

<b>EVALUATION OF CHILD TRAFFICKING IN ALBANIA</b>			<b>Political Science</b>
		<b>Keywords:</b> Albania, Child Trafficking, Exploitation, Reports, Public Policies.	
<b>Eglantina Farruku</b>	<b>Department of Political Science and International Relations Faculty of Law and Social Sciences. Epoka University, Tirana, Albania.</b>		
<b>Salih Özcan</b>	<b>Department of Political Science and International Relations Faculty of Law and Social Sciences. Epoka University, Tirana, Albania.</b>		
<b>Abstract</b>			
<p>Since the early 1990s child trafficking has become a highly sensitive issue of national concern in Albania. The political transition and changes occurred to the Albanian market economy influenced extensively child trafficking issue and made children a major target for trafficking. Trafficking represents serious threat to the wellbeing of children as their rights and dignity are violated. This research will highlight and analyze some major points of child trafficking and their possible causes and consequences. The paper aims to emphasize the severity of child trafficking in Albania. Various national and particularly international reports have stated that Albania has been recognized for years as a country of both source and transit, as well as a destination country for trafficking. This study is based on combining qualitative and quantitative research through data and statistics published by the state institutions and NGOs, media coverage, books and annual reports. The research finds out that there are few officially registered cases of child trafficking. However, the numbers remain so insignificant and unclear, because most of the cases are not identified and registered. In fact, it is quite difficult to calculate the precise number of children trafficked as they have been reported differently by the state institutions and NGOs. Furthermore, a survey of child protection related issues has been distributed to 452 respondents, representatives from central government, local government, NGOs, judiciary, academia and the media. Significant results have been gathered and analyzed. The study concludes that there is a need to reinforce the existing legal framework and the responsible public institutions should be developed, in cooperation with other relevant organizations, appropriate policies and programs need to be implemented efficiently.</p>			

## Introduction

**T**rafficking is considered as a form of organized crime. Victoria e Kalu claims that trafficking is “the third biggest illegal business after drugs and arms trade” (Kalu, 2009, p.28). European Parliament claims that “more than 20 million people living today around the world have been trafficked for sexual exploitation, forced labor and other activities across the world, generating a profit of €117 billion a year” (European Parliament, 2016). Furthermore, as cited by Chawla, UNICEF admits that among human trafficking “1.2 million children alone are being trafficked every year” (Chawla, 2017). Dottridge has pointed one of the possible reasons of child trafficking as “child trafficking” is being “the cheapest and most malleable work force available” (Dottridge, 2004, p. 18). International Labour Organisation (ILO) also emphasized the severity of this sensitive phenomenon stating that “the trafficking of human beings is unacceptable; child trafficking is intolerable” (INSTAT, 2003, p.4). Moreover, the Convention “Worst Forms of Child Labour 1999, No.182 in article 3 classifies “child trafficking” as a worst form of child labor and further requires from the states to take the respective measures to eliminate it.

This research will specifically focus on child trafficking in the case of Albania. Albania has an estimated population of 2,862,427 (INSTAT, 2019) with approximately 631,160 children (Rogers & Sammon, 2019, p.33).

Since the early 1990s the Republic of Albania has passed through a difficult transition to democracy after a long-standing communism regime, facing many political, economic and social challenges. Political isolation and poverty increased the number of migrants abroad and contributed to unemployment, alcoholism, domestic violence, sexual abuse, prostitution, HIV/AIDS and particularly to human trafficking. Various reports such as the U.S. Department, United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime, ECPAT International argue that a large number of children are vulnerable to trafficking. United Kingdom Home Office stated that “due to its vicinity to Western Europe and its proximity to North Eastern bordering countries, Albania has been used as a main trafficking route and hub for traffickers” (UK Home Office, 2016, p.11). However, there are very few officially registered cases of child trafficking revealed in various national reports and most of the figures do not coincide with the real situation of the phenomenon. Despite the efforts that have been made by the government to build a protective system for children, there is total a failure regarding the implementation to identify cases of children being trafficked.

Concerning the structure of the paper, first the research examines the key concepts related to child trafficking; mainly what trafficking means and further a comparison of associated issues is analysed in detail. Further, secondary data collected and then analyzed show that Albania is recognized as a source country for international, internal, transit and a destination country of child trafficking. Following this, a survey has been conducted that a questionnaire distributed to 452 respondents as representatives of central government, local government, NGOs, judiciary, academia and the media. This survey covered child related issues; therefore, it was not conducted to ordinary public but to those actors who have involvement or interest on child issues in terms of policy making and implementation.

## **Trafficking Related Terms and Definitions**

The Palermo Protocol and other legal international documents in which Albania is a signatory provide definitions on trafficking and other related terms. It is also important to make clear distinctions between trafficking and related issues to avoid abuses of the terms and concepts.

### **Defining Child**

In 1989 the General Assembly adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child to protect children under 18 years old. This Convention defines a child as “every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (United Nations, 2002). Albanian Law No.10347, dated 4 November 2010 “Concerning the Protection of the Rights of the Child” in Article 3 states that “child refers to every individual born alive, up until 18 years of age”. However, several articles of the Albanian Criminal Code refer and mention a child confusingly in different way as follow:

- Article 51 states that for minors, who at the time they committed the criminal act was under eighteen years old...;
- Article 100 of the Criminal Code it is stated that having sexual or homosexual relations by violence with children that are fourteen to eighteen years old...;
- Article 107/a expresses that when this action is committed with accomplices, against several persons, more than once or against children fourteen to eighteen years old...;
- Article 124 states that the abandoning of the child under 14 years of age...;
- Article 129 says that inducement or attraction of *minors* (emphasis added) under 14 years of age (EURALIU, 2016, pp. 34,51-52, 54,63,66).

