee consisting of Deputy Ministers covering the relevant sectors. The committee is chaired by the Deputy Minister of Social Welfare and Youth and is composed of Deputy Ministers from other line ministries responsible for the National Strategy and Action Plan implementation. At the working level, responsibility for monitoring the Action Plan implementation lies with the focal points for Roma and Egyptians in line ministries who collect data and identify information gaps that need to be filled. The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth has a coordinating role and periodically reports on implementation progress. The Action Plan foresees the publication of annual progress reports and support for civil society monitoring reports. P.40
Quality assurance and accountability		No information available
(others …)		

If no, please give further information:

Are there shared responsibilities between central and local governments on inclusion in education?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, in which areas does this take place and who is involved?

Area	Yes/No	Description: who is involved and how
Policy development, implementation and coordination	Yes	While the Law on Pre-University Education, which is one of the fundamental legal documents that emphasizes quality and inclusive education for all children, has been developed through cooperation and a wide consultation process with various stakeholders at local and national level, it's implementation is a responsibility of various Ministries and institutions at national level as well as Local education and self-governance units including various related structures.
Identification of needs / referral for services		While the Law on Pre-University Education emphasizes the right to education of all children, it also defines the role and duties of various stakeholders at national and local level to successfully implement it. For example, defining the role of regional education directorates with their multidisciplinary committees for identification and evaluation of students with disabilities, the role of local government and educational institutions in identifying their needs and providing adequate support. The self-governance units, in cooperation with the respective educational local unit responsible for the pre-university education and public educational institutions, are responsible for the registration of students in public schools of full time compulsory education. *Also the cooperation agreement no. 7522, dated* 12.07.2018 between Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Ministry of Health and Social Protection and Ministry of Interior "on the identification and enrolment in school of all children of school age" has defined Local education institutions and educational institutions as the main actors responsible for its implementation. In the framework of the initiative "Every Child in school" UNICEF Albania has supported the Observatory of Child and Youth Rights for the draft of an important document that will guide all the actors that are responsible for the implementation

		of the Joint Order no. 292 date 28.5.2019 and the 3 Ministerial Agreement between the Ministry of Education Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection "For the identification and the registration of all the children that are at the age to attend school". The aim of this training module is to raise the capacities of the school leaders, teachers, school psychologists and social workers, policy makers, child protection workers, local education institutions staff, health center staff, parents and other community members on how to identify children that are at the age to attend school but also on how to prevent children that are at risk of dropping out of school.
Data sharing		There is considerable improvement in the data collection process, but more needs to be done to consolidate a joint national mechanism that would ensure data collection, sharing and usage by different stakeholders at different levels.
Monitoring and evaluation		The appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy stresses that monitoring of Education Sector performance needs improvement. "Currently, Albania does not have a process in place to provide comprehensive monitoring of the Education Sector performance" and "there is no consultation process among key stakeholders in the Education System which would lead to credible performance appraisal, and foster **accountability** and shared responsibility for results"
Quality assurance and accountability		Quality assurance is a priority in the Albanian education system. However, the appraisal of the Pre-University Education strategy concludes that "t**he absence of a Joint Annual Sector Review means that opportunity is lost in providing a regular overview,** periodic and systematic assessment of the PUEDS carried out jointly with partners and stakeholders. Therefore, the Government needs to consider introducing such a process within the new planning cycle, and use it to improve effectiveness, transparency and accountability within the Education System. (Appraisal p.43)
(others …)		

If no, please give further information:

Are non-governmental organisations and/or associations involved in governance processes?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please the describe their involvement:

If no, please give further information:

Yes, local, national and especially international non-governmental organizations have been playing a significant role in the designing and implementation of specific education related policies and initiatives aiming at a better quality and more inclusive education. They have been part of round tables, consultation meetings and public hearing, however, there is still room for improvement of a wider and more active involvement. Regarding school governance processes, they have the opportunity to be represented in the school board besides the technical, financial and material support that they provide in the school-based policy development process as well as various development projects and interventions.

Are there any accountability mechanisms to promote the inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups?

☐ No ✓No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, what is the focus of the mechanisms?

Area	Yes/No	Description of the focus/actors involved (e.g. state/non state)
Appeal process for rights violations		
School inspection		
Other quality assurance processes (e.g. standards for teaching, support services etc)		
Monitoring and evaluation (e.g. data collection on attendance, participation, achievement, funding)		
(others …)		

If no, please give further information:

Please describe the general mechanisms for funding schools. Give details on: which institutions provide funding; what they provide; how they provide it andto whom, which mechanisms they use to allocate resources; and their respective roles and responsibilities.

Funding mechanisms	Description of who, what, to whom and how
	Article 37 of the law on pre-university education states that 1) funding of pre-university education institutions at all levels of pre-university education system (pre-school, basic and upper secondary education) is done through the following sources: state budgets, incomes of

	local governance units, sponsorships and donations, incomes from Education institutions, and other legal incomes.
	2) Funding from the state budget is planned based on the 'per student' formula according to specific indicators of education levels and conditions of public education institutions.
	3) In the state budget for the local government units it is allocated a per-students fund, which is used for the maintenance of public education institutions in line with the standards approved by the decision of Council of Ministers. (Law nr.48/2018 on Pre-University Education with amendments.
	However, Budget allocations are still not made directly to schools, but they are allowed to receive donations that need to be under control of the school board. (Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy 2014-2020 – final report prepared by: Mike Wort & Dukagjin Pupovci & Ermelinda Ikonomi (consultants) 2 July 2019 P.17
	According to Article 40 of the Law on Pre-University Education System, public education institutions in compliance with their own policies, may gain financial funds or material support from donors or sponsors, in line with the criteria and procedures set by the minister of Education in cooperation with the Minister of Finance. Donations and sponsorships serve to improve the quality of the education service. In addition, public education institutions are allowed to ensure income from services to third parties in accordance with the scope of activity of the institutions and they are used in accordance with legal acts and regulations. However, schools face various challenges in ensuring this kind of support, and some of them have never been able to receive such donations.
	Private Pre-University education institutions are mainly funded from the incomes they generate and provide their service based on fees.

Do schools have flexibility to use funding allocations to support the inclusion of learners from vulnerable groups?

✓ No ☐No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please describe the flexibility:

If no, please give further information:

There is **no special financial autonomy granted to pre-university education institutions (EURYDICE),** as budget allocations are still not made to schools (Appraisal of Education Strategy). Therefore, schools do not have a set yearly budget that they can use to successfully implement their annual plans related to the school development program and effectively support inclusion of students from vulnerable groups.

While Article 40 of the law on Pre-university education system states that schools are allowed to gain financial funds or material support from donors or sponsors, in line with the criteria and procedures set by

the minister of Education in cooperation with the Minister of Finance, they have been encouraged to establish cooperation with national and international non-governmental organizations and institutions, which have provided significant support through various projects aiming at a better quality, more equitable and inclusive education.

EURYDICE https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-and-school-education-funding_en

Please describe the specific mechanisms for funding the inclusion of vulnerable learners and their families in education (e.g. benefits, cash transfers, scholarships). Give details on: which institutions provide funding; what they provide; how they provide it and to whom, which mechanisms they use to allocate resources; and their respective roles and responsibilities.

Funding mechanisms	Description of the who, what, to whom and how
Financial support for students with sight /seeing difficulties	People with seeing/sight difficulties are guaranteed free of charge education and are provided with payments specified by Decision of Council of Ministers during the duration of their studies. EURYDICE https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-and-school-education-funding_en
Provision with free text books of all children from Roma and Egyptian communities and national minorities	All the Roma and Egyptian children in compulsory education receive their textbooks free of charge in the schools where they are enrolled.
Provision with free text books of children of primary education (from 1st to 5th grades)	"For the first time, in 2018, children of grades 1–4 received free textbooks, a major step for the right to free education and one that removes a key barrier for poor children in attending school." (UNICEF Albania Annual Report 2018 p.7) "Free text books" initiative started during academic year 2018-2019 when free text books were given to all students from 1st to 4thgrade and all students from families with social/economic assistance, students with disabilities, and students that belong to different national minorities. During academic year 2019-2020, free text books were also given to 5th-grade students, covering the whole elementary school level of pre-university education. The used textbooks from 2nd to 5th grade will be collected and reused by the other students of the next year, whereas the 1st - grade students will receive new textbooks and all notebooks will be replaced...The plan, according to the Minster of MESY, is to cover also the other grades of

	lower secondary school up to 9th grade during the coming years. (Report of the Minister of Education, Sports and Youth to the Parliamentary Commission of Education and means of public information", Tirana, 2 October 2019)
Insurance of transport of students living more than 2km away from school	Students, who live more than 2 km away from the school that they attend are ensured 100% coverage of their transport costs by budget funds..

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 of funding and resourcing relating to inclusive education.

The Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy 2014-2020 – final report prepared by: Mike Wort & Dukagjin Pupovci & Ermelinda Ikonomi (consultants), 2 July 2019 (as a support provided to the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth by the UNICEF) provides important findings, conclusions and recommendations related to the current Pre-University education strategy and future strategic initiatives.

The authors of the report emphasize that the decentralization process has the potential to increase efficiency and accountability in management and governance of the Albanian education system if practices of information sharing, communication and transparency between the national, regional and local levels of education across the country are developed and promoted. In order to achieve this, the report emphasizes that MOESY and AQPUE need to provide technical assistance to municipalities to manage the Pre-School System as well as to General Directorate for Pre-University Education (GDPUE) to act as executive agency of the government for the Pre-University Education sector, whereas the GDPUE through its network of Regional Education Directorates/Local Education Offices should be able "to provide day-to-day support to education institutions and conduct high quality inspections and performance evaluations".

