

EU4SC Evaluation Terms of Reference

January 2026

Country:	Albania
Object of evaluation:	Enhancing Local Social Services partnerships with citizens and toward EU standards Project – namely EU for social care (EU4SC)
Time period of evaluation:	January - December 2026
Geographic coverage:	National; Municipalities: Durres, Kavaja, Kruje, Kurbin, Vlore, Kukes, Vore, Kamez, Pogradec, Gjirokaster, Librazhd, Elbasan, Korce, Cerrik.
Type of evaluation:	Summative evaluation

This Terms of Reference (ToR) is for the evaluation of the “**Enhancing Local Social Services partnerships with citizens and toward EU standards**” program in Albania financed by European Delegation.

This ToR outlines the context of the evaluation, conditions and requirements for the evaluation as well as its scope, objective and future use, and the technical requirements that the prospective evaluation team should meet.

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Country Development Context

Albania is an upper-middle-income economy whose development trajectory remains strongly influenced by ongoing reforms under the European Union (EU) accession framework and broader institutional modernization efforts. Albania is recognized for “unprecedented progress” in the EU enlargement process, reflecting sustained reform momentum and political stability in comparison with some regional peers. At the same time, the Albania Report 2025 of the European Commission¹ rates the country as moderately prepared for the accession, and that structural governance challenges persist hampering robust reforms’ implementation efforts. While reforms have strengthened regulatory alignment, uneven implementation capacity, weak monitoring of reforms, transparency shortcomings in budget management practices are present across sectors and administrative levels².

The country’s development goals are outlined in the National Strategy for Development and Integration 2022–2030 and the Economic Reform Programme 2025–2027. Albania’s economic development is closely tied to EU integration support frameworks. Through the EU Growth Plan for the Western Balkans, the country received a first disbursement of approximately €99.3 million, including budget support and infrastructure investment financing, reflecting external support for fiscal and structural reform.

Albania has maintained macroeconomic stability in recent years³. Albania’s public debt is under control, but the country remains exposed to macroeconomic and currency-related risks. Reforms and external funding have fueled economic expansion, yet the economy remains concentrated in a limited number of industries. The structure of public expenditure is heavily tilted toward current spending. Capital expenditure has remained at around 5% of GDP, with the potential of limiting long-term development investment. Social protection expenditure, at approximately 9–9.5% of GDP in 2023–2025, remains modest compared to the EU average (19.5% of GDP). Average annual GDP growth reached 3.2 percent from 2014 to 2024. Under the current pace of reforms, annual GDP growth is expected to slow in the long term, reaching just 1.5 percent by 2050⁴. This fiscal reality influences the ability of government to scale investment in human capital, infrastructure and adaptive social systems.

Albania is undergoing notable demographic and territorial transformation characterized by population ageing, declining fertility, and sustained outward migration. A large share of municipalities experiencing demographic contraction are rural and geographically isolated, with reduced economic dynamism and greater exposure to environmental and infrastructure vulnerabilities. At the same time, population growth and economic activity are increasingly concentrated along the Tirana–Durrës corridor, creating pressures on urban infrastructure and service provision. These spatial trends shape local development trajectories and service delivery contexts / needs. Decentralization reforms over the past decade have expanded the responsibilities of municipalities and strengthened the framework for local governance; however, variations in institutional capacity and fiscal space remain evident across territories, which continue to influence planning and service delivery effectiveness, particularly in smaller or depopulating municipalities.

Overall, Albania presents a mixed but dynamic development profile: macroeconomic stability and reform commitment coexist with structural demographic pressures, governance capacity gaps, regional inequalities, and constrained fiscal space. These contextual dynamics are critical for understanding the

¹ European Commission (2025). Albania Report 2025 — Enlargement Package

² *ibid*

³ World Bank (2025). Albania Country Overview and GovTech Program for Results — institutional modernization insights.

⁴ World Bank (2025). Albania Public Finance Review.

institutional, financial, and administrative environment within which sectoral policies and services—including social protection—are designed, implemented, and evaluated.

Social Protection Sector Overview

Albania's social protection system is undergoing a gradual but substantive transformation. Measurable progress in poverty reduction, disability reform and the expansion of social care services coexists with structural constraints that continue to limit adequacy, coverage and territorial equity. While the institutional architecture is increasingly aligned with European standards and decentralization reforms, financing levels, service intensity and local capacities remain decisive for overall system performance.⁵

The right to social protection in Albania is enshrined in the Constitution (Articles 49, 51, 52 and 55) and further regulated through dedicated legislation. A major milestone was Law No. 121/2016, *"On Social Care Services in the Republic of Albania,"* which laid the foundations for an integrated system of community-based social care services and marked a shift toward a modern, service-oriented social protection integrated model.

Progress has also been shaped by Albania's EU accession process, particularly the commencement of negotiations and approximation under Chapters 19 (Social Policy and Employment) and 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights)⁶. Continued harmonization with the principles of the European Pillar of Social Rights and relevant European strategies has influenced the approval of the National Strategy for Social Protection 2024–2030, which aims to reduce poverty, enhance social inclusion and strengthen support to vulnerable groups through an estimated investment envelope of approximately EUR 2.3 billion⁷. Strategy priorities improved targeting of children living in poverty through the child benefit scheme, the introduction of shock-responsive approaches and priority measures, accelerated decentralization and expanded fiscal space for local social care services. It also foresees the development of an EU Child Guarantee Plan of Action for Albania.

As mentioned above, the total social protection expenditure reached approximately 9.5–9.6 per cent of GDP during 2022–2025⁸. While this reflects continuity and modest consolidation, it remains significantly below the EU average (around 20 per cent of GDP), defining the fiscal space within which Albania operates. The structure of spending continues to reflect a predominantly cash-based model, with pensions and cash assistance representing the dominant components.

Albania has achieved significant poverty reduction: the at-risk-of-poverty rate declined from 23 per cent in 2019 to 19.2 per cent in 2024. Before social transfers, however, 36.7 per cent of the population would be at risk, demonstrating the redistributive and stabilizing role of the system; social transfers reduce the at-risk population by approximately 14 percentage points. Nonetheless, poverty risk remains strongly correlated with age, gender and household composition. According to EU-SILC 2024 data, 26.6 per cent of children aged 0–17 are at risk of poverty—considerably higher than the overall population rate of 19.2 per cent⁹. Girls face a slightly higher risk of poverty across age groups. Poverty exposure is also significantly higher among households with dependent children. Monitoring and sectoral reports further identify

⁵ UNDP, *Mapping of Social Services in Albania 2025*, Tirana.

⁶ European Commission, *2025 Albania Progress Report*.

⁷ Government of Albania, *National Strategy for Social Protection 2024–2030*.

⁸ Ministry of Finance and Economy; Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, budget execution reports (2021–2025).

⁹ INSTAT, *EU-SILC 2024 – Income and Living Conditions in Albania*.

persons with disabilities; women and children survivors of violence and abuse; Roma and Egyptian communities; older persons; LGBTIQ+ individuals; and populations in remote and rural areas as facing heightened risks of poverty or social exclusion¹⁰.

Complementing developments in cash assistance, social care services have undergone significant and accelerated reform. Following the 2015 territorial reform, responsibility for service provision shifted to municipalities, creating a decentralized governance framework. To support service expansion, the Government of Albania (GoA) established a dedicated financing instrument—the Social Fund. The Fund’s growth has been substantial. In 2019, it supported 14 services in 14 municipalities, with a total budget of ALL 70 million. By 2025, it finances 98 social services operating in 61 municipalities and 8 regions, backed by a budget of ALL 445 million. Over seven years, cumulative investment has reached approximately ALL 1.9 billion, supporting 98 services nationwide, reaching around 46,500 beneficiaries and employing 817 social service professionals¹¹.

