**Albania’s Institutions response to OHCH’s annual thematic study on the rights of persons with disabilities on participation in sport, pursuant to Human Rights Council resolution 43/L.34.**

In Law 79/2017 "On Sports", respectively in point 10 of article 16 "Sports Federations", it is provided that persons with disabilities can be organized in sports associations in different sports and membership the respective sportive federations, which by law have the exclusivity of treating all issues regarding to that sport. By this provision is created the necessary legal space for self-organization of this target group in sports organizations and activities.

Referring to the category of persons with intellectual disabilities, the efforts for their organization in sport activities have been effective starting from 2017, with the establishment of the Organization "Olympic Special Albania".

**"Olympic Special Albania" mission**

In 2017, the Special Olympic Organization was established in Albania, as an organization whose mission is to provide year-round sports training and athletic competition in a variety of Olympic sports for children and adults with intellectual disabilities, providing ongoing opportunities to develop physical and intellectual skills, to enjoy from sport experience, and participate in sharing gifts, skills, and friendships among each-other, with their family and community members. This organization is a member of the Albanian National Olympic Committee and the International Special Olympic Committee, replacing the Albanian Special Olympic Committee, which was expelled from the International Special Olympic Committee after being inactive for a very long time.

**On field activity**

Currently, there are two Sport Clubs for people with different abilities that operate in Tirana and Elbasan. Until December 2019, more than 50 athletes have been engaged in these clubs, who have participated in friendly football and basketball games during the European Football and Basketball Weeks. In addition to such disciplines, athletes also do fitness training according to the FIT5® guide, in order to improve motor skills.

**Capacity**

Athletes from Special Schools, athletes cared for by other NGO centers and athletes registered with SOA, participate in sports activities organized by Special Olympics Albania. Depending on the scope and the extension of the activity, SOA engages 20-80 athletes and partners of different ages and both genders.

**Programs and trainings for young people**

Currently, young volunteers are the most powerful generator for SOA. As part of the Youth Innovation Grants, the young volunteers of Special Olympics have organized campaigns, trainings, seminars, workshops, training and practical sessions in the field, meetings with teachers and representatives of various universities and special schools, actively involving parents and individuals with disabilities. The young volunteer’s projects at SOA have been awarded with international awards and have got attention for their innovation and implementation. The total number of volunteers and youth leaders who are actually engaged with SOA is 20 individuals, mostly students from high schools and universities in Tirana and Elbasan city.

**Main activities**

* **“3-point for inclusion” project**

The project "3 points for inclusion" was initiated by the Albanian "Special Olympic" Organization, through which was intended to provide sports opportunities for 40 young people of school age in Tirana city, with and without intellectual disabilities to participate for the first time in the Special Olympics Unified Sports activities related to basketball. This activity was realized as a cooperation between the "Special Olympic" Organization, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth and the American Embassy in Albania. The aim of the project was to provide opportunities for young people with intellectual disabilities to participate in activities entitled "Unified Sports", which come for the first time in our country, as new comprehensive sports practices. "Unified Sports", consists in the creation of joint teams with individuals with and without disabilities, as a very good opportunity for inclusion and increasing social sensitivity regarding people with disabilities. The project was implemented in 8 high and secondary schools in the city of Tirana. The duration of the project was 4 months and consisted of the creation of unified teams in the sport of Basketball, with the aim of educating young people with a sense of solidarity and inclusion for people with intellectual disabilities. This project involved school teachers, school students and about 80 children and young people with intellectual disabilities.

* **“Plan to include”,** is an ongoing awareness arising and training campaign for young people.
* **Participation in Abu Dhabi Special Olympics World Games**

On March 8-22, 2019 in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates hosted the "World Special Olympics 2019". A representative team of Albania also participated in these games, whose training took place 3 months before the games. The “participating” project was divided into two parts. The first part was the development of training sessions from December 1, 2018 to February 28, 2019. The second part was the team's participation in the world games from March 8 to March 22, 2019.

**Participating/representative team**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| *Name and surname* | *Role* | *Description of tasks* |
| Lulzim Koçi | Athlete / competitor | Competitor in 100 and 200 m track and field |
| Gersi Troka | swimmer / competitor | Competitor in 100 and 200 m free style |
| Gëzim Corja | Trainer | Periodic training lasting at least 12 weeks before the athlete competition. |
| Gentjan Lama | Trainer | Periodic training lasting at least 12 weeks before the competition for the Swimmer |
| Roland Hysi | Official leader of the delegation | Ensuring the well-being and support of the delegation. |
| Brunilda Hyka (Komti) | Official leader assistant | Provide and coordinate training preparation and support for the delegation |

* **European Football Week and European Basketball Week**

"European Football Week 2019" and "European Basketball Week 2019" are annual events which are supported by "Special Olympics International" and "Special Olympics Europe and Eurasia". The events organized dedicated to this weeks were attended by representative teams of several special schools in the country which were laded by a group of volunteer trainers of the “Special Olympics Albania".

* **“Getting Healthy Together” project**

It is a project that guides thought ongoing promotion, of the creation of healthy lifestyles through physical activity and nutrition.

**Ongoing Planned Activities**

Ongoing training for coaches (TOT) by experts for Unified Sports Special Olympics Europe and Euro Asia (SOEE) for teachers (coaches) from special and regular schools, as well as for sports coaches from the University of Sports of Tirana.

Organization of activities in at least 6 high schools and community centers, which include a presentation of the concept of Unified Sport and its impact on inclusion, as well as very useful experience for young people and coaches.

Establishment of four Unified Basketball teams (2 women and 2 men teams) and establishing a regular training schedule for them.

Organizing competitive activities (tournaments) in unified basketball and football teams within the European Basketball and Football Week of the Special Olympics.

**Referring to the inclusion of persons with physical disabilities (different categories)**, in sports activities in different disciplines, their organization is supported by the Federation of the respective sports discipline based on point 10, article 16, of Law 79/2017 " For Sport", “Disabled people can be organized into sport associations and join federations, which are exclusive of dealing with all issues of a sport”. The main difficulties related to the accessibility of people with disabilities in sports activities, are mainly related to sports infrastructure, which includes outdoor (stadiums, sports fields, etc.) and indoor sports facilities (sports halls, gyms and sports centers), etc.). These facilities are under the administration of the local government, for which we have a detailed database nationwide, but we do not have detailed information on the conditions they meet to be accessible to people with disabilities, (like the ramp existence, the adaptation of the hygienic-sanitary facilities, etc.). Excluding the newly built sports infrastructure (Games Palace at "Olympic Park" and the National Stadium "Air Albania"), in the construction of which are included elements for their accessibility by persons with disabilities, the old sports infrastructure, inherited, does not provide for total of persons with physical disabilities accessibility.