Furthermore, The Albanian Civil Code (1994) in the Article 7 states that “the minor, who has come to 14 years of age...”. Also, the Labour Code (2018) in Article 98 states that “the employment of the juveniles under the age of 16 is prohibited”.

Hence, the age of the child is left to personal interpretation of the legislator that ‘child’ is a person from 0-14 years of age, whereas a person from 14-18 years of age is considered a ‘minor’. However, defining the age of the child is very important. There are different countries that permit children less than 18 years to gain a job or obtaining a driving license. Moreover, the importance of the age is also related to the criminal responsibility of the individual which differs from one country to another.

### **Defining Child Trafficking**

The standard and legal definition of trafficking was approved in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, the United Nations Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children in 2000, Palermo city. Albania ratified the convention in 2002 and adopted the ‘trafficking’ definition and made it part of the domestic legislation, specifically in the Criminal Code. The Palermo Protocol in Article 3, paragraph (a) and (b) defines Trafficking in Persons as:

- a. The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;
- b. The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

- c. Recruitment, transportation, transfer, harboring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered ‘trafficking in persons’ even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;
- d. Child “shall mean any person under eighteen years of age” (United Nations, 2000, p. 3).

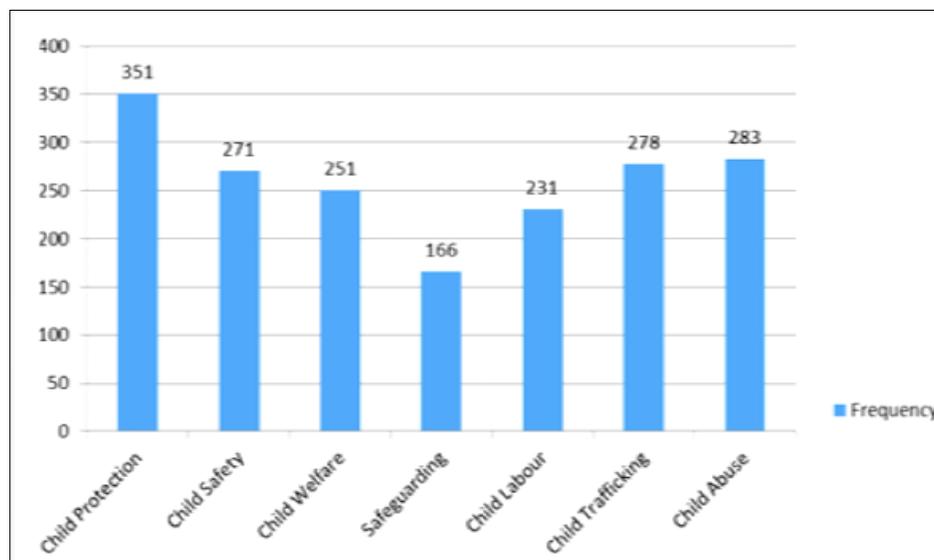
The article 3(c, d) makes clear that child trafficking is the trafficking of individuals below the age of 18. Furthermore, it is not important to prove that the defendants are using the tools of intimidation, fraud, coercion, as is required by the relevant provision, it is sufficient to prove that the trafficker, without using deception or other forms has committed illegal actions of ‘recruitment’, ‘transport’, ‘transfer’ of a child for the purpose of exploitation. UNICEF states that “any child under the age of 18 who is recruited or moved from one place to another to be exploited is considered to have been trafficked, even if no deception or coercion is used” (UNICEF, 2009, p. 16).

Exploitation is the other essential part of child trafficking. Trafficking is always made up of both movement and (the intention of) exploitation. If there is only movement and no (intent) exploitation, then this is not trafficking. If there is exploitation but no movement, then this is not trafficking either. Child trafficking happens when a child is moved from one place to another within a country or across a border into a situation, in which they are exploited. Further UNICEF explains that “movement of children with intention to exploit is central to this notion of exploitation, even where the action is thwarted and the exploitation unfulfilled” (UNICEF, 2009, p. 9).

The relation between ‘trafficking’ and ‘exploitation’ is clear but, in practice is quite difficult to distinguish if children are trafficked or exploited. Such as there are cases when children who leave home on their own and decide to go abroad without the influence of the trafficker; children who have been exploited but not trafficked; children who earn money being under the trafficking networks but they do not give money to the trafficker or to other person that control them. However, exploitation can take many forms, depending on the sex of the child, their age, the nature of the labor market into which they have been trafficked, and the level of their skills, as well as their vulnerability.

This research aims to go further the existing literature explaining what child trafficking means. An important objective of the study is to present the perception of the professionals in Albania regarding the familiarity of the child related issues. In this context, a survey about child related issues was distributed to 452 people of different target groups such as central government, local government, NGOs, judiciary, academia and the media. The following sections will present results and figures focusing on the child trafficking in the case of Albania.

Figure 1: Which of the following child related concepts you are familiar with?



As shown in the figure 1, among the alternatives of child related concepts, it results that 77 percent of the respondents (351 out of 452) recognize ‘child protection’ as the most familiar concept. After that, ‘child abuse’ was pointed out to be the second concept they are familiar with by 63% (283 out of 452) and ‘child trafficking’ was ranked as the third one by 62% (278 out of 452). Further, as it was not unexpected, ‘safeguarding’ has been considered by the respondents as the least familiar concept by 37% (166 out of 452) due to the fact that this concept has not been widely used in the literature regarding the Albanian studies.