Service provision is structured across multiple levels of governance. Municipal-level providers account for 77 per cent of all providers, demonstrating strong local engagement in delivery. At regional level, specialized public institutions and mixed public–civil society organization (CSO) services address more complex or targeted needs, while national-level provision is primarily ensured through public institutions financed through the State Social Service. Civil society organizations have played a pivotal role in piloting and developing new service typologies—including family-based care, emergency services, day-care centres and community-based models—several of them have subsequently been institutionalized¹². Despite quantitative expansion, coverage remains limited relative to estimated need. Territorial disparities remain pronounced: 39 municipalities meet less than 10 per cent of identified social care needs, and only 38 municipalities provide services to at least three vulnerable groups¹³. While decentralization has strengthened local ownership, it has also exposed capacity constraints. Many municipalities allocate a limited share of their own revenues to social services, often below 2 per cent. Operational challenges include incomplete staffing of Needs Assessment and Referral Units (NARUs); absence of focal points for vulnerable groups in some municipalities; and underutilization of the national Management Information System/ National Electronic Registry of Social Services, limiting evidence-based planning and monitoring.

Overall, Albania’s social protection reform trajectory can be characterized as one of incremental consolidation: institutional foundations are increasingly in place, yet questions of scale, adequacy and equity remain central to the next stage of reform.

In this context, in 2023, the EU, under the framework of IPA 2019/IPA II, launched the call for proposals¹⁴: *“Local level partnerships for strengthening the delivery of social care services*. The initiative aimed to establish new or expand existing models of social care services, promote inclusive education, and enhance the employability of groups at risk, as prioritized in each municipality’s Local Social Plan. The grant scheme targeted 14 municipalities: Gjirokastrë, Vorë, Cërrik, Librazhd, Kavajë, Kurbin, Kukës, Krujë, Pogradec, Korçë, Kamëz, Vlorë, Elbasan, and Durrës.

¹⁰ UNDP, *Mapping of Social Services in Albania 2025*, Tirana; 2023 CRC Concluding Observation for Albania; EC’s Albania Progress Reports.

¹¹ Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Social Fund administrative data (2019–2026).

¹² UNDP, *Mapping of Social Services in Albania 2025*, Tirana.

¹³ UNDP, *Mapping of Social Services in Albania 2025*, Tirana.

¹⁴ <https://resourcecentre.al/european-commission-call-for-proposals/>

In partnership with World Vision Albania, UNICEF Albania was selected as the winning applicant for the project titled “*Enhancing Local Social Care Services: Partnerships with Citizens and Toward EU Standards*.” The project is closely aligned with the Albanian Government’s priorities in the sector, focusing on advancing social care reforms that promote social inclusion, equal opportunities, and the decentralization of social care services. The initiative has now entered its third and final year of implementation, running from December 2023 to December 2026.

Object of Evaluation

The object of the evaluation is the implementation of “*Enhancing Local Social Care Services partnerships with citizens and toward EU Standards* project”. The Project has been implemented nationwide with specific focus in 14 Municipalities: Gjirokaster, Vore, Cerrik, Librazhd, Kavaje, Kurbin, Kukes, Kruje, Pogradec, Korce, Kamez, Vlore, Elbasan, Durres. The Project commenced in December 2023, and currently it is at this third year of the implementation cycle, being also the last. Out of the 2,800,000 EURO allocated from the EU, at this current stage, 84% of the budget is spent.

The goal of the project is to strengthen municipal and central level capacities to establish and deliver social care services for citizens and in alignment with EU standards, ensuring equitable and effective support for citizens at risk of social exclusion.

The project’s Theory of Change¹⁵ (See Annex I) was part of the Project Proposal and is based on three Outcomes:

- Established new or extend community-based services and integrated social care services and further strengthen a structured approach to case management, standards of services and outreach work through the mobile and homebased services to support families and individuals at risk of exclusion.
- Provision of specialized social care services (for women and children with disabilities and survivors of violence); and tailored capacity building and mentoring for frontline professionals to ensure adequate quality of integrated services.
- Strengthened municipal capacities to establish and deliver social care services in the long run and ensure financial and policy sustainability for the social care services.

The establishment of community and specialized services is defined by the Law no 121/2016¹⁶, and regulated by its bylaws. The project is guided by National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022-2030, which prioritizes social cohesion, emphasizing the imperative to strengthen the local government's role in providing essential social care services to all citizens. The project is intricately tied to the new National Social Protection Strategy 2024-2030. The project approach aligns also with the Intersectoral Strategy for Decentralization and Local Government 2023-2030, recognizing the crucial role of decentralized governance in effectively addressing social challenges.

The below document maps out the alignment of the EU4SC project with the national policy framework:



Alignment%20EU4So
cialCare+%20Nationa

¹⁵ The TOC is developed during the proposal phase and in response to the call for proposal.

¹⁶ <https://qbz.gov.al/eli/ligj/2016/11/24/121-2016>

The objectives and expected outcomes of the project are designed to respond to the EU integration requirements for the country, in particular **chapters 19 and 23**. They are also based on sector recommendations and consider the implementation progress, in line with Policy Guidance¹⁷ issued by the European Commission within the framework of the **Economic Reform Programme (ERP 2023-2025)** linked to Reform Measure 4, which aims to enhance the integrated social care system to reduce the share of the population at risk of poverty. Policy Guidance 5 outlines the need to increase allocations to expand service coverage and offer specialized services, provide additional support to municipalities, and ensure the sustainability of service provision at the local level. Furthermore, the project aligns with the **European Pillar of Social Rights** principles¹⁸, reflecting a commitment to promoting social well-being and inclusion.

Importantly, this intervention directly contributes to achieving three **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** of the **UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**:

- SDG 5 (Gender Equality) and SDG 10 (Reduction of income inequality within and among countries),
- SDG 16 (promoting peaceful and inclusive societies and containing explicit references to child rights), as well as to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

In full harmony with the UNICEF Programme Documents for Albania 2022-2026¹⁹, and with the special focus on the most vulnerable communities, the project combines UNICEF programmatic interventions in response to increased opportunities for social inclusion, and a stronger social protection system.

The Project primary target groups and final beneficiaries (right-holders) are individuals and families at risk of poverty, social exclusion, and with limited access to essential social care services in 14 targeted municipalities. The main categories identified during the design and implementation of the project are families living in poverty, adults, children at risk of exclusion, people with disabilities, women and children, and survivors of violence and abuse.

Another direct group of beneficiaries are the frontline professionals engaged in service delivery that require continuous training and support to enhance their skills in providing effective and holistic assistance to the target groups.

Leaving out EU, UNICEF and World Vision, the main stakeholders engaged in the implementation of the project can be categorized into the following layers: central government partners, local governmental partners, local partners.

Stakeholder type	Name of Stakeholder
State / Public central institution (duty barriers)	Ministry of Health and Social Welfare General Directorate of State Social Service Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Tirana Order of Social Workers Ministry of Finance

¹⁷ Specifically link to the Reform measure 4 Increasing the coverage and adequacy of integrated social care system to reduce the share of the population at risk of poverty; PG 5, in summary, refers to the increase allocations to ensure service coverage, provide additional support to municipalities and support the sustainability of service provision. European Commission (EC 2023), Economic Reform Programme of Albania (2023-2025) Commission Assessment, 23 May 2023.

¹⁸ Principle 2: Gender equality; Principle 3: Equal opportunities; Principle 11 Childcare and support to children, Principle 12. Social protection, Principle 14. Minimum income, Principle 16. Healthcare, Principle 17. Inclusion of people with disabilities, Principle 18. Long-term care, Principle 19, Housing and assistance to homeless, Principle 20. Access to essential services. Accessible at: <https://op.europa.eu/webpub/empl/european-pillar-of-social-rights/en/>

¹⁹ <https://www.unicef.org/executiveboard/country-programme-documents>

	Minister of State for Local Government
State entities at municipal level	Municipalities – Leadership (mayor/deputy mayors/ department/directorates of social services, including the child protection units, needs assessment and referral units.
Various entities and groups at local level	NGOs acting as implementing partners for the EU4SC project, service providers, young volunteers

At this stage, the below, more detailed list of stakeholders engaged has been drafted, to be further developed during inception stage.