Regarding funding, the report also emphasizes that "Albania is far from the 2020 target of public spending of 3% for PUE and 5% for Education", and, "in general, low levels of education spending raise issues of access, inclusiveness and efficiency levels of education". (Appraisal of Pre-University Education Strategy p.18)

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to governance and finance issues in the country?

Decentralization in the education system has been a priority of the government supported by legal framework and institutional and administrative restructuring, and the "government's policy on decentralization recognizes the importance of improved service delivery, local partnerships and decision-making and accountability". However, "education institution building and putting decentralization in place remains a major challenge" (Appraisal, p.7)

As stated above, the municipalities need more technical assistance by the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth (MoESY) and the Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (AQAPUE) to manage the pre-university-system, whereas the GD PUE needs more assistance to act as an executive agency of the Government for the Pre-

University Education Sector. Education institutions on the other hand need a better management capacity and continuous support to ensure effective school governance, quality and accountability, while the school administrators are "seen as weak links in the system" (Appraisal, p.4). Therefore, the establishment of the Center for School Leaders that will provide professional capacity building opportunities for school leaders all over Albania is considered as a significant measure toward improvement of school leadership and governance.

Strengthening of inner school structures, such as: School Boards, Parent Councils, Student Governments, Teacher Councils that are considered as important mechanisms of the school governance system, is an element of high priority recognized by legal framework, as well as different education authorities and other related stakeholders. Studies and experience show that in spite of positive changes, there is still "a gap ...between the legal framework....and the actual implementation of the decentralized system", especially regarding school governance, which "is often very formal" (Who rules the schools? - Mapping of the current school governance policies in the 10 countries, NEPC, 2016, p.62).

A significant support has been provided to schools by different local, national and international organizations to increase the capacity of school leaders together with inner school structures. More specifically, Children Are the Future (CAF) with the support of Open Society Foundation for Albania has been working for many years to support development of collaborative school leadership and democratic school governance through strengthening of the capacity of school leaders, establishment through a democratic and participatory election process of Parent Councils and Student Governments, increase of their capacity and active involvement through participatory methods in the School Development Planning, implementation and democratization process. However, positive experiences developed through this and many other initiatives through local, national and international organizations, including the School as Community Center program of the Ministry of Education in cooperation with UNICEF, World Vision, and other organizations, in order to ensure long lasting improvements at national level, need to be exchanged and extended to all the schools and combined with continuous mentoring, as well as technical and financial support.

In addition to professional and institutional capacity, a key challenge is related to limited funding and investment in the Education sector. The appraisal of the Pre-University Education report stresses that "Albania is far from the 2020 target of public spending of 3% for PUE and 5% for Education", and, "in general, low levels of education spending raise issues of access, inclusiveness and efficiency levels of education" (p.18). Furthermore, schools themselves are not directly provided with funds that they would be able to effectively use in order to increase inclusion as well as quality of service. On the other hand, there is "low school capacities for sound financial management" (Appraisal, p.17).

https://www.unicef.org/albania/reports/appraisal-pre-university-education-strategy-2014-2020

Section 3: Data

What data on inclusion in education is available to understand if progress is being madetowards equitablelearning opportunities for all learners?

Please indicate if the following frameworks are in place, provide a link and give a brief description of their aims and focus:

Framework	Yes/No	Description
For monitoring and evaluating the implementationof national-level inclusion in education policy		Monitoring of Education Sector performance needs improvement. "Currently, Albania does not have a process in place to provide comprehensive monitoring of the Education Sector performance. Also, there is no consultation process among key stakeholders in the Education System which would lead to credible performance appraisal, and foster **accountability** and shared responsibility for results" (Education Strategy Appraisal, p.40)
For quality assurance across all levels of the system (national, regional, school)	Yes	Quality Assurance in Albania is a shared responsibility of three different levels: 1) Central level represented by the State Education Inspectorate (SEI), Institute for Development of Education (IDE) and Centre for Educational Services (CES); 2) Regional/Local level represented by regional education directorates and local education offices (RED/LEO) and 3) Education institutions as direct service providers. IDE develops methodologies for quality assurance and evaluation of pre-university education institutions, as well as their curriculum (QShA, 2018), the SEI is responsible for inspection and external evaluation of schools, whereas CES maintains responsibility for national assessment as quality assurance tool. RED/LEOs provide direct support to schools within their area of responsibility, whereas schools themselves are responsible for ensuring the quality of provision for their pupils. The Pre-University Education Law provides for the establishment of an institution responsible for quality assurance in the Pre-University Education. The Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education (AQAPUE) was established in February 2019 as effective merger of State Education Inspectorate (SEI) and the Institute for Development of Education (IDE). AQAPUE is responsible for assessing performance of the

		education system, as well as for curriculum development and teacher professional development. (Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy 2014-2020 p.28) Regional Education Directorates have their school inspection departments, whereas school administrators have got the responsibility to supervise/monitor the teaching and learning process during specific lesson hours. School Performance Card is another instrument of school self-evaluation that is based on a set of indicators.
Providing guidanceon the use of a range of different data sources for evaluation and self-review at different levels (national, regional, school)		The policy review report emphasizes that the Government of Albania will need to pay significant attention to strengthening monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacities throughout the education sector. The implication is to identify key indicators and that responsibilities for data collection and analysis are clearly assigned and that the necessary capacities to collect, analyse, disseminate and utilize data are in place. (Education Policy Review, 2017). However, there are significant steps forward in terms of data collection and use. The project of Save the Children with the local NGO MEDPAK implemented in 2014-2017 in 28 school of Albania developed identification, assessment and support mechanisms for inclusive education. More specifically, a **database was set up to be used by educational institutions to identify and follow the educational progress of children with special educational needs**, even though there is no information available on the progress and extension of this mechanism all over Albania. A *web based Romalb system* (www.romalb.org) enables data collection and monitoring regarding registration and progress of Roma children in pre-university education and other related issues. This system has been reported to have enabled the opportunity for 200 public officials to collect data for the report prepared by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in Albania with the support of the "Roma Integration 2020" project implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council with the financial support of European Union and Open Society Foundations and the "Economic and Social Empowerment for Roma and Egyptians – a booster for social inclusion" (ESERE) project, funded by European Union

		and implemented by United Nations Development Programme. (June 13, 2019)

What data is collected on learners from vulnerable groups, how and why?

Even though data collection on learners from vulnerable groups remains an area that needs improvement, as stated above, there are many steps forward undertaken with the support of national and international organizations in the framework of important projects and initiatives, which need to be strengthened and extended at national level.

More specifically, the project of Save the Children with the local NGO MEDPAK implemented in 2014-2017 in 28 school of Albania developed identification, assessment and support mechanisms for inclusive education. A database was set up to be used by educational institutions to identify and follow the educational progress of children with special educational needs.

Furthermore, a *web-based Romalb system* (www.romalb.org) is another system that enables data collection and monitoring regarding registration and progress of Roma children in pre-university education and other related issues. (Please see table 3.1 for more information).

There are also data collected at local education, local governance and school level related to number of children with disabilities, children from Roma and Egyptian communities, children from families that receive social/economic assistance, and so on.

Please provide the available data relating to all learners in the compulsory education system and where they are enrolled for their education.

All questions can be answered using the country's own data sources as far as possible. Alternatively, the data can be provided from publicly available international sources e.g. UIS: http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=216 or UOE: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Main_Page

Please give a clear reference to the Source in the column provided.

In the Learners column, as far as possible:

- provide actual numbers as far as possible and not estimates.

- only use 0 when the data is zero.

- use M to indicate missing data.

- use NA to indicate the question is Not Applicable (i.e. the country does not have that type of provision).

All questions refer to ALL learners in the education system, not just those formally identified as belonging to a group that is vulnerable to exclusion.

Please provide notes to clarify any issues with the data and include a specific note on the calendar year and/or school year the data refers to.

Data on learner access to compulsory education	Learners	Notes	Source
(i) What is the *potential population* of learners for the compulsory education system in the country (i.e. how many children are in the country that should, by law, be in some form of compulsory education)?	Total: M Male: M Female: M	It was impossible to find these data, as the age groups provided in different resources did not correspond to the ones required.	
(ii) How many learners are enrolled in all forms of education (i.e. educational settings maintained by the ministry of education or by other authorities such as health, welfare or labour ministries)?	Total: 319,671 Male: Female: Year 2018-2019: Total children enrolled in basic education: 306530	2017 – 2018 Basic education:167104 Lower secondary: 139426	Primary (ISCED1) 170,861 Lower Secondary (ISCED 2) 148,810 (Source INSTAT, 2018 , extracted from Appraisal of the Strategy of Development of Pre-UNIVERSITY Education p.42) http://instat.gov.al/media/6562/sv-eng-2019.pdf Statistical Yearbook 2019, p.42

(iii) How many learners are out of any form of education (who by law shouldbe in some form of education)?	Total: 8714 out of which: 4085 children out of primary; 4629 out of lower secondary. Male: M Female: M	2018	http://data.uis.unesco.org/index.aspx?queryid=216
(iv) How many learners are enrolled in mainstream schools (i.e. all learners, not just those with recognised needs or from vulnerable groups)?	Total: Male: Female:		
(v) How many learners are enrolled in mainstream schools and spend the majority of their time (i.e. at least 80% or 4 days of the week) in inclusive groups/classes with their peers?	Total: Male: Female:	In the academic year 2016-2017, 3252 disabled children were enrolled in mainstream schools, 114 of them children with Down syndrome. Note: However, it's not clear how much time they spend in mainstream schools)	EURYDICE https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-and-school-education-funding_en During academic year 2018- 2019, 4683 children with disabilities attended pre-university education (489 pre-school education, 3664 basic education and 530 lower secondary education).