In order to understand and evaluate specifically child trafficking concept, following crosstabulations has been produced with several independent variables such as age, gender and workplace.

In the survey there were 452 respondents in total. The demographic characteristics of these respondents are as follows (frequency):

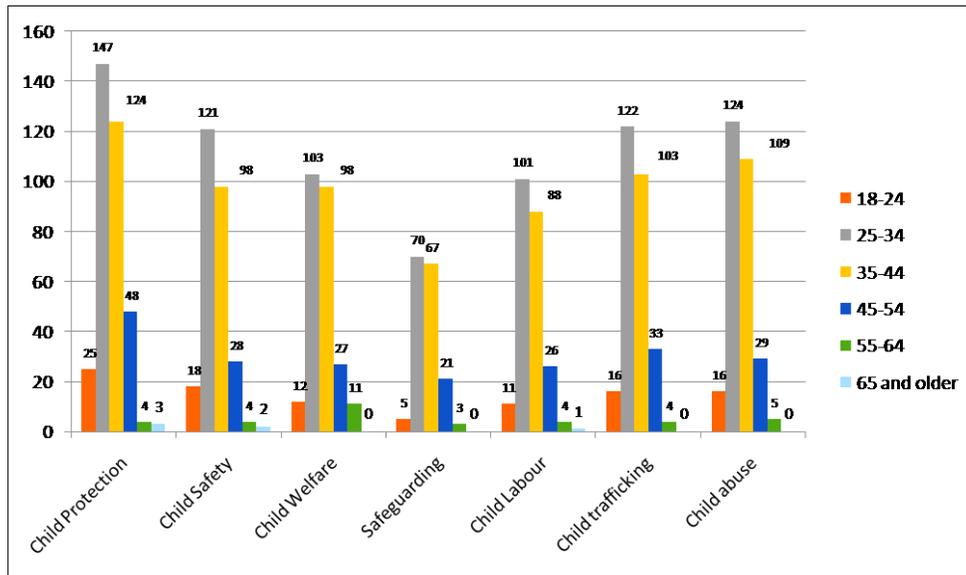
*Gender:* Female (299) and Male (153)

*Age Groups:* 18-24 (32); 25-34 (184); 35-44(161); 45-54 (56); 55-64 (16); 65 and older (3);

*Workplace:* Central Government (81); Local Government (80); NGOs (51); Judiciary (59); Academia (110); Media (71).

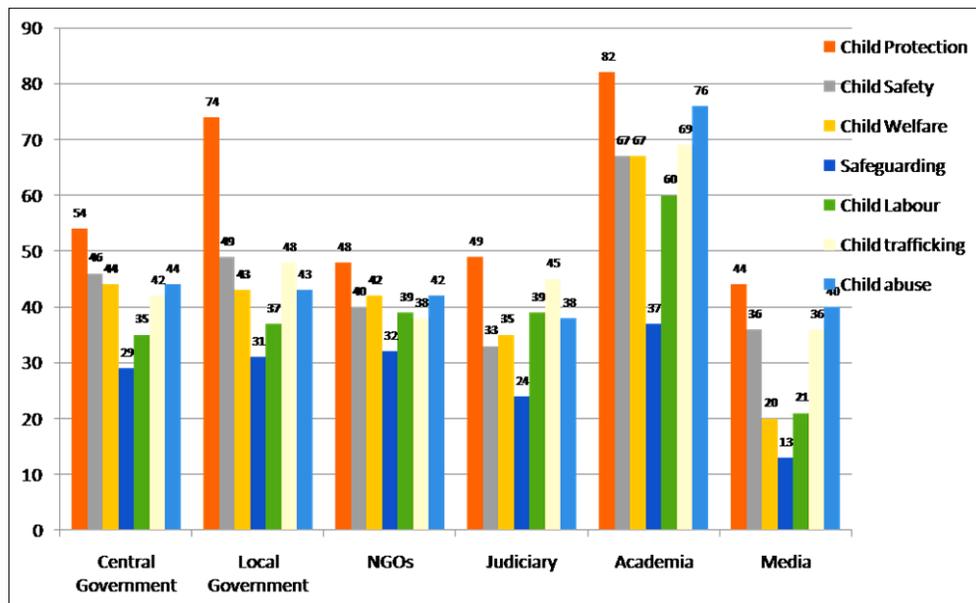
Since the survey was an elite interview, gender balance was not the main concern of this study. There were 299 female respondents of which 188 (63%) are familiar with the concept. On the other hand, male familiarity rate with the same concept was 59% (90 out of 153 male respondents). As a result, females are being found more aware of the concept of child trafficking.

Figure 2: Which of the following child related concepts you are familiar with? (Age Distribution)



The results of the above figure show that the age groups of 25-34 and 35-44 were the two biggest groups most familiar with child related concepts. Specifically, referring to the age group of 25-34, 147 out of 452 respondents selected child protection as the most familiar concept, and 124 out of 452 respondents considered child abuse as the second familiar concept. Referring to child trafficking it was ranked as the third familiar concept by 122 out of 452 respondents of the same 25-34 age group.