EU4SocialCare%20Evaluation%20Stakehold

The second progress report for the project was submitted to the donor in February 2025. Key achievements and results are outlined in **Annex I (result framework table) and Annex II**. Below is a mapping of services established at the 14 Municipalities with information on implementing partners, the alignment with social care plan, and beneficiaries (right holders).



Services-EU4SCproject.xlsx

Rationale, Purpose, Scope and Use of Evaluation

Rationale: The evaluation of the project has been a request of the donor and has been part of the project proposal since the project proposal submitted by UNICEF and World Vision. It is intentional that the evaluation was planned for the third year of project implementation cycle to provide the necessary time for the implementation of the results to be measured. The evaluation is part of the UNICEF Albania Costed Evaluation Plan that is monitored by the Regional Office²⁰.

Purpose: The evaluation will be mostly summative to document the work done to date. The evaluation of the project is intended to:

- Promote learning. The evaluation will produce information especially on how Local Social Care Service Delivery has been enhanced and municipal capacities and partnerships strengthened.
- Promote accountability: The evaluation will enable the various stakeholders, including national counterparts and donors, to hold UNICEF and World Vision, as the counterparties of the EU in this project, accountable for fulfilling the roles and commitments as set out in the project.

²⁰ Standard Operating Procedures for Quality Assurance and Ethical Standards in UNICEF-supported Research, Studies and Evaluations towards results for Children in the Europe and Central Asia Region (2019).

Scope: The **time (chronological) scope** of the evaluation will cover from start December 2023 up to the implementing month when the data collection for the evaluation takes place (indicative June 2026). The **geographic scope** of the evaluation will be up to the level of the 14 municipalities that the project targets. The thematic scope is to assess the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of the project as defined in the Project Agreement with the donor.

Intended use: The evaluation may be used by a broad range of stakeholders of which some have a direct stake in the evaluation because they are involved in its implementation. These stakeholders are referred to as Primary Stakeholders. Other stakeholders, i.e. Secondary Stakeholders, refer to rights holders and duty bearers who benefit from the contributions of the Project, and organizations with which

UNICEF does not have any formal partnership but that work with similar programmes for which lessons and good practices drawn from this evaluation may be relevant.

- **UNICEF in Albania and World Vision Albania:** The evaluation will serve as a strategic learning and accountability tool for UNICEF and World Vision Albania. The evaluation will provide evidence to inform future joint initiatives, ensuring that lessons learned are systematically integrated into new programme frameworks and partnerships. It will also support adaptive management, enhance evidence-based advocacy with central and local government institutions, and strengthen accountability to beneficiaries and stakeholders. In addition, the findings will contribute to future resource mobilization efforts, including the development of proposals in the area of social protection and social inclusion, particularly Child Guarantee.
- **European Delegation in Albania (donor):** The evaluation intends to provide an independent assessment of the effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability of the EU-funded intervention. The findings intend to inform future EU programming in areas related to decentralization, social care reform, and inclusive service delivery. The evaluation may support strategic dialogue with the Government of Albania on EU integration priorities linked to social protection and fundamental rights, while also guiding decisions on scaling up or replicating successful models. Furthermore, it will ensure accountability for the use of EU funds, demonstrating value for money and informing future grant-making approaches and partnership modalities in the social inclusion sector, particularly the child guarantee.
- **State Bodies.** The main national and local governmental institutions engaged in the project constitute the primary audience for this evaluation. These include relevant line ministries, central agencies responsible for social protection and social care reforms, and participating municipalities overseeing the planning, budgeting, and delivery of social services at the local level. As duty bearers, they play a central role in policy development, resource allocation, coordination, and service provision. The evaluation findings will provide an evidence base to inform decision-making, strengthen coordination between central and local levels, improve the quality and sustainability of social services, and enhance collaboration around social inclusion interventions, while supporting institutions to adapt to the changes required under ongoing reforms.
- **Local NGOs (Implementing Partners at Municipal Level):** For local NGOs that have acted as implementing partners at the municipal level, the evaluation will help them reflect on their contribution to improving social inclusion and local social care services. It will highlight what worked well, what challenges were faced, and where improvements are needed in service delivery and cooperation with municipalities. The findings can support their future planning, strengthen their credibility with local authorities and donors, and help them mobilize resources for continued work in the area of social inclusion.

- **Other donors (secondary audience).** Multilateral and bilateral donors will have an interest in evaluation findings, especially those that support social and economic integration / inclusion of the most vulnerable groups and communities – e.g. Swiss Cooperation, GIZ. Donors will use the findings of the evaluation for learning purposes and informing their own programming.
- **UNCT and its agencies (secondary audience).** UNCT and agencies, like IOM, UNDP, UNWOMEN would use the findings for learning purposes and informing their own programming in social protection. The findings will inform the programming of the UNSDCF Outcome 1 on human capital development.
- **Wider public (secondary audience)** to raise self-awareness and participation in the design and implementation of the social services in the country.

Objectives of the Evaluation

Based on the overall purpose, the primary objectives of the evaluation include:

- Assessing the project's effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability to understand what worked, why, and under what conditions. The evaluation will examine progress towards the achievement of EU4SC results at output and outcome levels, as well as the overall objective, including the integration of cross-cutting principles such as human rights, gender equality, and disability inclusion. It will also identify any unintended positive or negative effects arising from implementation.
- Identifying the factors that determine success in establishing sustainable social care services at the local level.
- Documenting key programmatic and operational lessons learned, and identifying insights and opportunities to consolidate efforts and scale up project results in the future.

While there is no dedicated objective on assessing contributions to human rights and gender equality, these considerations are mainstreamed across the objectives above.

Evaluation Questions

The questions that will guide this evaluation are aligned with the evaluation criteria developed by the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC)²¹ - effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability. The evaluation questions will be informed by internal and external stakeholders at the inception stage (UNICEF, Word Vision, Ministry of Health and Social Protection, Local Government Units, and implementing partners).

The evaluation criterion of impact has been intentionally omitted, and this has been the case from the project proposal. The rationale was the short duration of the project, imposing difficulties in yielding results at impact level. The final criteria and questions should be designed in a way that ensures that human rights and gender responsive related data will be collected.

Key Evaluation Criterion and Questions

Effectiveness: the extent to which the programme has been implemented as planned and the extent to which it achieved or is expected to achieve its objectives

- To what extent were the EU4SC project's outputs and outcomes achieved or are expected to achieve their stated objectives?

²¹ The DAC evaluation criteria were first defined in 1991 under the leadership of the OECD.

- What are the factors that have enabled quality implementation? What barriers have hindered the project's effectiveness?
- Were there positive/negative unintended outcomes? Could they have been foreseen and managed?
- Are the needs and rights of beneficiaries consistently integrated in all aspects of programming and implementation?
- Have EU4SC project strategies been effective in supporting the delivery of the outputs and outcomes? What can be learned about the most effective strategies for the achievement of results?

Efficiency: the extent to which inputs or resources been allocated efficiently for programme implementation.

- Did the EU4SC project use the resource, including the implementation arrangement/partnerships, in the most economical and timely manner to achieve its objectives?
- Are there more efficient ways and means of achieving outcomes? Are there any bottlenecks or delays impacting on the efficiency of delivery? What have the mitigation measures been in cases of challenges?
- Did EU4SC project find synergies with other funding sources, grants and mechanisms of Government operating under the same theme?

Sustainability: The extent to which the intervention's net benefits will continue or are likely to continue.

- To what extent are the project's benefits likely to continue beyond its funding period? Have initial results, practices, or processes been institutionalized within local systems, policies, or practices?
- What measures - such as strategic partnerships or mechanisms - have been established to secure long-term government and stakeholder ownership, leadership, and engagement?
- What are the key enablers and potential risks affecting the project's sustainability, and what strategies or mitigation measures are in place to address them?

An initial draft of the evaluation matrix can be found at **Annex III**.

Evaluation Approach and Methodology

The evaluation is summative and the approach it will take is nonexperimental, using theory-based and mixed methods approaches. The evaluation is guided by the following approaches:

Participatory approach: The evaluation will adopt a participatory, clear, and engaging approach, encompassing a diverse array of collaborators and stakeholders at both the national and sub-national levels.