(vi) How many learners are enrolled in mainstream schools and spend the majority of their time (i.e. at least 80% or 4 days of the week) in separate, special groups/classes, away from their peers?	Total: M Male: M Female: M		
(vii) How many learners are enrolled in totally separate, special units and/or schools, away from their peers?	Total: 560 Male: M Female: M 4400	2016-2017 2019 - 2020	In the academic year 2016-2017, 560 pupils were enrolled in special education schools, including the Institution of Blind Pupils and the Institution of Deaf Pupils. EURYDICE https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/early-childhood-and-school-education-funding_en In addition, the number of students with disabilities registered in the education system during academic year 2019-2020, according to the Minister of Education, Sports and Youth report to the Parliamentary commission of Education is 4400 children.

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 of data collection and monitoring for inclusion in education.

The Commissioner of Council of Europe for Human Rights on her report of the visit to Albania (2018) emphasizes the importance of "collecting quality and reliable data on socio-economic status and desegregated data pertaining to vulnerable groups, including children and persons with disabilities". She also notes that in the context of the United Nations' Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (PoCSD) with the Government of Albania 2017-2021, the capacities of relevant ministries and the national statistics agency (INSTAT) to produce disaggregated data and to ensure the dissemination and use of such data, at national and local level, for evidence-based policy development and planning will be strengthened. (United Nations' Programme of Cooperation for Sustainable Development (PoCSD) with the Government of Albania 2017- 2021, p.6)

Report by Dunja Mijatovic, Commissioner of Council of Europe for Human Rights following her visit to Albania from 21 to 25 May 2018, September 2018

Appraisal report of the Education Strategy states that monitoring of Education Sector performance needs improvement. Currently, Albania does not have a process in place to provide comprehensive monitoring of the Education Sector performance. EMIS is still not fully operational, whereas national education performance indicators have not been clearly defined. (Appraisal of Pre-University Education Strategy, p.40)

https://www.unicef.org/albania/reports/appraisal-pre-university-education-strategy-2014-2020

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to data collection issues in the country?

The policy review report emphasizes that the Government of Albania will need to pay significant attention to strengthening monitoring and evaluation (M&E) capacities throughout the education sector, what needs identification of key indicators and assigning of clear responsibilities for data collection and analysis and building the needed capacities to collect, analyse, disseminate and utilize data. (Education Policy Review, 2017).

Even though data collection, analysis and utilization is still an area that needs attention and investment for improvement, there are a number of initiatives that have provided their own positive contribution.

The project of Save the Children with the local NGO MEDPAK "Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs" implemented in 2014-2017 in partnership with the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth , made possible development of an identification, assessment and support mechanism for inclusive education. More specifically, a **database was set up to be used by educational institutions to identify and follow the educational progress of children with special educational needs**.

In addition, a web-based system (**Romalb system** (www.romalb.org) has been developed to enable data collection and monitoring regarding registration and progress of Roma children in pre-university education and other related issues. This system has given the opportunity to 200 public officials to collect data for the report prepared by the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in Albania with the support of the "Roma Integration 2020" project implemented by the Regional Cooperation Council with the financial support of European Union and Open Society Foundations and the "Economic and Social Empowerment for Roma and Egyptians – a booster for social inclusion" (ESERE) project, funded by European Union and implemented by United Nations Development Programme. (June 13, 2019)

https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/operations/projects/poverty_reduction/economic-and-social-empowerment-for-roma-and-egyptians--a-booste.html

There is also improvement in data collection at local education, local governane and school level related to children with disabilities, children from Roma and Egyptian communities, children from families that receive social/economic assistance, and so on, which needs to be further developed, analysed and shared at different levels.

Section 4: Curricula, learning materials and assessment

To what extent are curricula, learning materials and different assessment processes and procedures adapted to the principles of inclusive education?

Curriculum

a. Does the curriculum content include and represent all learners?

☐ No ☐No information available ☐ Partially✓Yes

If yes or partially, please provide a description and available links, including to underpinning values and principles.

If no, please give further information:

The curricular framework emphasizes that the curricula should recognize, accept, respect and respond to the educational needs, experiences and interests as well as values of all the groups of students regardless of their background or peculiarities. This principle aims to build a curriculum that creates equal opportunities for the success of each and every child. (Korniza Kurrikulare e Arsimit Para-Universitar të Republikës së Shqipërisë 2014 / Curricular Framework of Pre-University Education of the Republic of Albania 2014.p.22)

https://ascap.edu.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Korniza-Kurrikulare.pdf

However, in order to assess whether the curriculum content includes and represents all learners, a deeper analysis is needed.

b. Does the process of curriculum development involve the participation and contribution of different stakeholders?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please provide information on stakeholder involvement.

If no, please give further information:

The curricular framework, which is the fundamental policy document for the curricular reform in the Republic of Albania, was designed through an involvement and cooperation of various stakeholders, including experts of the Institute of Development of Education, Ministry of Education, General Directorate of Pre-University Education, Agency of National Exams, State Inspectorate of Education, District Education Directorates and Education Offices.

This document states that Education is a joint responsibility of students, teachers, parents, education specialists and the whole society. Therefore, planning, designing and implementation of the curricula, and above all, achievement of learning results require responsible cooperation of all the interested parties and stakeholders. (Korniza kurrikulare/ Curricular Framework p.22)

The curricular framework emphasizes the autonomy and flexibility of curricular development at school level, which has to do with the opportunity to enrich the curricula in line with the nature and type of the school by enabling the opportunity and responsibility of the school for: adapting the curricula to the various needs of students by individualizing teaching, creation of opportunities for additional subjects relevant for certain groups of students;

creation of opportunities for including also subject modules or programs that are related to education of children with disabilities.

More specifically, especially the preparation of Individual Education Plans for students with disabilities, at school level, is a process that involves different stakeholders, such as: the assistant teacher, classroom and subject teacher, the school psychologist, the social worker and the parent. However, this is a process that is not yet fully developed and more mentoring and support is needed for further improvement.

c. Is there guidance/procedures for schools to ensure that the curriculum content takes account of all learners (e.g. using flexibility to address differences due to gender, culture, religions, the ethnicities/nations living in the country, their history and culture, differences related to disability and socio-economic background, LGBT community).

☐ No ✓No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description and examples of this flexibility.

If no, please give further information:

d. If individual education plans (IEPs) are used, please describe the procedure for developing (who is involved and how), what they focus on (specific curriculum areas; cross curricular competences; support strategies etc.) and how IEPs are implemented, used across the school?

Individual Education Plans (IEP) are used in accordance with Article 65, of the Law on Pre-University Education System in the Republic of Albania, which specifies that:

1. Children with disabilities shall learn in accordance with ordinary teaching plans and syllabuses, but adjusted for them, or in accordance with ordinary teaching plans and syllabuses specialised for them.

2. In the mainstream educational institutions, the Individual Education Plan for the disabled students shall be drafted by a commission, composed of teachers of various fields of learning of the institution and psychologists. The drafting of this syllabus shall be done in cooperation with parents and students. The amendment of the IEP within a local institution shall be determined by the commission within the institution in cooperation with the parents of the child. (Article 65 of Chapter XI, Law NR.69/2012 On Pre-University Education System in the republic of Albania, with amendments)

https://arsimi.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Pligj-parauniversitari-i-azhornuar.pdf

Moreover, instruction No. 26 dated 25/11/2019 of the Minister of Education, Sports and Youth for assistant teachers on chapter II, point c, specifies that: The assistant teacher in cooperation with the classroom teacher, subject teacher, psychologist, social worker of the school and with the parent designs and implements the individual education plan approved by the School Commission for children with disabilities; In cooperation with the classroom teacher/subject teacher, plans interventions to meet the highest priority needs of learning; Cooperates together with the classroom teacher and with the psycho-social service of the educational institution for the assessment of the child according to the level of achievement in the areas defined in IEP. (Instruction No. 26 dated 25/11/2019 of the Minister of Education, Sports and Youth on the assistant teachers for students with disabilities in public institutions of Pre-University

education) / Udhëzimi no.26, datë 25.11.2019 për mësuesit ndihmës për nxënësit me aftësi të kufizuara në institucionet publike të arsimit parauniversitar)

https://arsimi.gov.al/udhezim-nr-26-date-25-11-2019-per-mesuesin-ndihmes-per-nxenesit-me-aftesi-te-kufizuara-ne-institucionet-publike-te-arsimit-parauniversitar/

e. Are there different curricula or programmes for specific groups of learners at risk of exclusion (e.g. ethnic minorities or minority language groups)

☐ No ✓No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description of the main characteristics/organisation.

If no, please give further information:

While there is specific information for students with disabilities, there is no clear information available regarding various other groups of learners at risk of exclusion.