Figure 3: Which of the following child related concepts you are familiar with? (Workplace Distribution)

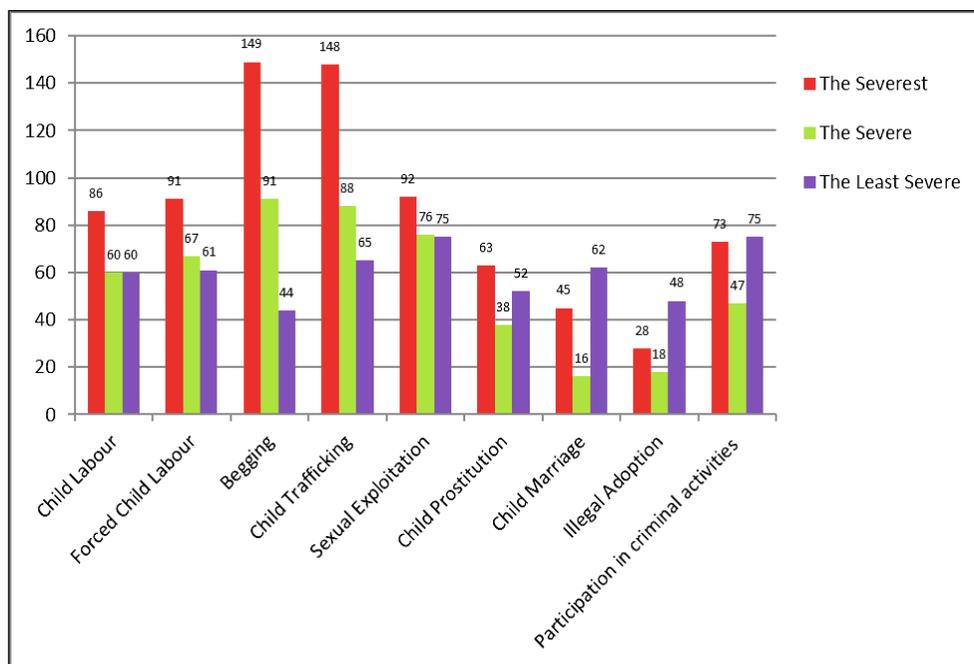


Based on gender and age distribution ranking of the most familiar concepts are the same. However, when it comes to workplace distribution the results are mixed and interesting.

Child protection is still number one in the ranking of familiarity, but the other options are various based on each group. Particularly child trafficking is the second most familiar concept in the judiciary (...), but surprisingly in the NGOs it is ranked as the sixth option just before the least familiar concept, safeguarding. Similarly, in central government it is ranked as the fifth one.

Furthermore, in order to see the perceived severity of the child related problems in Albania 9 alternatives and ‘other’ option are given. The respondents (N=452) were asked to choose three of the nine proposed alternatives and rank them as the severest (1), the severe (2) and the least severe (3). Obviously, majority of the alternatives were not selected. Since each option chosen individually by the respondents, the valid selected number for each option is ranging from 94 (illegal adoption) up to 301 (child trafficking). For the simplicity of the figure ‘other’ option is not included as it was not selected. In the following graph the severest option is being illustrated:

Figure 4: Evaluation of the forms of the child exploitation as the severest



In line with the results of the Figure 4, it is obvious that child trafficking and begging are both considered almost equally as the severest problem in Albania, specifically 149 out of 452 consider begging as the severest problem and 148 out of 452 consider child trafficking as the severest problem in Albania. Meanwhile, illegal adoption was the lowest selection for being the severest problem by 28 out of 452 respondents.

## **Differences between Trafficking and Smuggling**

Smuggling and trafficking in persons are recognized as forms of illegal migration. The U.S. Department of Justice defines the term ‘smuggling’ as “the facilitation, transportation, attempted transportation or illegal entry of a person(s) across an international border, in violation of one or more countries laws, either clandestinely or through deception, such as the use of fraudulent documents” (U.S. Department of Justice, 2019). These concepts differ and have similarities among each other. Referring to the similarities the cross of the borders is done by both through illegal ways by cooperating with corrupted national and international people and both include recruiting and transportation which is planned and organized by criminals. The difference in this case consist that smuggling refers to cross the borders of the case country while the trafficking activity can be done inside and outside the national territory. From other point of view the migrant requires by the smuggler the service with his/her will while the trafficker force the individuals to act as the latter wants. In addition, the smuggling does not violate the human rights while trafficking does. As Kalu has stated “smuggling is perceived as a migration issue, human trafficking is regarded as a human rights issue (Kalu, 2009, p. 29).

Further, Julia O’Connell Davidson has stated that “smuggling is a crime against the state, whereas trafficking is a crime against a person” (Davidson, 2015, p. 6). Moreover, the main purpose of the trafficker is to exploit the victim whereas the smuggler does not exploit people. Other difference consists in the continuity of their relations. The relationship between the trafficker and the victim is characterized by continuity while the relationship between immigrant and the smuggler is voluntary arranged and it is temporary.

However, despite the similarities and differences among these terms “key components that will always distinguish trafficking from smuggling are the elements of fraud, force, or coercion” (Louise, 2014, p. 112).

## **Child as a Victim of Trafficking vs Child as an Illegal Migrant**

Referring to the article 297 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania it states that “illegally crossing the state borders constitutes a criminal contravention and is punishable by a fine or up to two years of imprisonment” (EURALIU, 2016, p.132). This article does not provide any solution to sort out the case when the child has been trafficked by crossing the borders illegally. Furthermore, the criminal approach considers the trafficked children caught in criminal offences as illegal migrants. Based on this perception, children may be arrested rather than providing to them a safe environment. Considering the age of the children they could not be able to understand that crossing the borders illegally is classified as a criminal offence. On the other hand, in most of the cases when children try to escape from the trafficker, they feel frightened to declare the case at the police authorities.

Danaj (2011) further explains in detail the reasons why this happens:

- Unwillingness to declare one's position as a victim because of fear for one's life and a lack of trust of the police authorities, who are considered as "capturers" and not "saviors";
- Unwillingness to declare one's position as a victim because the traffickers in many cases are their own parents or relatives of some sort;
- Failure to understand one's position as a victim, thus ignoring their state as trafficked children;
- Failure to accept one's position as a victim of some sort of exploitation or trafficking (Danaj, 2011, p. 10).

