**Albania’s institutions response on the issue of child, early and forced marriage following the call for submission by OHCHR.**

1. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania, through drafting policies for the rights and the protection of children, has focused its work towards creating a more effective system for the protection of children, which guarantees the rights and ensures their protection from all forms of violence. This system also aims to strengthen the responsiveness of all the structures and mechanisms for their protection.

Law No. 18/2017 "On the Rights and Protection of the Child", clearly states the approach of an effective child protection system, which is oriented towards the protection of children, ensuring and implementing the principles of cross-sectoral cooperation and strengthening the responsiveness of the system for the prevention and protection of children from all forms of violence.

This law defines the rights, access to rights, protection enjoyed by every child, responsible mechanisms that guarantee the effective implementation of supervision, promotion and protection of these rights, as well as special care for children. Also the provision of efficient mechanisms and the proper functioning of the responsible institutions in charge of taking concrete measures for the promotion, respect and protection of the rights of the child.

In the strategic document "National Agenda for the Rights of the Child 2012-2026", approved by DCM no. 659, dated 03.11.2021, some measures and priorities have been defined regarding the improvement of the legal framework for the protection of children, to approximate it with the international legislation and to take concrete measures to guarantee the rights of children and their protection.

2. The Family Code , according to Article 7, regarding the age of marriage, has defined that marriage can be concluded between a man and a woman, who have reached the age of 18 years.

The National Agenda for the Rights of the Child 2021-2026, in the strategic pillar "Elimination of all forms of violence, exploitation, abuse and harmful practices", provides measures, which aim to raise children in a supportive environment, with positive parenting practices that protect them from violence and abuse. One of the measures provided to achieve this goal is drafting of a communication plan and supporting materials / products, to address negative social norms related to all forms of violence / abuse against children (including the issue of early marriage).

In addition, related to early marriage, in the publication by INSTAT, “Women and Men in Albania 2021”, are given data about the early marriages for girls and boys for the age group 15-19 years old. The number of girls married before the age of 18 during 2020 was 16. This number has decreased compared to a year ago, where 20 marriages of girls under 18 were registered. The percentage of married girls between 15 and 17 years old is very low, while it marks the highest values between the ages of 18 and 19, respectively 6.4% and 5.5%. Boys do not have marriages before the age of 18 and the percentage of boys married at the age of 18-19 is below 1%.

You can find more data on pages 17 and 36 of the INSTAT publication, in the link as follows: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8713/burra-dhe-gra.pdf>