Learning materials

a. Is there autonomy for schools and teachers to select learning material/textbooks etc?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Yes, according to Article 47 of the Law on pre-university education, schools and teachers have got the autonomy to select learning materials and textbooks. The school textbooks are selected by teachers on school basis, after the certification by the Ministry. The selection procedures are defined by the minister's instructions. The number of alternatives for the selection of textbooks is limited to no more than three alternatives per each subject or learning field. The school textbooks are ensured by Albanian or foreign publishing houses based on textbooks standards, through an open, equal and transparent competition, in compliance with the minister's instructions. (Law on Pre-university Education system with amendments 56/2015)

However, there are still challenges related to this process. The Pre-University Education Strategy appraisal report explains that with the implementation of the new curriculum teachers can select maths and science textbooks from three publishers: Cambridge, Pearson, and Oxford. However, teachers they spoke with reported that examples in textbooks are often derived from contexts not suitable for Albania. Pupils confirmed the same concern of suitability. For example: a chemistry textbook provides a number of laboratory activities, which cannot be implemented in the Albanian context. On the other hand, it does not provide the necessary theoretical background because it is assumed that with the new curriculum it would have been derived from the laboratory activity. However, the Curriculum Guideline suggests that if the teachers note that the selected textbook lacks knowledge, concepts and topics defined in the syllabus or does not meet the learning outcome then they are advised to use other learning resources. P.19-20 (Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy, 2019).

https://www.unicef.org/albania/reports/appraisal-pre-university-education-strategy-2014-2020

If no, please give further information:

b. Are there policies to ensure the availability of textbooks/materials that promote the inclusion of learners from different vulnerable groups? (e.g. resources relevant to different ethnic groups etc.)

☐ No ☐ No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Yes, as explained in point 1.1 of Section 1 of the report, the Law No.96/2017 on Protection of National Minorites in the Republic of Albania (specifically Article 13 on "the right to education on the language of minorities", the Law on Pre-University Education (Article 10 on "Education for national minorities" and the joint instruction no.18, dated 20.08.2019 of the Minister of Education, Sports and Youth and Minister of Finance and Economy for Academic Year 2019-2020 are key policies that emphasize the right of minorities to quality education and education in their native language alongside Albanian language.

Law No.96/2017 https://www.kmd.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/1524738824-Ligji-Per-Mbrojtjen-e-Pakicave-Kombetare-ne-R.Sh-2017.pdf

c. Is there guidance/procedures to help schools to make learning materials accessible for all learners? (e.g. Braille/large print for learners with visual impairment, materials in other languages).

☐ No ✓ No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

d. Is ICT used to improve access to materials for vulnerable groups?

☐ No ☐ No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

The Appraisal of the Pre-University education strategy, emphasizes that Albania is trying to increase social inclusion and improve student achievement at all levels, among others, through expanding Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in education. Many teachers are trying to use ICT to improve the teaching and learning process and ensure an active involvement of all learners. However, it still remains a real challenge due to lack of resources at school level.

e. Are there specific financial and practical resources available for textbooks/materials/ICT for different vulnerable groups?

☐ No ☐ No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

Yes, even though there is no sufficient information about different vulnerable groups, it is important to emphasize considerable improvements in terms of policy and practice. For example, all children from minority groups at Pre-

University level receive free textbooks. Moreover, people's Ombudsman on the report of December 2014, focusing on education of different minorities, states that there are textbooks in the native language for Greek, Macedonian and Bosnian minorities ensured by the Ministry of Education and there are also textbooks and other useful materials provided by civil society organizations in the framework of different projects.

Raport i veçantë për gjendjen e të drejtave të minoritetit në Shqipëri / Special report on the situation of minority rights in Albania by the People's Ombudsman, December 2014)

Assessment

a. Is there a national/local assessment framework that includes all learners?
☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

There is currently a national exam for all fifth-grade learners and another national final exam for all 9th-grade learners at the end of basic/compulsory education.

Students taking compulsory education at home undergo the same exams as students in primary education and follow similar assessment forms. In order to complete nine years obligatory education they should complete the respective final exams [provimet e lirimit]. **EURYDICE:** https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/organisation-education-system-and-its-structure_en

b. Is there guidance for teachers on how to use curriculum-based assessment to identify all learning needs in the classroom?
☐ No ☐No information available ✓Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Different types of assessments based on the new curricula make it possible to identify students' needs and adopt teaching and programs accordingly.

The instructive material/guideline provided by the Agency for Quality Assurance in Pre-University Education to assist schools related to student assessment describes the types and steps of assessment of students that help teachers not only assess the student progress and achievement, but also adjust teaching materials and methods to their needs. According to this document, students' assessment is made through: 1) continuous assessment (learning assessment 40%), 2)Assessment through tests/summary task (assessment of achievement 40%), and 3)assessment of student's subject portfolio 20%). Each step of the evaluation/assessment and its specific aims have been presented in the document for teachers and school principals/directors and have also been illustrated with specific examples. It is exactly these forms of assessment especially the continuous assessment and assessment of the student's portfolio that provide the opportunity to monitor students' progress and identify specific needs for further support ("Students assessment in Lower Secondary and Upper secondary education", Tirana, 12.09.2019 - Agency for Quality Assurance

in Pre-University education (Instructive material to assist schools) https://www.ascap.edu.al/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Materiali-shpjegues-per-vleresimin-e-nxenesit-1.pdf

If no, please give further information:

c. Is there guidance/procedures on providing access to tests/examinations when learners need additional support/reasonable adjustments?(e.g. adapted materials, extra time etc.)

☐ No ☐No information available ✓Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

Even though there is no information available for all groups of learners, according to the Instruction no.2. dated 06.02.2019 of Minister of Education, Sports and Youth on "the assessment of achievements of elementary school students / Udhëzimi nr.2 datë 06.02.2019 për zhvillimin e vlerësimit të arritjeve të nxënësve të arsimit fillor 2019", point 5: Students with disabilities conduct the assessment of achievements in accordance with the syllabus/curriculum which they work with, their standard and peculiarities. Whereas, point 6 of the instruction states that the Institute of students who cannot see withdraw the test from the Center of Educational Services one day before the assessment and converts it into the Brail system writing.

https://arsimi.gov.al/udhezim-nr-2-date-06-02-2019-per-zhvillimin-e-vlersimit-te-arritjeve-te-nxe-nxenesve-te-arsimit-fillor-2019/

d. Are there specific arrangements and/or formal procedures to support the assessment of the specific needs of learners who need additional support in their learning? (e.g. those with disabilities)

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description, including clear information on the focus of needs identification procedures and who is involved in the procedures (learners, parents, professionals):

Yes, the Law on Pre-University Education, related normative provisions and minister's instructions outline arrangements and procedures for the assessment of the learners needs, especially students with disabilities, and the process of adjusting teaching to their needs. More specifically, the joint instruction of Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth and Ministry of Finance and Economy, in point c. emphasizes that the local education institutions responsible for pre-university education and the directorates of educational institutions should:

i. Monitor/follow with priority education of children with disabilities and create conditions for their integration in kindergartens and schools,

ii. Work with responsibility for children with disabilities to be assessed in the respective local education institutions responsible for pre-university education **by multi-disciplinary commissions,** and to be treated by teachers, assistant teacher and the school psychologist with an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in line with the committee recommendations, and so on. The instruction also emphasizes: c. Establishment and functioning of multi-disciplinary commissions for children with disabilities; d. Appointment of assistant teachers for children with disabilities in the

schools where they are enrolled, in line with the recommendations given by the multi-disciplinary commission of the local education units responsible for pre-university education; and e. Active involvement of their representatives in the child protection units established at municipality level.

http://arsimiparauniversitar.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/UDH%C3%8BZIM-I-P%C3%8BRBASHK%C3%8BT-NR.-18-DAT%C3%8B-20.08.2019-P%C3%8BR-VITIN-SHKOLLOR-2019-2.._.pdf

In addition, Instruction no.26, dated 25.11.2019 of the Minister of Education, Sports and Youth about assistant teachers for students with disabilities / limited abilities, among others, outlines the procedures and actors involved in the process of identification and assessment of the needs of a student with disabilities at local education offices and education institutions and adjustment of teaching and education plans to their needs.

The multi-disciplinary commission established at the Local Education Office, based on the documentation provided by parents or the related education institution, assesses the level of difficulty of the student and determines: the educational needs of the student; the need for an assistant teacher in the classroom; the need for an assistant teacher at home; the number of lesson hours that are necessary for each student with disability /limited abilities and writes it down in the evaluation file. After each evaluation process, once a year conducts re-evaluation of the need of the student for an assistant teacher.

The assistant teacher, in cooperation with the classroom teacher/subject teacher, the psychologist the school social worker and the student's parent designs and implements the Individual Education Plan approved by the school commission for students with disabilities and plans interventions in order to meet the students' priority needs.

http://arsimiparauniversitar.gov.al/udhezim-nr-26-date-25-11-2019-per-mesuesin-ndihmes-per-nxenesit-me-aftesi-te-kufizuara-ne-institucionet-publike-te-arsimit-parauniversitar/

If no, please give further information:

e. Is ICT used in the assessment of vulnerable groups?
☐ No ✓No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, studies, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 relating to issues around curricula, learning materials and assessment processes.