Gender equality, equity, and human rights based approach: The evaluation should also consider the issues of human rights, including child rights, equity and gender equality and mainstream them throughout the evaluation process and deliverables (including the methodology design, development of data collection tools, analysis of data and drafting of the report), based on UNICEF Guidance on gender²² and disability integration.²³ This entails developing a sampling strategy that is inclusive and representative of all stakeholders of the project, ensuring the design of appropriate tools, and if deemed possible the

²² UNICEF (2019) UNICEF Guidance on Gender Integration in Evaluation EVALUATION OFFICE AND GENDER SECTION; UNICEF (2020) "How to" checklist for gender integration into COVID-19 socioeconomic impact assessments and response plans

²³ UNICEF (2012) Integrated Social Protection Systems Enhancing Equity for Children, UNICEF

participation of beneficiaries. This will imply also that data is disaggregated by marginalized groups and differential results are assessed (distribution of results across different groups).

Theory-based approach: This approach is deemed necessary, as the evaluation aims to assess the Project's contribution towards its intended and unintended results. The validation of the TOC will be done during the inception stage.

Mixed methods approach for data collection: The study utilized a mixed-method research design with a heavier weight of qualitative data. This would include within the scope of the evaluation: secondary data including desk review of project's documents, and any other documents and databases, and primary data including key informant interviews with stakeholders, FGDs with participants of project's activities, direct observations at municipal social care services, and potentially a survey with professionals' capacities because of this project. Vignettes could be used to elicit knowledge absorption and application. At this stage of planning, direct project beneficiaries / right holders will be engaged as informants for this evaluation (refer to ethical considerations below concerning this category).

Youth engagement approach: Youth volunteer engagement remains a key pillar of the EU4SocialCare project, strengthening outreach and community connection within local social care services. To date, 65 volunteers are engaged across the initiatives, of whom 51 are formally registered and declared with the tax office. There is an intention to invite volunteers to contribute to the evaluation implementation as *community-based data collection facilitators*. Building on their existing placement within services and their established trust with beneficiaries, volunteers could support the evaluation team in administering short beneficiary feedback surveys, or gathering structured testimonies from service users—under the guidance and tools provided by the external evaluators. To safeguard objectivity and data quality, volunteers would receive a brief, dedicated orientation on evaluation ethics, confidentiality, and neutrality, and would operate using standardized tools developed by the evaluation team. This approach would not only enrich the evaluation with deeper community insights but also reinforce local ownership and strengthen the volunteers' skills in reflection, accountability, and evidence-informed practice—further contributing to the sustainability of the EU4SC project.

The final approach and methodology of the evaluation should be developed at the inception stage and be guided by the UNICEF's revised Evaluation Policy²⁴, the Evaluation Norms and Standards of the United Nations Evaluation Group (UNEG)²⁵, UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluations and Data Collection and Analysis²⁶ and UNICEF's reporting standards²⁷. The inception report should set out an approach and methodology for gathering and analyzing data that is gender responsive and represents the right holders and duty bearers.

A thorough stakeholder analysis will be conducted during the inception phase to identify key institutions and individuals to participate in the data collection phase. The evaluation team should propose a clear sampling strategy, determining sampling criteria for institutions and stakeholders (individuals).

The evaluation team is welcome to suggest ideas about how they would approach this assignment to complete it as efficiently and timely as possible. The methodology should aim to identify the limitation and constraints in the availability of data and propose the best mix of data gathering tools to yield the most reliable and valid answers to the evaluation questions and generate maximum learning. It should also contain a clear and complete description of the methods of analysis.

Proposed methods for ensuring validity and reliability at analysis stage will include:

²⁴ UNICEF 2018 Evaluation Policy <https://undocs.org/E/ICEF/2018/14>

²⁵ UNEG Norms: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/21>, UNEG Standards: <http://www.uneval.org/document/detail/22>

²⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/evaluation/documents/unicef-procedure-ethical-standards-research-evaluation-data-collection-and-analysis>

²⁷ www.unicef.org/evaluation/files/UNICEF_adapted_reporting_standards_updated_June_2017_FINAL.pdf

- Triangulation – to confirm and corroborate results reached by different methods.
- Complementarity - to explain and understand findings obtained by one method by applying a second.
- Interrogation - where diverging results emerge from the application of different methods – these will need to be interrogated to either reconcile, or explain, the differences apparent.

Limitations

Limitations of the exercise include the following.

Risk/limitations	Mitigation actions/Response
Limited duration of the intervention may have impacted visible results attributable from the project.	The Evaluation will use mixed-methods approaches to capture both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for triangulation and deeper insights even within a short timeframe. A specific focus can be considered to be given to intermediate outcomes and process indicators that have been observed and measured within the intervention period.
Not all key informants involved in the project implementation may be available or reachable during the evaluation, and access to certain stakeholders. This could restrict the richness and completeness of the data collected.	Evaluation team will be expected to expand the pool of key informants to include secondary stakeholders or beneficiaries who can provide relevant insights. Use remote data collection methods (phone, Zoom, Skype, Teams, WhatsApp) to reach geographically dispersed or unavailable informants.
Absence of a control group poses a challenge for attribution of EU4SC project results.	The evaluation team will use a before-and-after approach to assess the results of the project and combine to the extent possible both quantitative and qualitative data to gain insights into the causes of the observed changes.

At the inception stage, the team of evaluators will be responsible for detailing the limitations and further expanding the mitigation measures.

Ethical Considerations

The evaluation must be in line with the United Nations evaluation norms and standards.²⁸ The ethical principles that will guide the evaluation are independence, impartiality, credibility, responsibility, honesty and integrity.²⁹ Similarly, it is essential for the evaluation team to maintain respect for the dignity and diversity of the individuals interviewed, and to take into consideration respect for human rights, gender equity and equality³⁰ throughout the evaluation process. The team will take the appropriate measures to preserve the confidentiality of information and data of the individuals involved, while respecting the right to provide information in confidence. Here, it is essential that informed consent be obtained when the information is collected.

²⁸ **UNEG Norms and Standards (2016)**: Available from www.uneval.org/document/detail/1914

²⁹ The evaluation team must comply with the UNEG/UNICEF standards and guidelines:

Ethical Guidelines for UN Evaluations (2008): Available from www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/102 and **Code of Conduct for Evaluation in the UN system** (2008): Available from www.unevaluation.org/document/detail/100

³⁰ **Integrating Human Rights and Gender Equality in Evaluation – 2011**

Towards UNEG Guidance, www.uneval.org/document/detail/980

UNICEF requires that when interviewing children, it is essential that the evaluation team refer to the UNICEF guidelines, Ethical Research Involving Children.³¹ It is also necessary to minimize the risks associated with any possible negative consequences and maximize the benefits for the main stakeholders by foreseeing unnecessary harm or injury that may arise from the findings of a negative or critical evaluation, without compromising its integrity.

The evaluation must also comply with the UNICEF Procedure for Ethical Standards in Research, Evaluation, Data Collection and Analysis,³² and according to the methodology selected³³, it must be reviewed by an external ethical review committee (contracted by UNICEF Albania). The evaluation will not be able to proceed with the data collection before being approved by the ethical review committee. In its methodological proposal, the evaluation team should clearly indicate any possible ethical issues and specify the supervision and the ethical review mechanisms that are applicable to the evaluation process. In addition, members of the evaluation team are required to disclose in writing any past experience, of themselves or their immediate family, which may give rise to a potential conflict of interest, and to deal honestly in resolving any conflict of interest which may arise during the evaluation.

Evaluation Process

Once the evaluation team is on board, the evaluation will be structured in three main phases defined by accompanying activities as described below:

Inception Phase

A Desk Review

The evaluation team will commence the evaluation with a document review for which an electronic library will be established comprising relevant documentation that will be updated on an ongoing basis during the evaluation process. Documentation made available to the team may include but will not be limited to: Project proposals, partner narrative reports, country-specific documents/data, etc.