However, what is important to emphasize is that children under the age of 18 are classified as minors and cannot be prosecuted and considered as illegal migrants. Since children fulfill the requirements of the article (c, d) of the Palermo Protocol they should be treated as victims of trafficking. Moreover, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in article 37 strongly emphasizes that children under the age of 18 years cannot be subject of punishment "to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment" (United Nations, 1989, p.10). Additionally, article 40 of the CRC Convention requires from states not to prosecute children who have violated the law with judicial proceedings but providing them other social care alternatives. United Nations also through resolution 1997/30, "The administration of juvenile justice" aims to establish a large number of educational measures and alternatives to liberty deprivation. The Recommendation 87 (20) of the Council of Europe "On the social reaction to juvenile delinquency" points out that measures taken against children should have educational character and freedom restriction measures should be avoided. Referring to the Albanian legislation Article 33 of The Criminal Code of the Republic of Albania sets the principle of detention restriction in separate institution from adults. While Article 52 of the same Code states that the court may exclude children from punishment in case when the criminal offense is less dangerous, regarding the behavior of the minor and replace the minor to an educational institution. Children are continuously in the development process and in addition they should enjoy a special treatment. The other problem consist that children are also unaware how to exercise their legal rights and they are incapable to ask for help; they feel vulnerable and hopeless.

### **Albania as a Source Country**

Albania is highlighted in various international reports with regard to child trafficking cases. The U.S. Department of State *Trafficking in Persons Report 2018* has stated that "Albania is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor (U.S. Department of State, 2018, p.69). On the other hand, the National Strategy on Combating Trafficking in Persons confirms also that "Albania is a source, transit, and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor" (U.S. Department of State, 2018, p.68).

Moreover, Carrie Auer, UNICEF’s representative in Albania declared that “since 2004 Albania is the country with the highest reported number of child victims of trafficking in the region, including for the purposes of forced labour, begging and delinquency” (Hahn, 2004). The United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime Report (2006) identifies Albania along with 7 other countries (such as Thailand, China, Germany) as the greatest sources of trafficked persons in the world” (ECPAT International, 2012, p.13).

### **Albania as a Source Country for Internal Trafficking**

The Regional Clearing Point Report (2005) notes that in Albania, “1750 victims were identified between the years 2000 and 2004, and over 20 per cent of those were minors” (Hahn, 2004). Surtees in the report entitled “*Second Annual Report on Victims of Trafficking in South-Eastern Europe*” mention Albania by stating that:

Albanian victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation were minors in 21.1 per cent of cases in 2003 and 23.6 per cent in 2004. A striking 100 per cent of victims of trafficking for labour, begging and delinquency were minors in 2003 and 93.2 per cent in 2004 (Surtees, 2005, p.52).

Daniel Renton through the research conducted in Puke district in the north, identified 80% of children trafficked; the same percentage was identified also from Berat” (Renton, 2001, p.1).

Important data come also from U.S. Department of State Reports entitled “Trafficking in Persons”. These reports mention Albania involved in trafficking roots and provide cases of child trafficking through different years. “The Trafficking in Persons” Report (2010) provides data for the year 2009 by stating that:

Approximately half of the victims referred for care within the country in 2009 were Albanian; these were primarily women and girls subjected to conditions of forced prostitution in hotels and private residences in Tirana, Durres, and Vlora. Children were primarily exploited for begging and other forms of forced labor (U.S, Department of State, 2010, p. 58).

Other following years reports further state that:

- In 2013 of the 95 trafficking victims identified 43 were children” (U.S. Department of State, 2014, p.71).
- In 2014 of the 125 trafficking victims 62 were children” (U.S. Department of State, 2015, p.66).
- In 2015 of the 109 trafficking victims 48 were children” (U.S. Department of State, 2016).

Furthermore the U.S. Department of State Report 2017 provided other important data stating that the government and NGOs identified:

- 95 trafficking victims and potential trafficking victims, compared to 109 in 2015. Of these, 55 were adults and 44 were children (61 adults and 48 children in 2015), 11 were

male and 84 were female (22 male victims and 87 female victims in 2015), and eight were foreigners (four foreign victims in 2015).

- Sixty-two were identified as potential victims and 33 officially identified as victims, a status provided after a joint interview held by representatives from both law enforcement and state social services. (U.S. Department of State, 2017, p.59)

Albania was known and reported as a source country by the reports of U.S. Department of State between 2001 and 2018 for each and every year. On the other hand, as cited by the Report of the UK Home Office, GRETA (Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings Report) has claimed that internal trafficking “is reportedly on the increase, because of migration from rural areas to towns and seasonal migration to places of tourism (trafficking of children for the purpose of sexual exploitation and/or exploitation of begging)” (UK Home Office, 2016, p. 9). Moreover, “The National Strategy on The Fight Against Trafficking of Human Beings and The Trafficking of Children” (2014-2017) underlines that “the internal trafficking of minors and adults has increased the overall numbers of trafficking in Albania evidenced by the number of identifications by the newly established pro-active mobile units in 2013” (IOM and UN Women, 2016, p.9).

However, the scale of internal trafficked children is difficult to be calculated properly. Below will be presented data gathered, albeit limited, from state institutions.

#### *National Registered Case*

Available data can be found from *The Sector against Illicit Trafficking* at the State Police. Further, there is available data of the Prosecutor of Serious Crimes, First Instance Court for Serious Crimes, Appellate Court for Serious Crimes, and Supreme Court. This shows an indication of the level or reporting of trafficking within Albania.