Education Policy Review: Issues and Recommendations - Extended Report, UNESCO Section of Education Policy, August 2017 is a comprehensive report focused on three main policy domains: (1) Curriculum development and reform; (2) Information and communication technology (ICT) in education; and (3) Teacher and school leadership policies. UNESCO Digital Library: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259245

Some of the main findings, issues and recommendations in the domain of **Curriculum development and reform** are as follows:

The curriculum reform currently underway in Albania aims to equip students with a broad set of competencies that include communication and higher order skills such as critical thinking, extracting and analyzing information from a variety of sources, and utilizing multiple strategies for learning, including problem-solving, analysis, and presentation.

The key competencies that underlie the new curriculum are aligned with the key competencies for lifelong learning that have been by throughout the European Union. The adoption of this approach in Albania's national curriculum framework is seen as a significant step in curriculum modernization. (Education Policy Review, UNESCO, p.12)

However, the report emphasizes that "there is some concern in the country that **the pedagogical shift required to engage students in a constructivist, collaborative learning approach and adopt a new competency-based assessment model is one for which teachers in Albania have not been adequately trained or prepared**. To address this gap, the report recommends improving school placements and the mentoring of new candidate teachers, and enhancing opportunities for collaborative peer-learning and other forms of continuous professional development (CPD) for teachers. (Education Policy Review UNESCO, 2017, p.12) It also recommends that "the authorities should ensure that all curricular materials, including new textbooks and online resources, are relevant and appropriate for Albania's students". UNESCO Digital Library: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259245

UNICEF Albania Annual report 2018 is another report that provides an analysis of the work done in Albania especially in the field of Education toward quality and inclusive education for all children. According to it, Albania's education system reforms have reached milestones in recent years in ensuring better coverage, quality and inclusiveness of learning. The year 2018 has seen continuous efforts for effective implementation of new curricula, standards and teaching methodologies, including from a gender equality and non-discrimination perspective, developed over the last couple of years. (UNICEF Annual Report 2018, p.23).

https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2216/file/UNICEF%20Annual%20Report%20Albania%202018.pdf

However, the UNESCO policy review report emphasizes that "in order to address the gaps in educational equity and equality, teacher training and professional development be expanded and an increased emphasis placed on inclusiveness while teaching (through differentiated instruction) as well as on effective pedagogy and classroom management in order to engage all students in the learning process." (UNESCO Policy Review p.12)

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to curricula, learning materials and assessment processes in the country?

"In modernising its education system Albania can be proud of embarking on a series of important and ambitious education reforms in the Pre-University Education, for example: creating a platform for social inclusion, **introducing a competency-based curriculum** and redesigning teacher education. The government has committed itself to improving levels of equity, equality, vulnerability and non-discriminatory access for children with disabilities and children from minority populations. (Appraisal 2019, p.8))

A Curricular Framework of Pre-university Education, developed in 2014, serves as a key document that guides education stakeholders and interested groups regarding the main aspects of curricula, as the basis for ensuring quality education for all and various instructions have been provided for curricula implementation and assessment.

However, in order to ensure a successful implementation of the new curricula, teachers need more training and better support. The Pre-University Education Strategy Appraisal report emphasizes that "the length and timing of training that teachers currently are offered in response to implementing a major reform is limited, especially with the range and complexity of the changes in education." (Appraisal 2019). Another challenge to the successful implementation of the new curriculum identified by the Appraisal report is related to the "lack of resources at the school level, especially ICT. Although ICT is recognized as being vital for progressive education in Albania, the use and utility of ICT is poor and the challenge noted is to make their use effective within the new curriculum paradigm" (Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy, 2019).

https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2031/file/Education%20Sector%20Appraisal%20Document%20Eng.pdf

The progress made with the selection and supply of textbooks has been considered as a strength in the curricular reform, however, more work needs to be done in order to ensure that "all curricular materials, including new textbooks and online resources, are relevant and appropriate for Albania's students" (UNESCO Policy review 2017, p.12).

In addition, it has also been recommended to develop and implement a student information management system and to broaden the set of indicators to include qualitative and outcome-based measures.

Note: A number of opportunities and challenges have also been mentioned in 4.4 above.

Section 5: Teachers and support personnel

How are staff in schools prepared to accommodate students of all abilities and backgrounds, in terms of their initial training, continuing professional development and their attitudes to inclusion?

Please list type of staff, their numbers and required level of education for the position in different type of educational institutions

Type of staff	Number	Required education	Comment
Mainstream schools			
Professional staff (psychologists, pedagogues, social pedagogues, speech and other types of therapists) School psycho-social staff	470 (Year 2019)	Based on Article 5 of the Law on the Order of Psychologists in the Republic of Albania, the psychologist should meet all the following requirements: a)Completion of the Psychological study at Bachelor and masters level in Psychology or equivalent, b) one year supervised professional internship / 1000 hours of supervised internship/practicum 40 of which are individual professional supervision, c)passing the state exam. The Minister of Education in the report to the Parliament Commission of Education states that there is a plan to increase the number of psychologists and social workers in schools to 560 during the academic year 2019-2020.	Law on the Order of Psychologists in the Republic of Albania / Ligji për urdhrin e Psikologut në Republikën e Shqipërisë
Teacher Assistants (specify role and add rows as required)	983 during academic year 2018 – 2019 (933 in public schools and 50 in private schools)	Assistant teachers should be licensed in "special education". When there are no teachers with "special education" profile, they should possess a second cycle diploma in the field of education in compliance with the requirements of article 57, point 2 of the law 69/2012 (amended) as well as should have attended trainings on education of students with disabilities (and have received a certificate, evidence or diploma that certifies this additional professional competency). Note: The number of assistant teachers has been extracted from the Guideline for monitoring children that are out of Education System and children that are at risk of drop out, July 2019) https://www.unicef.org/albania/reports/guideline	Instruction nr.26 dt.25.11.2019 on assistant teachers for students with disabilities in public institutions of pre-university education: related to the criteria and procedures of selection of assistant teachers.

Others (please specify and add rows as required)			
Special schools			
Teachers		**Note:** Even though there are still special education schools in Albania, it was impossible to find data/national statistics on their staff.	
Professional staff (psychologists, pedagogues, social pedagogues, speech and other types of therapists)			
Teacher Assistants (specify role and add rows as required)			
Others (please specify and add rows as required)			
Other institutions offering education if they exist (i.e. children's homes, young offenders institutions etc).			
Teachers			
Professional staff (psychologists, pedagogues, social pedagogues, speech and			

other types of therapists)				
Teacher Assistants (specify role and add rows as required)				
Others (please specify and add rows as required)				

Please indicate if education/training on inclusion in education is available for the following groups of professionals.

Type of staff	Yes	No	No inform-ation	If yes please state if pre- or in-service, mandatory or optional, who provides education/training and summary of content
Head teachers/ School directors	Yes			Based on a long cooperation of national and international organizations in the field of education and the commitment of the Ministry to a quality and inclusive education, various training manuals on inclusion in education have been developed and piloted at local and national level. Even though most of them are optional, as they are not part of the Initial Techer Training Programs or continuous professional development requirements, many of them are licensed and recognized by the Ministry of Education and related institutions. For example, "As a direct result of UNICEF project, **"Facing the challenges of inclusive education in Albania",** a module on inclusive education was prepared and introduced in the course for school headmasters that the MOES (Currently MRSY) provided to school headmasters in the country from August 2016 to March 2017.. (Making a change in Inclusive Education" UNICEF Albania, p.8) https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/421/file/Making%20a%20change%20in%20inclusive%20education%20in%20Albania.pdf The training provided by Save the Children and MEDPAK (mentioned above). Additional training has been provided by Children Are the Future to school leaders and other school stakeholders on inclusive education as a broader context, and

				designing and implementation of inclusive school based policies, such as: School Development Program and Annual Action Plan) through an active involvment of all stakeholders).
Teachers	Yes			*NB: For pre-service education, please cross reference your answer to question 5.4 as necessary* After the training and mentoring provided in the framework of the project "Facing the Challenges of Inclusive Education in Albania" by UNICEF, University of Tirana, Durrës Shkoder and Gjirokaster, as part of the project efforts, have approved and included *subjects with a focus on inclusive education in their Bachelor and Master level.* (Making a change in inclusive education, UNICEF, 2016, p.14) https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/421/file/Making%20a%20change%20in%20inclusive%20education%20in%20Albania.pdf **TOT of Teachers**: 80 Participants from Regional Educational Directory, school teachers, school principals, school psychologists and lecturers from the faculties from 4 cities (Tirana, Durres, Shkodra and Gjirokastra) were trained about inclusive education issues. "The training aimed to help participants to develop an 'inner map' to help guide them on the path towards inclusive education and to build teachers' capacities to work with diverse student populations, ensure participation and promote learning." After the training 98% of teachers understood the inclusive education approach as a concept that includes all groups of children". (Making a change in inclusive education in Albania -) UNICEF Albania, Tirana, July -December 2016 (Pg. 6-7) https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/421/file/Making%20a%20change%20in%20inclusive%20education%20in%20Albania.pdf The training provided by Save the Children and MEDPAK, as described above. Additional training has been provided to teachers by various organizations and institutions, such as Council of Europe, World Vision, Children Are the Future (CAF), and so on. More particularly, CAF has provided training as well as follow-up, mentoring and support on issues of building an inclusive classroom and school culture and inclusive practices, including introduction to and implementation of various child-centered interactive/ inclusive teaching methods that ensure an active and meaningful involvement of all children.
Teacher Assistants	Yes			Even though there are not yet nationally developed Initial teacher programs on assistant teachers, there are various training opportunities for assistant teachers provided by national and international organizations, such as: Save the Children, UNICEF, MEDPAK, World Vision Albania, and so on. Moreover, in the framework of

				the project "Inclusive Education for children with special educational needs in Albania, with the support of Bologna University, the Universities of Korça and Elbasan revised their curricula on education and have designed a master program for teachers with a minor profile in assistant teacher.
Profession al Staff	Y es			The same as above.
Inspectors	Y es			There are optional training courses provided by organizations.
Teacher Trainers	Y es			Note: Please see above regarding TOT training.
Others (please list add rows as required)				

a. If you answered no to any of the above, please provide further information:

Is education and training of teachers aligned with national policy goals on inclusive education?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Even though education and training of teachers is generally in line with the national policy goals on inclusive education, evaluation reports show that redesigning remains a priority in order to fully meet the set requirements due to several challenges faced in the framework of continuous educational reforms.