Briefing with UNICEF and World Vision teams

UNICEF team and evaluation team will conduct virtual discussions, covering, *but not limited to*: a) evaluation process, with its key milestones and deliverables. b) roles and responsibility of major stakeholders in the evaluation management; c) quality and ethical assurance steps, tools and templates for the evaluation deliverables; d) update on the list of materials for desk review; e) timing and agenda of the Inception mission. UNICEF will not constitute a separate reference group for this evaluation, but instead will use the Project Steering committee as the advisory group to provide inputs on all main evaluation deliverables that are expected to strengthen the quality and credibility of the evaluation.

An Inception Report (IR)

An inception report will be submitted that demonstrates impartiality, and that aligns with UNICEF's quality standards. The IR will be subject to quality assurance performed by the UNICEF Albania and Regional office, a review conducted by the Project SC, an ethical review³⁴ – should methodology proposes data gathering involving vulnerable groups, sensitive subjects and/or use of confidential data – and, finally, an external quality assurance check that requires a satisfactory rating for the data collection phase to

³¹ **Ethical Research Involving Children** (2013). Available from <http://childethics.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/ERIC-compendium-approved-digital-web.pdf>

³² UNICEF PROCEDURE ON ETHICAL STANDARDS IN RESEARCH, EVALUATION, DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS (2021)

³³ Should methodology proposes data gathering involving vulnerable groups, sensitive subjects and/or use of confidential data.

³⁴ If required, an Institutional Review Board will be contracted by UNICEF Albania to ensure data collection and analysis instruments and protocols are reviewed and cleared before proceeding to data collection mission.

proceed. First draft is reviewed by UNICEF team only. At least 3 IR versions of IR are expected to be prepared, until it is marked completed. The approval of the IR by UNICEF Albania Representative marks the completion of the Inception Phase. The report will be numbered in paragraphs (for ease of receiving feedback) and be no longer than 30 pages excluding annexes.

Sample Outline for the Inception Report

1. Presentation of the country context, policy and programming aspects
2. Object of the evaluation
3. Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation
4. Constructed theory of change, including the narrative for causal relationship between activities, outputs and outcomes
5. Evaluation framework (evaluation criteria and questions). At the annex, this will be accompanied, with a detailed evaluation matrix linking evaluation criterion with specific questions/areas of inquiry and analytical frameworks/rubrics (assumptions/hypothesis), and corresponding data sources and criteria to make a judgment.
6. Preliminary stakeholder analysis and preliminary positioning of stakeholders.
7. A complete methodology with:
 - an explanation and rationale of the methodological design and analytical framework, description of how methodology is human rights and gender responsive;
 - sampling and list of people to interview and sites to visit;
 - data collection tools (questionnaire, interview guidelines, etc.). In case of data collection with children and vulnerable groups, will be included data protection protocols and pathways of reporting;
 - limitations and mitigation measures;
 - ethical considerations;
 - data analysis (how the data will be analyzed, what technique, software and approach will be used, including triangulation, how it the analysis will be human rights and gender responsive), criteria for identification of recommendations and lessons learned.
8. Work plan, including data collection agenda and description of the role and responsibilities of each team member
9. Outline of the Final Report (structure of the report)
10. Bibliography
11. Annexes

Text should be distributed between main body of the Report and its Annexes, to ensure flow of reading, and highlighting in the body of the report the core content.

The Data Collection Phase

Following the inception phase, a four-week data collection agenda will be defined and agreed upon. The national expert will carry most of the weight in this process, whilst the international consultant will conduct interviews with strategic stakeholders. If relevant, during this phase, secondary data will be generated. UNICEF will provide organizational support during the data collection process ensuring, to the extent possible, smooth access to key stakeholders at national and sub-national level via logistical / coordination facilitation, and translation.

Following the review of the transcripts of data collected, the evaluation Team will present preliminary observations and findings.

The Reporting Phase

The evaluation team will prepare 1st draft evaluation report that will be subject to a review undertaken by UNICEF team. Following the first review of the draft report, the evaluation team will incorporate the

comments provided and prepare a second report, alongside a response matrix detailing how comments were addressed. The second draft will be shared with for external quality assurance³⁵, Project SC and be also reviewed by UNICEF team (including relevant RO colleagues). Comments will be incorporated into the final draft report, coupled with a response matrix. As with the IR, if the draft report does not pass UNICEF's external quality assurance with a satisfactory rating, another draft report will be submitted for quality assurance, until satisfactory level of the report quality is achieved.

Once a final draft report has been approved, the evaluation Team will present and discuss with UNICEF and relevant stakeholders the evaluation findings and recommendations. UNICEF Albania will be responsible to organize the meeting, where the international consultant will participate remotely/virtually. Following the validation of the findings, the Finalized Report will be complied to be approved by UNICEF Albania Representative. UNICEF keeps the right for final Report's editing and design of the Report. UNICEF holds the copyrights of the report.

Recommendations should target UNICEF Albania and other stakeholders as deemed relevant. Clear prioritization and/or classification of recommendations should be done to support use. The amount of recommendation should be balanced to the purpose of the evaluation and feasibility of their implementation.

The report will be numbered in paragraphs (for ease of receiving feedback) and be no longer than 40-60 pages excluding annexes. Annexes to include ToR for the evaluation, detailed evaluation matrix, marking any changes from the TOR and IR, list of interviewees, ToC/logical framework (unless included in report body), list of site visits/data collection, data collection instruments (such as survey or interview questionnaires), list of documentary evidence. Other appropriate annexes could include: additional details on context, programme, methodology, results chain, information about the evaluator(s).

Upon completion of the evaluation report, it will be rated in UNICEF's Global Evaluation and Research Oversight System (GEROS),³⁶ and it will be published on UNICEF's global website.

Evaluation Management Response: UNICEF will be responsible for developing a Management Response covering the two-year period following the completion of the evaluation, addressing the recommendations with which it agrees. The Management Response will outline concrete actions, timelines, and responsible parties, and will be submitted for validation to the Project Steering Committee (SC). Recommendations directed at other stakeholders will be considered advisory in nature. While these may inform future planning and coordination efforts, no formal management response process or official follow-up mechanism is required from those stakeholders.

Workplan and Deliverables

A tentative time frame for the evaluation is provided below. The evaluation is expected to be completed within 7 months upon signing the contract (target commencement and end date is: December 2026). An extended period is dedicated to the inception phase to ensure proper scoping of the evaluation.

Activity	Month 1	Month 2	Month 3	Month 4	Month 5	Month 6	Month 7
Desk review	X	x					
Draft Inception report		x					
Report reviewed by evaluation stakeholders,		x	x				

³⁵ The same company, hired by UNICEF Albania that performed the review of the IR.

³⁶ https://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_GEROS.html

ethical review and quality assurance conducted							
Finalization and approval of Inception Report			x				
Data Collection and Mission and presentation of preliminary observations			X	x			
First draft report					X		
Report reviewed by evaluation stakeholders, ethical review and quality assurance conducted						X	
Final Report							x
Final presentation							x

The evaluation main deliverables are outlined below. Number of days is indicative.

Evaluation main deliverables and deadlines

Evaluation Deliverables	Completion Dates	# of days Team Leader	# of days per Team Member
Desk review	2 weeks before submission of the IR	5	5
Inception Report (30 pages excluding annexes), including presentation		10	5
Data collection and preliminary observation presentation to UNICEF staff.	4-6 weeks after the beginning of the Inception Phase.	12 (5 working days in the country)	30
Draft Report (40-60 pages excluding executive summary and annexes towards which national expert will contribute with, at least, 10 pages). Presentation to UNICEF team, ERG and other stakeholders.	2 weeks after completion of data collection	15	4
Final Report (as above) should be a publishable document.	3 weeks after internal review and external quality assurance on draft report have been completed.	3	1
Total		45	45

Roles and Responsibilities

The undertaking of the evaluation is planned to be undertaken by a team of 2 consultant – the team leader - international consultant, and the national consultant. Each of them will have a direct contract with UNICEF Albania (separate), however, it is expected that the team leader will be overall responsible for guiding the work of the national consultant. At any time during the process, the UNICEF evaluation manager should be consulted and know the division of the work between the team leader and the national consultant.