Table 1: Criminal offences of trafficking in minors during the years 2005-2015<sup>1</sup>  
(Ministry of Interior, 2005-2015)

Period	Recorded	Perpetrators	Arrested	Free Status	Wanted	Detained
January-December 2005	9	12	1	-	1	1
January-December 2006	4	7	2	-	0	0
January-December 2007	7	7	4	-	0	2
01.09.2008-30.04.2009	1	2	-	2	-	-
January-December 2010	1	3	3	0	0	0
January-December 2011	6	10	2	7	1	0
January-December 2012	3	3	-	2	-	1
January-December 2013	10	12	-	7	3	2
January-December 2014	-	-	-	-	-	-
January-December 2015	17	23	5	11	3	11

<sup>1</sup> The data have been checked again in January 2020 and there is no report published on child related issues after 2015.

Table 2: Data on child trafficking published by the State Police<sup>2</sup>  
(Ministry of Interior, 2005-2015).

Period	Recorded Cases	Referred to Prosecution	Damaged Parties	Perpetrators	Arrested	Detained	Remanded On Bail	Wanted
January-December2005	9	7	7	12	1	1	8	1
January-December2006	4	3	4	7	2	0	5	0
January-December 2007	7	6	3	7	4	2	1	0
September 2008-April 2009	1	-	-	2	-	-	2	-
January-December2010	1	-	-	3	3	-	-	-
January-December2011	6	-	-	10	2	-	7	1
January-December 2012	3	3	-	-	-	1	2	-
January-December 2013	10	-	-	12	3	1	5	3
January-December 2014	4			3		-		
January-December 2015	17			23	5	4		

Table 3: Data on recorded cases of child trafficking provided by the Prosecutor of Serious Crimes and Albanian courts of different level (based on the reports of the Ministry of Interior<sup>3</sup>  
(Ministry of Interior, 2005-2015).

Period	Recorded Cases			
	Prosecutor of Serious Crimes	First Instance Court for Serious Crimes	Appellate Court for Serious Crimes	Supreme Court
January-December 2008	8	5	-	-
September 2008-April 2009	2	Unknown number	-	-
January-December 2010	6	3	1	-
January-December 2011	7	8	-	6
January-December 2012	-	-	-	8
January-December 2013	Unknown number	-	-	5
January-December 2014	4	-	3	-
January-December 2015	14	Unknown number	Unknown number	4

<sup>2</sup> The data have been checked again in January 2020 and there is no report published on child related issues after 2015.

<sup>3</sup> The data have been checked again in January 2020 and there is no report published on child related issues after 2015.

Table 4: Data on child trafficking provided by the Ministry of Justice included in the reports of the Ministry of Interior (Ministry of Interior, 2005-2015)

Years	Total Cases	Concluded Cases	Non-Concluded Cases	Declared Guilty	Declared Not Guilty	Suspended Cases	Returned Cases to complete investigations	Declared as cases of incompetence
2005	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	-
2006	3	2	1	2	-	-	-	-
2007	7	2	5	2	-	-	-	-
2008	5	7	2	7	-	-	-	-
For the first 3 months of 2009	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-
January-June 2010	2	1	1	1	-	-	-	-

Table 5: Annual Statistics taken by the reports of the Ministry of Justice (Ministry of Justice, 2004-2018).

Year	Recorded Cases	Offence	Sentenced
2004	5	5	14
2005	6	6	3
2006	3	3	6
2007	2	-	
2008	7	-	4
2009	1	-	4
2010	1	-	1
2011	4		6
2012	0	-	-
2013	1	-	1
2014	-	-	-
2015	4	-	5
2016	-	-	2
2017	-	-	1
2018	-	-	2

It is obvious there are few officially registered cases of child trafficking, and the numbers vary in different sources. Hence, the reliability of data is questionable. It is quite difficult to admit that those numbers represent the whole country. The small numbers declared by the authorities of state do not mean the decrease of the phenomenon, but of their failure to identify the child trafficking cases. Moreover, most of child trafficking cases are not reported. This may be related to:

- The fear of the victims to confess the case.
- There is a lack of the information of sources to deal properly with the human trafficker.
- The mentality of Albanian families to keep the case in secret because not to be judged by the public opinion.
- The police are involved directly or indirectly in trafficking network.

On the other side to identify cases of child trafficking, NGOs can provide only few data. The problem is that not all children who need help benefit from the services provided by the NGOs. The national and international NGOs have a limited fund and limited activity regarding child trafficking. However, state institutions do not consider internal trafficking as a separate issue that needs more special attention. Nonprofit organizations, even though have limited funding, are the ones who pay more attention and provide some information through researches conducted about the trends and the patterns of this phenomenon. While, there is a lack of interest from the authorities to handle this phenomenon properly.

### **Albania as a Source Country for International Trafficking**

There are hundreds of Albanian families whose children have lost without leaving any trace, most of the girls under the age of 18 can be found in the boulevards and streets of neighboring countries as part of the trafficking chains. The traffickers choose illegal ways to transport their victims by using the green land and false documents to cross the borders of the country. Danaj has stated “most destination countries such as Greece, Macedonia and Kosova are among those the highest number of cases of trafficked Albanian minors, as they share land borders (the so-called green line) with Albania” (Danaj, 2011, p. 17). Particularly Italy, as bordered by sea and positioned close to Albania, has a very high level of Albanian trafficked children. Other trafficked children are found in Greece. To reach the destination children are trafficked into Greece by foots across the mountains, in the back side of a lorry or passing the border legally by using false documents. Furthermore, Gronow states that “if children are caught and arrested in Greece and they are 12 years old or over they are kept in jail, and when there are enough children to warrant using a lorry or bus they are deported back to the Albania border” (Gronow, 2000, p.32). Meanwhile “children below 12 years of age are placed in an orphanage” (Gronow, 2000, p.32). Furthermore, UNICEF Report (July 2015) admits that “for child trafficking in particular, Albania is primarily a country of origin for children trafficked abroad to Greece, Macedonia, and Kosovo” (UK Home Office, 2016, p. 20).