UNESCO policy review report (2017) states that pre-service training programmes in Albania "are not adequately supporting the country's education reform efforts" and that "Improving processes and institutions for initial teacher education (ITE) and teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) are key issues that Albania must address in order to ensure the success of education sector reforms.

Therefore, in order to address such challenges, various efforts are being made by Universities, as well as national and international organizations in cooperation with local and national education authorities, which are facilitated by important policy documents, such as Professional Standards of general and subject education of teachers in the lower and upper secondary schools, prepared by Institute of Education Development in September 2016 and the Profile of Inclusive Teachers prepared through cooperation of MESY, IDE, UNICEF and ISOP in the framework of UNICEF project on inclusive education.

If no, please give further information:

With respect to the main initial teacher education programmes, describe how inclusion in education is addressed in it (i.e. requirement for number of academic credits under European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System (ECTS), subjects and topics covered, focus etc).

Redesigning of Teacher Education in line with the curricular reform and national goals including Sustainable Development Goal 4 for qulity and inclusive education for all has become a national educational priority. Therefore, Universities that are responsible for providing initial teacher education, are working on adjusting their programs accordingly. More specifically, University of Tirana, Durrës, Shkodër and Gjirokastër have approved and included subjects with a focus on inclusive education in their Bachelor and Master level, as part of the efforts of UNICEF project "Making a Change in Inclusive Education in Albania".

https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/421/file/Making%20a%20change%20in%20inclusive%20education%20in%20Albania.pdf

In addition, in the framework of the project "Inclusive Education for children with special educational needs in Albania", with the support of Bologna University, the Universities of Korça and Elbasan have revised their curricula on education and have designed a Master program for teachers with a minor profile in assistant teacher. More specifically, the department of Teaching Methodology at Elbasan University "Aleksandër Xhuvani" offers a specific course/subject at the Master's program called "Special pedagogy for Inclusive education" with 7 academic credits.

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) on any recent reports, evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 relating to initial teacher education and/or professional development issues.

The Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy 2014-2020 report (2019) emphasizes that "teacher education programmes do not sufficiently cover important topics such as: student assessment, lesson planning, classroom management, and working with special needs children and those from diverse backgrounds.

In addition, according to the UNESCO Review (2017) and the Institute of Development of Education (IDE) study (2017) , practice teaching is the least effective part of the curriculum due to weaknesses in supervision and mentoring of trainees.

The IDE have acknowledged the need to harmonise pre-service programmes offered at the public and private institutions offering teacher development programs. The study conducted by them in 2017 concluded that there are difficulties with adaptation of study programmes to the requirements of the Law and the new competency-based curriculum with little to no similarity between programmes offered by universities across the country. There are currently 14 Universities that need to harmonize their programs. Therefore, the MoESY has established 16 working groups composed of representatives of higher education institutions offering teacher education in different areas, IDE experts and teachers. Groups have worked for one year and first drafts of new curricula are completed. **(Appraisal of Pre-University Education Strategy, 2019, p.14**)

https://www.unicef.org/albania/reports/appraisal-pre-university-education-strategy-2014-2020

In addition, in the UNESCO Education Policy Review report (August 2017, "Improving processes and institutions for initial teacher education (ITE) and teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) were found to be central

issues that Albania must address in order to ensure the success of education sector reforms. The emphasis on implementing a more student-centered, competency-based curriculum, expanding the use of ICT in schools, and increasing equity, have placed new expectations on teachers to create more inclusive classrooms where students develop transversal skills and prepare for their role in the knowledge society".(UNESCO policy Review p.14-15)

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to teachers and support personnel in the country?

One of the challenges identified by the evaluation report of Pre-University Education Strategy (2019) is related to the teacher preparation and development. As stated above, among others, "Teacher education programmes do not sufficiently cover important topics such as: student assessment, lesson planning, classroom management, and working with special needs children and those from diverse backgrounds", and in addition to it, student teacher internships in schools are seen as "the least effective part of the curriculum due to weaknesses in supervision and mentoring of trainees". Therefore, more investments in the improvement of teacher internship program is recommended together with an evaluation and the development of a system-wide performance appraisal system for teachers.

In addition, adaptation of the teacher study programs with the Law and the new competency-based curriculum is considered as a challenge due to the "little or no similarities between programs offered by universities all over the country. (Education Strategy Appraisal report, 2019)

UNESCO policy report states that pre-service training programmes in Albania "are not adequately supporting the country's education reform efforts" (Policy Education Review, UNESCO, 2017) and that "Improving processes and institutions for initial teacher education (ITE) and teachers' continuous professional development (CPD) are key issues that Albania must address in order to ensure the success of education sector reforms.

In this framework, Institute of Education Development has developed in 2016 professional standards for teachers at all ISCED levels, which may be used as guidance for development of the new pre-service programmes.

In addition, development (through cooperation of Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth, Institute for Development of Education, UNICEF and ISOP) of the *Profile of an Inclusive Teacher* is another step forward in the efforts toward a more inclusive education. This profile is an Education Policy document that contributes and serves as a basis of standards and competencies for the improvement of initial and continuous professional development of teachers toward becoming an inclusive professional.

EDUKIMI DHE FORMIMI I MËSUESVE PËR GJITHËPËRFSHIRJEN Profili i mësuesit gjithëpërfshirës

In addition, in the efforts toward increasing Education quality and also raising the status of the teaching profession, during the last two years, the Government has made efforts to attract highly qualified applicants in the teaching profession by offering scholarships and raising the bar for admission to pre-service programs. More specifically, the level for initial teacher training has been raised to the grade-point average from upper secondary education of 7.5 and above and it aims to increase it to 8. **(Appraisal of Pre-University Education Strategy, 2019,** p.35)

https://www.unicef.org/albania/reports/appraisal-pre-university-education-strategy-2014-2020

On the other hand, during the last years, many teacher training modules have been developed and licensed through a contribution of national and international organizations, as well as IDE. Such trainings, most of which have been developed in the framework of various projects, have been providing a tremendous support and contribution to the improvement of the ITE Programs of a number of Universities (as mentioned above) and especially valuable opportunities for continuous teacher professional development.

Moreover, assignment of assistant teachers in schools where there are students with disabilities, (since 2014) is a significant step forward toward inclusion of this vulnerable group of children and creation of equal opportunities for all children, even though, as a relatively new position, it still needs more efforts and investments to further consolidate it as a suport service

Section 6: Schools

How does the work of schools, school management and leadership impact on access, participation and provision of equitable opportunities for all learners?

Who is excluded from attending any form of school?

Please give reasons for this group being excluded from attending school and describe any form of alternative provision made for them?

While the Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy emphasizes significant improvements in the inclusiveness process as a national goal and the commissioner of the Council of Europe for Human Rights notes in her report that Albania has significantly increased access to all levels of education, it is also stressed that some children remain excluded from mainstream education due to a number of factors, in particular disability, extreme poverty and migration.

The commissioner stresses that the children who are most at risk of being out of school in Albania are children with disabilities, Roma and Egyptian children from families engaged in seasonal migration, returnees, children contributing to the family income and early married girls. (Report by Dunja Mijatovic, following her visit to Albania from 21 to 25 May 2018. September 2018 pg.11. https://rm.coe.int/report-on-the-visit-to-albania-from-21-to-25-may-2018-by-dunja-mijatov/16808d2e22

Are there issues around the over- and under-representation of different vulnerable groups in different school settings?

☐ No ☐No information available ☐ Yes

If yes, please give a description and provide any data/evidence that is available

If no, please give further information:

The Education Policy Review team emphasized that, even though the Government's efforts to integrate all children into schooling, a significant segment of the population is being left behind. The analysis results showed that "Roma children, children in rural and remote communities, and children with disabilities are not currently attaining the quality education to which they are entitled by law due primarily to structural barriers and discrimination". As a consequence, many schools in cities and suburbs appear to function at the edge or above their capacity and there is overcrowding in their classrooms, what jeopardizes the successful implementation of the new curriculm that requires time, space and more interactive and differentiated forms of instruction.

Therefore, the Education Policy Review report recommends that the Government increases investment in institutions, including strengthening the capacities of teachers and school leaders, and school infrastructure. Targeted investments are needed to reduce overcrowding in public schools in urban area and to increase educational access and quality for marginalized and disadvantaged populations including Roma and Balkan Egyptian children, children in remote rural areas, and children with disabilities.

UNESCO Digital Library: https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000259245

Please give details on the main admissions criteria for schools.

a. Highlight any issues with the national polices.