Common tasks and duties for the evaluation team

The evaluation team is requested to refer attentively to the documentation made available in the electronic library developed for the evaluation, including the ToRs, context information and information on UNICEF's interventions.

- Evaluation team (both consultants) is requested to familiarize themselves with UNICEF's global normative products in the substantive areas for which they are responsible.
- Evaluation team (both consultants) will contribute to the evaluation deliverables – inception report, final report and power point presentation;
- Evaluation team (both consultants) should participate in the field data collection mission.

The team leader will be responsible for managing and leading the evaluation, designing the evaluation methodology, developing tools, data collection, analyzing data, conducting debriefing sessions, drafting the inception and the final reports with recommendations, guiding the national expert, and presenting the final report.

Specific tasks of the Team Leader will include but may not be limited to:

- Complete the desk review of existing information on the context including national policies and priorities, all relevant programme documents and reports, previous studies, research and evaluations.
- Familiarize and adhere to all the guiding UNICEF documents for the conduct of quality evaluation.
- In agreement with UNICEF evaluation manager, divide the roles and responsibilities with the national expert during the entire evaluation process
- Lead the work for the preparation of the Inception Report (IR).
- Develop and provide detailed methodological guidance for the national expert with regards to the data collection tool and define the overall direction for data analysis and quality assurance.
- Conduct interviews with various high level stakeholders / evaluation informants.
- Lead the conduct of analyses and report writing.
- Submit the IR, the draft and final evaluation reports, and accompanying presentations.
- Manage the evaluation work plan, respecting deadlines for specific activities and deliverables.
- Maintain a high level of communication with the national expert, UNICEF and World Vision staff and Project SC.

Specific tasks of the national expert will include, but may not be limited to:

- Review all relevant documentation related to the context and programme. Support team leader with summary of information of documents that are in Albanian.
- Support the process for the stakeholder analysis developed during the desk review/inception stage.

- Contribute to the preparation of the Inception Report (IR). Tasks to be assigned by the Team leader and agreed with the UNICEF evaluation manager.
- Conduct interviews with a range of key stakeholders and informants as per the inception report, in all 14 municipalities. Prepare transcripts for the interviews/focus group discussions in English.
- Contribute to the drafting of the final report, with tasks assigned by the team leader, in agreement with the UNICEF evaluation manager.
- Maintain a high level of communication with the national expert and UNICEF staff involved in management of the evaluation.

Role of UNICEF Albania Country Office:

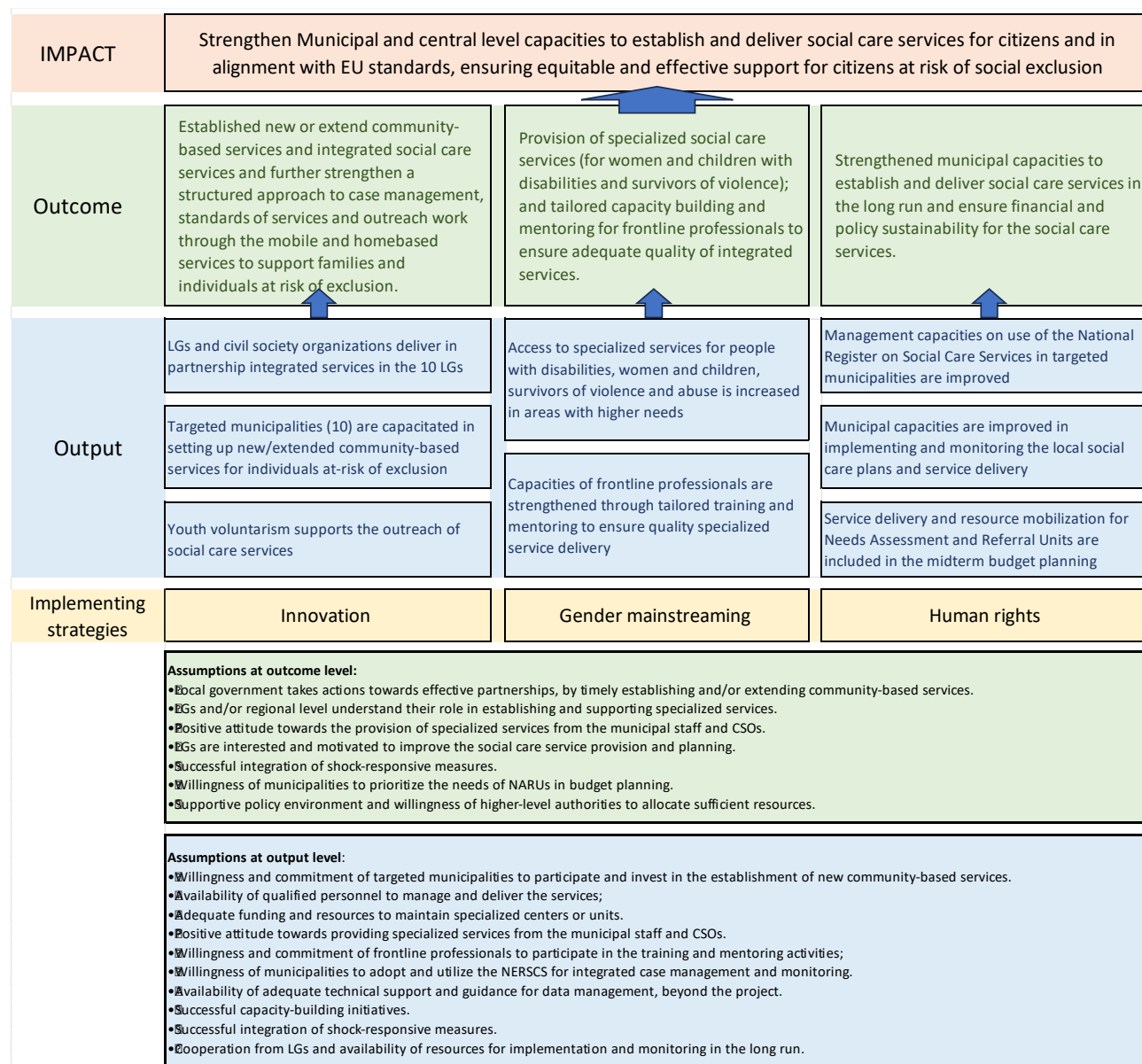
The manager for this evaluation is the (Child Rights) Monitoring and Evaluation Specialist at UNICEF Albania, who will work very closely with the EU4SocialCare team of UNICEF. The ultimate responsibility for the evaluation sits with the Representative of the Country Office.

Key responsibilities of the UNICEF team:

- Lead the management of the evaluation exercise throughout the process (design, implementation and dissemination), ensuring that the evaluation products meet quality and ethical standards.
- Hold monthly meeting (virtual) to discuss the progress of the work and any emerging issues.
- Establishing and updating the electronic library of documents for the evaluation.
- Sharing the relevant UNICEF documents, tools, templates and providing guidance throughout the process to contribute in delivery of quality deliverables.
- Providing, collecting and summarizing all feedback received for IR and Draft Report throughout the main stages of the evaluation.
- Conducting the Quality assurance as per the Standard Operating Procedures for Research, Studies and Evaluations.
- Ensuring Ethical standards and requirements are fully met as per UNICEF Evaluation Policy and SOPs for RSEs.
- Supporting participation of stakeholders throughout the evaluation process.
- Integrate the Evaluation-related agenda points in the agenda of the Project Steering Committee' meeting and facilitate the dialogue.
- Ensure SC members and other key stakeholders are consulted and comment on the evaluation main deliverable. Support the development of management response for the evaluation.

Annexes to the TOR

Annex I: Project Theory of Change and Results framework ³⁷



³⁷ The TOC is the one developed during the proposal phase and guided by the call. No further modifications of the TOC have been made during implementation.