The report further lists the forms of exploitation stating that child trafficking victims face:

- Sexual exploitation.
- Forced labour, including forced begging.
- Forced marriage.
- Being forced to commit illicit activities.

Trafficked and exploited children in Albania are mostly subject to forced labour, including begging, and sex trafficking (UK Home Office, 2016, p.20).

Referring to ILO researches it was stated that “the Ministry of Public Order reports that, between 1992 and 2002, an estimated 4,000 children were trafficked mainly to neighbouring countries for labour or sexual exploitation, for begging or into slavery” (INSTAT, 2003, p.4). Furthermore, ECPAT International states that “each year approximately 6,000 children aged

between 12 and 16 are trafficked into Italy and 37 percent of female minors trafficked into Italy are Albanian” (ECPAT International, 2012, p.13). Cases of child trafficking have been also found recently in UK. Javed Khan Barnardos, Chief Executive of Barnardo's, the UK's oldest and largest children's charity, highlights the severity of the problem by stating that “Albanian children comprise a quarter of all trafficked children (Doward, 2015). He further states that:

The current estimate of the number of trafficked children in the UK is just the tip of the iceberg. Within the past year there has been an increase in the number of trafficked children from Albania whom we support across our services. We believe they have been trafficked internally after arriving here. We know they have experienced trauma (Doward, 2015).

The Serious Organized Crime Agency in the report named “A Strategic Assessment on the Nature and Scale of Human Trafficking” referring Albanian trafficking to the UK, stated that:

There was an increase of 69 (182 percent) in potential victims of trafficking from Albania compared to those encountered during 2011 from 38 to 107. Of the 107 potential victims encountered in 2012, 82 (77 percent) reported having been sexually exploited, 85 (79 percent) 22 (21 percent) children. Of those reporting sexual exploitation, the majority (72, 88 percent) were adults, with 10 (12 percent) being children (SOCA, 2013, p.7).

Furthermore, UK Home Office through its periodic reports provides data on child trafficking cases. As cited by UK Home Office Report 2014, The Council of Europe, GRETA (Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings) Report concerning the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by Albania, dated 02 December 2011, stated that:

- The Albanian authorities have identified 108 victims of trafficking in 2008 (19 children),
- 94 in 2009 (22 children), and 97 (14 children) in 2010 mainly for the purpose of sexual exploitation.
- The main destinations have been Italy, Greece and Kosovo. Only one victim of labour exploitation was identified in 2010 (UK Home Office, 2014, p.9).

Furthermore, the UK Report 2016 presents data published by GRETA in June 2016 stating that according to statistics provided by the Office of the National Anti-trafficking Coordinator (ONAC), the number of potential victims and victims of Trafficking of Human Beings (THB) identified per year was as follows:

- 97 in 2010, including 14 children;
- 84 in 2011, including 39 children;
- 92 in 2012, including 26 children;
- 95 in 2013, including 43 children;
- 125 in 2014, including 62 children; and
- 109 in 2015, including 48 children. The vast majority of the victims were Albanian (UK Home Office, 2016, p.17).

## Albania as a Transit Country

The Protection Project, in its report “A Human Rights Report on Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children”, declared that “Albania has increasingly become a transit country for men, women, and children, recruited into the trafficking chain” (Protection Project, 2010, p.1). Traffickers consider Albania as a strategic place for the trafficking of human beings abroad. Albania has ports and borders which are favorable for the traffickers and easy passage for them to access. Through the research conducted by International Organization for Migration in Albania (IOM) (2001), 54% of victims named Italy as the most favored intended destination country” (IOM, 2001, p.6). Also, the Home Office Report (2015), stated that “in 2007, Greece was reported as the main destination for trafficked victims transited, from or through, Albania (UK Home Office, 2015, p.10).

To transport the victims towards Italy, traffickers prefer the port of Vlora, as a transit area because this port is only 70 miles away from the coast of Southern Italy. However, the Albanian police through the Eagle Operation undertaken in 2001-2002 impeded illegal migration from Albania and the transit of migrants through the country. The speedboats from the ports of Durres and Vlora across the Adriatic Sea to Italy are blocked since the Albanian government approved the moratorium against the use of speed boats. However, as cited by Kane, local organizations report “that the most commonly used routes are now mountain routes through Pogradec and Oher to Macedonia, through Korça and Kapshtice or through Gjirokastrë and Kakavije to Greece and via Shkodra to Montenegro” (Kane, 2005, p.8). IOM (2004) further stated that foreign victims are trafficked from Albania to neighboring countries by using these following different routes:

- From Albania to the Province of Kosovo (Serbia and Montenegro): across the 174 kilometer “green border”, where there are few patrols;
- From Albania to FYROM: legal transit using real (Albanian) documents and legal checkpoints or illegal transit across the green border;
- From Albania to Greece: mainly illegal transit using the green border (for exploitation of victims for begging) or legally using regular check points;
- From Albania to Montenegro: using both the green border and regular check points (IOM, 2004, p.32).