Article no. 61 of the Law on Pre-University Education states that students have the right to choose a public or private education institution, attend the public education institution that is in the areas defined by the related local self-governance unit.

b. Where schools set their own admissions criteria, please outline any impact on inclusion.

There is no documented information available regarding admissions criteria in public compulsory education institutions.

Please provide information on the different forms of support that are available to learners in schools.

a. Inclusive pedagogy, personalised learning and universal design approaches

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

The education law, normative provisions, curricular framework and other education policy documents emphasize the importance of inclusive pedagogical strategies and also provision of opportunities for personalized/individualized learning.....in order to increase student participation and achievement and realize their full potential. However, there is still a need for more teacher training on student-centered teaching methods, didactic materials and continuous mentoring and support.

If no, please give further information:

b. counselling and mentoring possibilities

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

One type of counselling and additional support offered in schools, as stated in Article 20 of the Law on Pre-University education "Psychological service at educational institutions", is offered through the psycho-social service. The local educational units shall provide psychological service to the students and employees of educational institutions concerning certain aspects of students progress.

c. input from specialist teachers/therapists

☐ No ✓No information available ☐Yes

If yes, please give a description.

When referring to students with disabilities,

If no, please give further information:

d. input from learning support assistants

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

Due to the increase of number of assistant teachers in mainstream schools, there is additional support to students with disabilities. Since 2014, educational institutions have been supported by assistant teachers, whose number at the beginning of academic year 2019-2020 was around 930 (besides 50 in private schools). The aim is to increase the number in order to decrease the ratio of students with disabilities and assistant teachers. According to the minister of Education, Sports and Youth, there were around 4400 students with special needs in 2019 in the education system, which is almost 1 assistant teacher for 4 to 5 students and the aim is to increase the number of assistant teachers in order to provide a better support. (Report of the minister to the Parliamentary commission of Education, October 2019)

e. availability of ICT/ assistive technology

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

ICT assistant technology has been an integral part of the Education Development strategy and a number of initiatives have been undertaken during the last years to improve it. However, the appraisal report emphasizes that "the use and utility of ICT is still poor". It stresses that "although ICT is recognized as being vital for progressive education in Albania, the challenge noted is to make their use effective within the new curriculum paradigm". In addition, according to the appraisal report, "achieving success with the curriculum has been limited because of the lack of resources at the school level, especially ICT". (Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy, 2019, p.5).

https://www.unicef.org/albania/reports/appraisal-pre-university-education-strategy-2014-2020

f. Please describe any other forms of support available.

Please give a description of the strategies in place for practically supporting mainstream school staff teams to increase their capacity to be inclusive and to improve access, participation and achievement for all learners.

Strategy	Description of the focus
Assignment of assistant teachers in the schools where there are students with disabilities	Assistant teachers assigned in all the schools where there are students with disabilities, provide support to these specific students, and also to the classroom and subject teachers, as well as school administration. The assistant teachers play an important

	role in the multi-disciplinary commission in order to design and implement Individual Education Plans and monitor progress.
Psycho-social support	Provision of psycho-social support to students and teachers is another type of support provided in schools that facilitates inclusion and helps creating a safer and more friendly environment.
Teacher professional network	Establishment of teachers professional networks based on their profile is another type of support provided to them, which is relatively new and needs to be strengthened for maximum benefits.

Please provide information regarding school buildings and infrastructure.

a. Are there schools that face infrastructure issues that are barriers to inclusion?

☐ No ☐ No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description and provide information on what barriers, how they are monitored and any data/evidence that is available.

Physical infrastructure in the country (especially in rural areas) does not meet the contemporary/modern standards or requirements. This is accompanied by inefficient support to the teaching process through didactic materials, (Applicative or demonstrative) laboratories, provision with adequate equipment to support the education process, and so on. (Extracted from the Strategy of Development of Pre-University Education 2014-20120, p.15)

As stated in the National Strategy for Development and Integration, "the generally poor state of physical infrastructure of school buildings impedes the provision of quality education at all levels. In the case of children with disabilities, the issue is not merely limited to guaranteeing physical access by schools themselves, but it also includes additional support, such as: financial and social support, transportation, etc. for children and their families (and related connections with the social inclusion programs)". (National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015 – 2020 - Strategjia Kombetare për Zhvillim dhe Integrim 2015-2020, May 2016, p.129).

In addition, student teachers in their internship in school during the project "Facing the Challenges of Inclusive Education in Albania 2016-2017, "identified as problematic from their observations at schools the need for infrastructure, appropriate education programs, flexible curriculum, teaching methodology, logistic means and physical infrastructure, including the decrease of the number of students per classrooms and the presence of self-supporting teachers or professionals". (Making a change in inclusive education in Albania, UNICEF Albania, Tirana, July -December 2016)

https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/421/file/Making%20a%20change%20in%20inclusive%20education%20in%20Albania.pdf

During these years, a number of school buildings have been constructed and many others have been renovated, however, there are still other school buildings that face various infrastructure issues that are real barriers to inclusion and need urgent intervention.

- If no, please give further information:

b. Are there strategies and/or initiatives to improve school buildings and infrastructure?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please describe the strategies, their aim and focus.

Strategy	Description of the focus
Budgetory Plan of Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth for 2020-2022	For the period 2020 -2022 Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth has planned to finance with priority projects on : construction, reconstruction, building extension for more than 200 school buildings and 1700 to 2000 classrooms / laboratories, which will benefit 35000 – 40000 students and 3000-350 teachers. Furnishing newly constructed and reconstructed schools with school equipment is another priority.

If no, please give further information:

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) from any recent reports, systematic evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015of the school system, potentially drawing on information from school inspections and / or school self-review work.

Various reports acknowledge government and local level efforts toward better quality and more inclusive education and more friendly and inclusive schools. However, the Education Policy Review report emphasizes that a segment of the population is still being left behind and "particularly Roma children, children in rural and remote communities, and children with disabilities are not currently attaining the quality education to which they are entitled by law, due primarily to structural barriers and discrimination". Hence, it stresses that the government should do more for these groups of children in order to achieve the national goals and the goal and targets of SDG4-Education.

The report also emphasizes the issue of overcrowding of classrooms in urban and suburban schools as a challenge that hinders the positive effects and benefits of the new competency-based curricula, which requires interactive, child-centered teaching and learning methods and more attention to each student's needs and interests.

To address these issues, the report recommends increase of investment by the government in institutions, including improving school infrastructure as well as strengthening the capacities of teachers and school leaders. More investments are needed to reduce overcrowding in public schools in urban areas and to increase educational access and quality for marginalized and disadvantaged populations, including Roma and Balkan Egyptian children, children in remote rural areas, and children with disabilities.

Appraisal of Pre-University Education Strategy 2014-2020 – conducted in 2019 is another important report that has provided important information on the strengths of the education system, weak areas and recommendations for improvement. (Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy 2014-2020 – final report, 2 July 2019)

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to schools in the country?

The Law on Pre-University Education, the National Pre-University Education Strategy and the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2015-2020 emphasize the need for and work toward ensuring inclusiveness and equitable access to education for all and the "government has committed itself to improving levels of equity, equality, vulnerability and non-discriminatory access for children with disabilities and children from minority populations" (Appraisal,2019,p.8).

However, various challenges are faced at national and school level. The Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy report conducted in 2019, along with many strengths related to the progress of the efforts toward a better quality education and more inclusive schools, stresses that "Implementing the new curriculum remains a serious problem especially in relation to teacher development and in the absence of classroom and support resources." More specifically, "teachers perceived the benefit of new curriculum positively but putting outcomes-based learning in practice and building continuous assessment remains difficult for many."

In addition, students "shared the opinion that school infrastructure does not support curriculum implementation, primarily due to shortage of resources for demonstration and practical work. (Appraisal, P.20) . While many school buildings have been reconstructed and provided with equipment, there are still many other school buildings in rural and urban areas that are in poor conditions and need partial or total renovation. In addition, various facilities are needed in order to ensure access and effective inclusion of students with disabilities and students from other marginalized groups.

Regarding the use of modern technology, both teachers and students see it as very beneficial and are highly interested in it. However, the appraisal stresses the "lack of proper ICT infrastructure in visited schools - lacking both Internet connections at the classroom level and sufficient numbers of functioning computers. Where computers existed, pupils and teachers could only access in computer labs." (Appraisal of the Pre-University Education Strategy, 2019. P.24)

Section 7: Communities, parents and students

How far does the wider school community support learners to access and benefit from education opportunities?

Have there been any campaigns to raise awareness of inclusion in education at national or local level?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Yes, a wide awareness-raising campaign was organized on inclusive education at local (school and community) and national (as well as regional) level in the framework of the Joint CoE/EU project called: **"Regional Support for Inclusive Education in South East Europe"**, which started in 2013 and ended in 2015. The 3-year project was implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Serbia, North Macedonia and Kosovo. It aimed to enhance social inclusion and cohesion in the region by promoting the concept of inclusive education as a reform principle promoting diversity, in line with the beneficiaries' commitments to Council of Europe standards and EU accession. While NEPC was selected at regional level, CAF was the Albanian national partner organization that supported seven schools in seven regions of Albania as well as national peer learning events.

Following this project, during 2016-2019 CAF went on its awareness-raising campaigns and also its direct support to six more schools and communities as well as local education authorities in Elbasan and Librazhd districts to develop and implement inclusive policies such as School Development Plans and Annual Plans and inclusive practices including various inclusive activities through an active involvement of all stakeholders.