<i>Result</i>	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Current value (2025)</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>
IMPACT (overall objective)	Strengthen municipal and central level capacities to establish and deliver social care services for citizens, and in alignment with EU standards, ensuring equitable and effective support for citizens at risk of social exclusion.	Impact indicator 1: % of population at risk of poverty and social exclusion ³⁸ (AROE 30).	43.9% (2021)	42.5% (2026)	NA	INSTAT/Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (SILC)
		Impact indicator 2: Financial resources (in million ALL) provided by Government through Social Fund to support expansion of social services.	200 million ALL (2022)	300 million ALL (2026)	Over ALL 400mln	MoHSW monitoring reports. MoFE, MTBP 2023-25.
		Impact indicator 3: No. of community-based services at national level for individuals at-risk of exclusion.	20 (2023)	35 (2026)	NA	MoHSW monitoring reports. SSS reports.

³⁸ AROPE shows the proportion of the population which is: (a) At risk of poverty after social transfers (people whose equivalised income is below 60% of the median equivalised income); (b) Severely materially deprived (people who, owing to a lack of financial means, cannot afford at least four of nine household material deprivation items; and (c) Living in households with zero or very low work intensity (adults worked for fewer than 20% of the total number of months in which they could have worked during the reference period). Under this Activity the data source is from Albanian INSTAT, and will be monitored annually through AROPE 30 indicator

<i>Resu lts</i>	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Current value (2025)</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>
OUTCOMES	Outcome 1 Established new or extend community-based services and integrated social care services and further strengthen a structured approach to case management, standards of services and outreach work through the mobile and homebased services to support families and individuals at risk of exclusion.	1.1. No. of new or extended community-based services established in 10 LGs. Disaggregated by municipality, typology of service, and whether is new service or extended	0 (2023)	10 (2026)	11 ³⁹ (Kamza (new&extended services), Kruja (new&extended services), Kavaja(new service), Kurbin (new&extended services), Librazhd (extended service), Elbasan (extended service), Vora (new&extended services), Durrës(new service), Pogradec (new&extended services, Gjirokastër (extended service), Cërrik new&extended services)	Project reports. Administrative data from the LGs. All subgrant agreements successfully finalised and being implemented.

³⁹ Two municipalities, Kruja and Kamza represent a blend of community-based and specialised services, so they are also counted under outcome indicator 2.1

<i>Result</i>	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Current value (2025)</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>
		1.2. No. of individuals at-risk of exclusion receiving (new or extended) community-based services and outreach work, in 10 LGs. Disaggregated by age, gender, disability, type of service, and by LG.	0 (2023)	18,000 ⁴⁰ (2026)	9220 (3905 males, 5315 females, 2759 under 17yo, 5772 over 18yo) (categories: disabled 388, under economic aid 1257, minorities 70, victims of domestic violence 401, etc)	Administrative data from MoHSW/SSS. Project reports. Subgrants reports.
	Outcome 2 Provision of specialized social care services (for women and children with disabilities and survivors of violence); and tailored capacity building and mentoring for frontline professionals to ensure adequate quality of integrated services.	2.1. No. of new or extended specialized social care services established	0 (2023)	4 (2026)	5 (Vlora, Kukës, Korçë, Kamza, Kruja)	Project reports MoHSP monitoring reports. SSS mapping report. Subgrants reports.
		2.2. No. of individuals at-risk of exclusion accessing the new or extended specialized social care services. Disaggregated by gender, age disability,	0 (2023)	100 (2026)	563 (399 under 17yo, 196 over 18 yo, 248 females and 315 males, 217 disabled, 246 under economic aid, 63 victims of	Project reports. MoHSP monitoring reports. SSS mapping report.

⁴⁰ These figures represent approx. 6000 families.

<i>Resu lts</i>	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Current value (2025)</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>
		type of specialised service and LG.			domestic violence); (106 individuals in Vlora, 90 in Kukes, 125 in Korca, 108 in Kamza, 134 in Kruja)	
	Outcome 3 Strengthened municipal capacities to establish and deliver social care services in the long run and ensure financial and policy sustainability for the social care services.	3.1. Number of technical tools/instruments developed and utilized to establish integrated and shock-responsive local social care services in 14 LGs.	0 (2023)	5 (2024)	10	Project reports. These tools are integrated into a comprehensive Manual for Municipalities guiding preparedness for, response to, and recovery from shocks
		3.2. No. of LGs that have integrated measures in their MTBs to resource the new and extended social care services and structures.	0 (2023)	14 (2026)	3	Project reports MTBs of 3 LGs.
OUTPUTS	Output 1.1 (Outcome 1) LGs and civil society organizations <u>deliver in partnership</u> integrated services in the 10 LGs.	1.1.1 No. of partnerships established between LGs and civil society organizations.	0 (2023)	14 (2026)	14	Project reports Signed Grant agreements.

<i>Resu lts</i>	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Current value (2025)</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>
		1.1.2 Regularity (quarterly basis) is established for the inter-sectorial meetings for case management of individuals/families at risk of exclusion in 10 LGs.	No (2023)	Yes (2026)	(i) YES. 96 inter-sectoral meetings organised, approx. 2 per quarter)	Project reports. Municipal administrative data.
	Output 1.2. (Outcome 1) Targeted municipalities (10) are capacitated in <u>setting up new/extended community-based services</u> for individuals at-risk of exclusion.	1.2.1. No. of social care providers that have improved their technical competences in 10 LGs. Disaggregated by sex, typology of services/sectors, and by LG.	0 (2023)	350 (2026)	280 professionals with improved technical competences (of 342 trained) ⁴¹	Project reports Monitoring Reports of the MoHSP/SSS
	Output 1.3 (Outcome 1) Youth <u>voluntarism</u> supports the <u>outreach</u> of social care services.	1.3.1. No. of young volunteers capacitated to support the outreach work in 10 LGs. Disaggregated by sex, and LG.	0 (2023)	70 (2026)	72 (8 males and 64 females; 12 Korca, 1 Vlora, 2 Kukes, 12 Kamza, 12 kruja, 6 Kavaja, 6 Kurbin, 1 Librazhd, 5 Elbasan, 6 Vora, 6 Durres, 3 Pogradec, 4	Project reports

⁴¹ This figure represents only the training sessions made locally available through the sub-grants' agreement. The final report will provide the figure of the nationally/centrally provided capacity-building sessions.

<i>Result</i>	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Current value (2025)</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>
					Gjirokaster, 4 Cerrik)	
	Output 2.1. (Outcome 2) <u>Access</u> to specialized services for people with disabilities, women and children, survivors of violence and abuse is increased in areas with higher needs.	2.1.1. No. of professionals engaged in planning / designing the new or extended specialized services. shared) Disaggregated by sex, and level of government (national/subnational).	0 (2023)	100 (2026)	(i) YES. Conducted; One Rapid assessment to identify the needs and gaps in provision of specialized services	Project reports
	Output 2.2. (Outcome 2) <u>Capacities</u> of frontline professionals are strengthened through tailored training and mentoring to ensure quality specialized service delivery.	2.2.1 No. of professionals that have attended the trainings in delivering the new/extended specialized social care services. Disaggregated by sex, typology of service and LGs. - shared)	0 (2023)	35 (2026)	35	Project reports.
	Output 3.1 (Outcome 3) <u>Management</u> capacities on use of the National Register on Social Care	3.1.1. No. of new cases recorded in the NERSCS in the 14 LGs.	538 (2022)	800 ⁴² (2026)	958 (cumulative - with 420 new cases registered in 2025)	Project reports NERSCS MIS reports

⁴² Approx. 50% more over the baseline

<i>Result</i>	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Current value (2025)</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>
	Services in targeted municipalities are improved.	3.1.2. No. of municipal staff capacitated in using MIS periodically for improved integrated service delivery and monitoring in 14 LGs. Disaggregated by sex, and LGs.	0 (2023)	50 (2026)	220 (4 Vlora, 7 Kukes, 24 Korca, 26 Kamza, 24 Kruja, 14 Kavaja, 6 Librazhd, 13 Kurbin, 30 Elbasan, 4 Vore, 49 Durres, 12 Pogradec, 3 Gjirokaster, 4 Cerrik)	Project reports Training report/s NERCS MIS Report
	Output 3.2 (Outcome 3) Municipal capacities are improved in <u>implementing and monitoring</u> the local social care plans and service delivery.	3.2.1 No. of municipal staff capacitated in integrating shock responsive actions in the local social planning in 14 LGs. Disaggregated by sex, and LGs.	0 (2023)	30 (2026)	35	Project reports Training reports

<i>Resu lts</i>	<i>Results chain</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Current value (2025)</i>	<i>Sources of data</i>
	Output 3.3 (Outcome 3) Service delivery and resource mobilisation for Needs Assessment and Referral Units are included in the midterm budget planning.	3.3.1 No. of municipal stakeholders engaged in the policy dialogue around the midterm budget planning in 14 LGs. Disaggregated by sex, and LGs.	0 (2023)	200 (2026)	NA	Project reports

Annex II Major Results of the Intervention (2023-2026)

The EU4SocialCare initiative, implemented by UNICEF Albania in partnership with World Vision Albania, has made substantial progress in strengthening local social care systems across fourteen municipalities during the first two years of implementation from December 2023 to December 2025. The programme has become a cornerstone in advancing Albania's national strategies on social protection and decentralization, embedding EU standards into local service delivery while ensuring that municipalities assume their role as primary duty-bearers for social services.