The limited official registered cases make it difficult to evaluate the scale to which Albania serves as transit country. However, International Organization for Migration provides some data in this regard as below:

- In 2002, 24% of the caseload involved victims deported to Albania from Italy, France, Sweden and Greece;
- In 2003, 47% of the caseload were international victims deported to Albania from Italy, Greece and Austria. Among the 15 assisted international victims, it was found that:
  - ✓ Two Kosovar victims were 14-year-old boys possibly en route to Greece;

- ✓ One Greek minor was deported from Greece by mistake because she was travelling with an Albanian boyfriend (IOM, 2004, p.19).

The U.S. Department of State report of 2016 declares an increasing number of Middle Eastern and African irregular migrants, particularly Syrians, transit Albania to reach Western Europe and are vulnerable to trafficking. However, police have not yet identified any as trafficking victim. In the assessment of the research, the reports of the U.S. Department of State also show through years the scale of Albania as a transit country between 2001 and 2018.

According to these reports Albania while in 2001, 2002, 2003 was considered a major country of transit from 2004 to 2016 is no longer considered a country of transit. U.S. Department of State Report (2005) stated that “regional and international experts consider Albania to have significantly decreased as a transit country to Western Europe” (U.S. Department of State, 2005, p. 52). Moreover, the reports of the Ministry of Interior stated that between 2005-2007 “Albania has been no longer considered as a transit or destination country, but only as an origin country for the trafficking of human beings” (Ministry of Interior, 2005-2007, p.5). IOM further explains the decrease of Albania as a transit country.

- In 2002 the Albanian force in cooperation with the Italian force launched the operation to eliminate the uses of speedboats towards Italy;
- Traffickers have changed the roots by avoiding entering transit in Albania;
- Changes in transport, by using fake documents that permit the traffickers to have easy access to pass the borders legally and make it difficult to identify cases of trafficking;
- Since 2002, citizens of Romania (in the past, a primary source country) and Bulgaria do not now need a visa to enter the Schengen area. As a result, citizens of these countries no longer need to pass through Albania illegally to enter the EU (IOM, 2004, p.20).

However, IOM and other non-profit organizations cannot acknowledge that the phenomenon has been disappeared. They are concerned that the performance of monitoring agencies is very low and for that reason the international victims go unidentified. The other problem consists to the police officers. They are well trained through international actors who operate with international trafficking but among other important issues they never give priority to the internal trafficking. However, the efforts to improve the technical methods how to identify cases of international victims are always in progress. Since 2001 IOM, UNHCR, OSCE and the Ministry of Public Order signed a “Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), on unified pre-screening procedure of detained foreigners” (OSCE, 2001). Based on the procedure, the police must inform IOM and UNHCR anytime they identify an irregular foreigner. Then, IOM and UNHCR Directorate for Refugees (DfR) of the Ministry of Interior interview the person within 24 hours to contest if the person is “an irregular migrants, asylum seekers, victims of trafficking or economic migrants and to channel them into the appropriate procedures” (UNHCR, 2003, p.1).

## Albania as a Destination Country

Albania is a source and destination country for men, women, and children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labor. Albanian women and child victims are primarily subjected to sex trafficking within Albania and in Greece, Italy, Macedonia, Kosovo, Belgium, Netherlands, Germany, Switzerland, Ireland, and the United Kingdom. Criminal groups fraudulently recruit women with offers of employment in waitressing, bartending, dancing, or singing in neighboring countries, specifically in Kosovo, Greece, and Macedonia, and subject them to sex trafficking. Victims from the Philippines and Albania were subjected to forced labor in Albania. There is an increasing problem of Albanian children, often of the Roma ethnicity, being subjected to forced begging and other forms of compelled labor in Greece, Kosovo, and within Albania. Some Albanian girls are subjected to sex trafficking or forced labor following arranged marriages.

United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime in its Report ranked Albania among other countries (Bulgaria, Romania, Lithuania) very high in the citation index as origin countries for trafficking (UNODC, 2006). IOM has stated that “in 2002, Vatra reported assisting 13 international victims, a decrease of almost 40% compared to 2001 (IOM, 2004, p.18). “In 2003, the NGO reported assisting only three international victims (of which one was Greek and another Italian)” (IOM, 2004, p. 18). Also referring to the Annual Reports of U.S. Department of State from 2001 to 2013 Albania has no longer being considered a destination country because there is no registered case in this regard. The U.S. Department of State in its report in 2014 declared that were found victims from the Philippines subjected to forced labor in Albania and in 2015 the report declares that some foreign women from European countries, including Ukraine, Russia, the United Kingdom, and Norway, are subjected to sex trafficking in Albania. No cases of children have been mentioned in these reports. Similarly, for 2016 Albania was reported as a destination country by the U.S. Department of State report. Positive for Albania the following two years of 2017 and 2018 were not considered as a destination country. In short, according to these reports between 2001 and 2018 Albania was stated as a destination country for three consecutive years only from 2014 to 2016 and all other years it was not considered as a destination country.

## Conclusion

Child trafficking is a serious crime with negative consequences to children. Trafficked children are prevented to have a normal childhood as their rights and dignity are violated. They lose their opportunities to contribute as a citizen of their country, and instead, they become “slaves” of the evil traffickers. Considering the fact that this phenomenon has a delicate nature, it always needs a particular attention. To combat trafficking in Albania, key actors such as government, national and international NGOs, and civil society should constitute the appropriate strategies to reduce the cases of trafficking and should create the mechanism to protect them well.

Also, there is no sign of trafficking to be decreased, but it is becoming more hidden. Since the traffickers change continuously their sophisticated methods of operations, trafficking has become less visible.

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