"Facing the challenges of inclusive education in Albania", the 15-months-extensive commitment of UNICEF Albania and other stakeholders, resulted not only in a new and more comprehensive understanding of Inclusive education in Albania, but also in teachers provided with an 'inner map' to help guide them on the path towards inclusive education and in new policies related to inclusive education teaching in the country impacting the in-service and pre-service teacher training in Albania. (Making a change in inclusive education in Albania, UNICEF Albania, Tirana, 2016, Author) https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/421/file/Making%20a%20change%20in%20inclusive%20education%20in%20Albania.pdf p.2

Another comprehensive project that has provided its contribution to the increase of awareness and promotion of inclusive education with a particular focus on inclusion of students with disabilities, is the project "Inclusive Education for children with special educational needs in Albania", implemented during 2014-2017 by Save the Children in cooperation with the local NGO MEDPAK and Ministry of Education and Sports, with the financial support of Italian Agency of Development Cooperation. Aiming to improve policy and practice in Inclusive Education, 28 public educational institutions were supported to develop Inclusive Education practices, identification and support mechanisms for inclusive education were developed and a **database was set up to be used by educational institutions to identify and follow the educational progress of children with special educational needs**. In addition, 84 members of RED/EO multidisciplinary commissions were trained, **577 teachers and 132 assistant teachers were trained on inclusive didactics** and 401 Children with Disabilities were included into mainstream schools and were provided with

special support, an **IEP model and guidelines were developed for RED/EO and school commissions**. More than 70% of target institutions were reconstructed by the project and are fully accessible with ramps and refurbished interiors.

Moreover, through the support of Bologna University, the Universities of **Korça and Elbasan have revised their curricula on education and designed a master programme for teachers with a minor profile in assistant teacher.** The awareness-raising campaigns reached an audience of 7000 children and 4700 parents in six regions. (Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs in Albania, 2017, p8) https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/node/12473/pdf/best_practices_of_inclusive_education_in_albania.pdf

If no, please give further information:

Does legislation/policy support parental involvement in schools?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

The law on pre-university education system in the Republic of Albania nr 69/12 amended in 2015 and 2018 and related normative provisions and Minister's instructions emphasize the importance of parent and community involvement in the school progress, improvement and democratization process. More specifically, Article 62 of the Law addressing the "rights and duties of parents" states that parents are ***the main partner*** of the educational institution for the progress of the child and of the institution. Normative provisions of the Ministry of Education guide and support parent involvement including specific sections on Parent Councils, which are elected at classroom and school level and the school board. Minster's instruction nr. 25, dated 25.07.2018 on the establishment and functioning of the board of the educational institution, emphasizes the important role, duties, rights and responsibilities of this inner school structure that is composed of parents, students, teachers, community members, local government and local education representatives, where the chair person is a parent. Moreover, the Law on Pre-university education system supports involvement of parents in education at regional and national level through establishment of Regional and National Parent Councils, which are still weak structures and need awareness-raising, capacity building and further support.

If no, please give further information:

Does legislation/policy support collaboration between schools and stakeholders in their local communities (e.g. services/employers)?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

Yes, this is emphasized in the law on pre-university education, national strategy of development of education, normative provisions, Minister's instructions, curricular framework and other related documents.

One of the principles of the Pre-University Education Development Strategy (PUEDS) (2014-2020) is to transform the school in a Community Centre. EURYDICE   https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/national-policies/eurydice/content/ongoing-

reforms-and-policy-developments_en which requires community and other stakeholders' involvement, cooperation and support.

The initiative to create the school as a community centre started from 2014 and so far, there are 270 community schools. The aim is to involve communities in creating child friendly school environments, as well as to strengthen and extend the school network. The appraisal of the education strategy found out that one focus was on providing further academic support to children falling behind. Supplementary classes were organised for students who needed further help and supporting homework tasks at school was another measure to provide assistance to children with learning difficulties, although currently, it addresses all children. While initially, the project relied on volunteers and students, now it is being implemented with help of regular teachers who get extra payment or are given less teaching hours. (Appraisal of the pre-university education strategy 2014-2020, July 2019, p.23)

https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/2031/file/Education%20Sector%20Appraisal%20Document%20Eng.

If no, please give further information:

Does legislation/policy support the development of learning communities in local/regional areas e.g.support for schools to work together; involvement with universities, support services to provide research evidence and development of innovative practice?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please give a description.

If no, please give further information:

The development of learning communities is supported by legislation and policies, even though there is still a gap between policies and practices. Universities are encouraged to cooperate with schools at different levels. Cooperation agreements between Teacher Education Departments of Universities and specific educational institutions on the support to student teachers to develop their internships is one of the oldest traditions in our education system.

Does legislation/policy set out a role for NGOs, DPOs, or other organisations representing vulnerable groups?

☐ No ☐No information available ✓ Yes

If yes, please describe the role. Specify which non-governmental actors are particularly active in inclusion in education and how they operate.

If no, please give further information:

Yes, especially policies that are related to inclusion of vulnerable groups, such as: students from Roma and Egyptian communities and Students with disabilities. Roma and Egyptian NGOS and Associations related to groups of children with disabilities, have been involved in the designing and implementation of national policies, such as: National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptian communities, Action Plan for People with disabilities, and so on.

More specifically, the National Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020 **(Plani Kombëtar i Veprimit për Integrimin e Romëve dhe Egjiptianëve në Republikën e Shqipërisë (2016-**

2020, November 2015) was prepared on behalf of the Government of Albania by the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth and line ministries in close consultation with representatives of local authorities, international organizations, with the contribution of civil society representatives including Roma and Egyptian organizations, experts of the area, as well as with the active participation of the Roma and Egyptian experts. Expertise and technical assistance for preparation of the document has been provided by "Supporting Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptian Communities – SSIREC" Project, funded by the European Union and implemented by United Nations Development Program in partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth. December 2015   UNDP Albania https://www.al.undp.org/content/albania/en/home/library/poverty/national-action-plan-for-integration-of-roma-and-egyptians-in-th.html

Please provide information (main conclusions, reference and a link if available) from any recent reports, systematic evaluations and/or reviews, since 2015 of parental and wider community involvement in the work of schools.

During the literature review process, we realized that there is no information available about specific evaluations, studies or reviews on parent and community involvement during the last years in Albania that would provide a general overview of the level of involvement and cooperation of parents and community in the school life. However, the national report of Institute of Development of Education on the perceptions of teachers and parents on the quality of Pre-University Education reform had a specific component of the evaluation the parents involvement and cooperation. More specifically, 51% of parents totally agreed and 29.7% of parents agreed that "school has encouraged cooperation and involvement of parents in school". (Raport kombëtar Perceptimi i mësuesve dhe prindërve mbi cilësinë e reformës së arsimit parauniversitar në Republikën e Shqipërisë Institute of Development of Education, 2017)

https://ascap.edu.al/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Raporti-Kombetar.pdf

In addition, based on our long experience of working with schools and communities, we have realized that there is a higher level of awareness among parents and other school stakeholders on the importance of parent and community involvement to the improvement of school life as well as quality of education, hence students' achievement and success. Furthermore, due to a number of projects and interventions organized by local, national and international organizations, project beneficiary schools have improved methods of parent involvement, representative inner school structures have been strengthened and parent and community involvement has been increased. More specifically, due to CAF projects implemented with the support of Open Society Foundation for Albania on the enhancement of parent involvement in the school life, strengthening of Parent Councils and School-Family-Community Cooperation and Partnership in a number of schools (including development of a democratic and inclusive election process, designing and implementation of annual action plans and integration into the School Development Programs) have contributed to significant improvements in the school life. Yet, in order to reach lasting improvements and extend positive practices at national level, more support is needed by local and central education authorities, better cooperation among schools, and more comprehensive programs of parent involvement and School-Family-

Community Partnerships are needed in each school, as an integral part of the whole school development and democratization process.

Overall, what are the perceived main challenges (barriers and hinderances) and opportunities (support and ways forward) for inclusion in education in relation to communities, parents and students in the country?

Improved legislation and related education policies stress the importance of parent and community involvement and cooperation in the whole school life, what is considered as a significant step forward toward creation of more open, friendly and inclusive schools and a better quality and more inclusive education. Various initiatives have been implemented in a number of schools with the support of local, national and international organizations, which have had their positive impact on the enhancement of an inclusive school culture, policies and practices. However, the gap between policies and their effective implementation is still large and needs a more comprehensive intervention, as well as bigger support and cooperation of all stakeholders at national, district and local level.

More specifically, while the law on pre-university education system as well as normative provisions and minister's instructions stress the importance of establishment and functioning of inner school structures, such as: School Boards, Parent Councils, Students Government, and so on, along with significant improvements in certain schools and districts where specific projects and interventions have been implemented, at national level they are still weak structures. Research at national and international level and our long experience of working with schools and communities to strengthen parent involvement and school-family-community cooperation show that more awareness raising is needed at local and national level, sustainable support to the development of an open, democratic and inclusive election process of representative structures, as well as capacity building, continuous mentoring and support.

While many school leaders and teachers recognize the need for and importance of parent and community involvement and cooperation to the improvement and democratization of the school life, they need to be better prepared to welcome parents and community and maximize their involvement and cooperation through comprehensive School-Family-Community Partnership programs, as an integral component of the School Development Programs and Annual Plans.