One of the most significant achievements has been the establishment of strong partnerships between local governments and civil society organizations. Through a competitive and transparent sub-granting process, fourteen joint projects were launched, surpassing the original target of ten. These partnerships have resulted in the creation and expansion of both community-based and specialized social care services. By the end of 2025, more than 3,000 families had been reached, positively impacting over 9,200 individuals, including 2,301 children. Importantly, 563 high-risk individuals—among them 399 children with disabilities—benefited from specialized services, a figure five times higher than the initial target. Services ranged from psychosocial support and parenting programmes to physiotherapy, digital literacy, and labour market orientation, ensuring a holistic response to diverse vulnerabilities. The services have been provided in the centers and also reached beneficiaries through mobile services.

Equally important has been the programme's success in embedding sustainability and institutional ownership. Municipalities integrated EU4SocialCare services into their Local Social Plans and budget processes, with Gjirokastrë formally establishing a Local Social Fund and all fourteen municipalities committing to operationalize such funds in 2026. Seven municipalities secured Government Social Fund allocations to ensure continuity of services, while others prepared submissions for future financing. This alignment with national reforms demonstrates a clear trajectory toward long-term sustainability, reducing reliance on external project structures and anchoring services within municipal systems.

The programme also strengthened coordination and prociders and frontline professionals capacity. Intersectoral mechanisms for child protection, gender-based violence, and social inclusion were revitalized, leading to improved referral pathways and service uptake. A total of 420 new cases were recorded in the National Electronic Register for Social Care Services, supported by the training of over 120 system users. Fifty-six Needs Assessment and Referral Units were established across seven municipalities, and more than 70 volunteers were mobilized to support outreach efforts. In parallel, over 340 social workers and professionals participated in capacity-building workshops, with mentoring and coaching sessions reaching 250 staff members. These investments have not only enhanced professional competencies but also fostered resilience, ethical practice, and inter-municipal collaboration.

At the policy and systems level, EU4SocialCare produced key technical tools to guide municipalities in sustaining reforms. These included a manual on shock-responsive planning and budgeting, tri-ministerial guidance on establishing Local Social Funds, and a user manual for the Social Services Management Information System. Together, these resources improved data quality, usability, and institutional alignment, ensuring that municipalities are better equipped to plan, finance, and monitor social care services.

Communication and visibility efforts further amplified the programme's impact, reaching nearly 1.2 million people across digital platforms. Human-interest stories highlighted the tangible benefits of EU-funded social services, particularly in connection with international human rights observance days. Volunteer engagement and collaborative communication strategies reinforced the programme's outreach and strengthened public awareness of social care reforms.

Annex III: DRAFT Evaluation Matrix

Criteria	Evaluation Questions	Indicators / Information Needed	Data Collection Method (Stakeholder Type)
Effectiveness	To what extent were the EU4SC project's outputs and outcomes achieved or are expected to achieve their stated objectives?	- Level of outputs delivered vs. planned - Achievement of outcomes - Progress toward objectives	Interviews, focus groups and surveys with: Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, State Social Service, Faculty of Social Sciences (University of Tirana), Order of Social Workers, Ministry of Finance, Minister of State for Local Government; Municipal leadership (mayor/deputy mayors, social services departments, child protection units, needs assessment and referral units); NGOs acting as implementing partners; service providers; young volunteers. Desk Review of project documents and progress reports.
	What are the factors that have enabled quality implementation? What barriers have hindered the project's effectiveness?	- Enablers: management, partnerships, coordination, capacity - Barriers: delays, resource gaps, institutional constraints	Interviews and focus group discussions with the same stakeholders as above; field observations of project implementation; NGO and service providers inputs.
	Were there positive/negative unintended outcomes? Could they have been foreseen and managed?	- Examples of unintended positive/negative effects - Measures taken to address negative outcomes	Interviews and discussions with central and municipal institutions, NGOs, service providers, volunteers; review of project reports.
	Are the needs and rights of beneficiaries consistently integrated in all aspects of programming and implementation?	- Inclusion of beneficiary needs in planning - Beneficiary participation in decision-making	Interviews; discussions with municipal social service departments, NGOs, and volunteers; review of planning and monitoring tools; field observations.

		- Evidence of rights-based approach	
	Have EU4SC project strategies been effective in supporting the delivery of the outputs and outcomes? What can be learned about the most effective strategies for achieving results?	-Extent to which planned strategies were implemented as designed. -Adaptations made to strategies during implementation and reasons for changes. -Strategies that yielded measurable results versus those that did not. -Identification of factors that enabled or hindered strategy effectiveness.	Review of strategy documents, progress reports, and outcome data; interviews with central institutions, municipal leadership, NGOs, service providers, and volunteers; focus group discussions.
Efficiency	Did the EU4SC project use resources, including implementation arrangements/partnerships, in the most economical and timely manner to achieve its objectives?	- Timeliness of activities vs. planned schedule - Budget utilization vs. planned budget - Use of human and material resources	Interviews with members of the EU4SC steering committee, central and municipal institutions, NGOs. Desk review
	Are there more efficient ways and means of achieving outcomes? Are there any bottlenecks or delays impacting on the efficiency of delivery? What have the mitigation measures been in cases of challenges?	- Delays in activity implementation - Instances of duplication of efforts - Bottlenecks in procurement or coordination - Mitigation strategies applied	Interviews with central and municipal institutions, NGOs. Desk review
	Did the EU4SC project find synergies with other funding sources, grants, and mechanisms of Government operating under the same theme?	- Co-funding or co-implementation with other donors or government initiatives - Joint activities or resource sharing - Avoidance of	Interviews with central and municipal institutions, NGOs. Desk review

		overlapping interventions	
Sustainability	To what extent are the project's benefits likely to continue beyond its funding period? Have initial results, practices, or processes been institutionalized within local systems, policies, or practices?	Continuation of project services or outputs beyond funding period - Evidence of integration of practices/processes into local systems, policies, or routines - Adoption of tools, guidelines, or methods by central or / and local authorities	Review of project reports, policy documents, and monitoring tools.
	What measures—such as strategic partnerships or mechanisms—have been established to secure long-term government and stakeholder ownership, leadership, and engagement?	- Existence of formal partnerships or agreements - Engagement of government institutions in project activities - Evidence of stakeholder commitment or leadership roles in continuation of project initiatives	Same stakeholder interviews as above; review of memoranda of understanding, partnership agreements, and project planning documents; focus group discussions with NGOs and local partners.
	What are the key enablers and potential risks affecting the project's sustainability, and what strategies or mitigation measures are in place to address them?	- Identification of enabling factors (institutional support, capacity, resources) - Identification of risks (political, financial, operational) - Evidence of strategies or mitigation measures applied to manage risks	Interviews with central and municipal institutions, NGOs, service providers, and volunteers; review of risk assessments, project reports, and mitigation plans; focus group discussions with partners and beneficiaries.