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Draft country programme document**

Albania

Summary

The draft country programme document (CPD) for Albania is presented to the Executive Board for discussion and comment. The draft CPD includes a proposed aggregate indicative budget of \$4,250,000 from regular resources, subject to the availability of funds, and \$12,706,000 in other resources, subject to the availability of specific-purpose contributions, for the period January 2027 to December 2031.

* [E/ICEF/2026/25](#).

** In accordance with Executive Board decision 2014/1, country programme documents (CPDs) are considered and approved in one session, on a no-objection basis. This draft CPD, and a costed evaluation plan, will be presented to the Executive Board for review from 9 to 29 June 2026. The final CPD will be posted to the Executive Board web page in English six weeks in advance of the 2026 second regular session and in the other designated languages four weeks in advance.

Programme rationale

1. Albania, an upper-middle-income country in the Western Balkans with a population of 2.4 million,¹ is undergoing a profound demographic transformation. The 2023 census recorded approximately 460,000 children aged 0 to 17 years,² representing 19.1 per cent of the population, compared to 26.4 per cent in 2011³ – a reduction driven by low fertility and sustained outward migration. Economic growth has stabilized at around 3.3 per cent.⁴ This shrinking child population within a converging economy intensifies the imperative to invest equitably and effectively for every child.

2. Albania has advanced key reforms within the framework of its European Union accession process, strengthening democratic standards, human rights and the rule of law in alignment with the European Union acquis. The national priorities align with the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2026–2029 and underscore the need to accelerate equitable, system-level investments that enable all children and adolescents, especially the most marginalized, to develop and transition successfully into adulthood, contributing to long-term development and convergence with European Union standards.

3. Albania has made measurable progress in advancing children's rights and well-being. Under-5 mortality declined to 5.6 deaths per 1,000 live births in 2024, marking a 5.3 percentage points decrease from 2020.⁵ This is mirrored by improvements in child well-being, with the child at-risk-of-poverty rate falling from 29.7 per cent in 2019⁶ to 26.6 per cent in 2024.⁷ At the same time, the share of young people not in employment, education or training declined from 27.9 per cent in 2020 to 22.2 per cent in 2024.⁸ The National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022–2030 prioritizes inclusive human capital development, democracy, good governance and social cohesion, aligning with the country's child well-being objectives and European Union accession trajectory. However, inequalities continue to constrain development outcomes, as reflected in the country's inequality-adjusted

¹ Albania Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), Albanian Population and Housing Census, 2023, available at <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/publications/books/2024/albanian-population-and-housing-census-2023/>.

² INSTAT, "Children and Youth in Albania: Thematic Insight Report, Census 2023", available at <https://www.instat.gov.al/media/s3ulezdzj/children-and-youth-in-albania-thematic-insight-report-census-2023.pdf>.

³ Ibid.

⁴ World Bank, Western Balkans Regular Economic Report, October 2024, available at <https://thedocs.worldbank.org/en/doc/3a8f6f353a496e481b3065a8e084552f-0080012026/original/WB29-FC-EN-02-ALB>.

⁵ INSTAT, SDG Dashboard, available at <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/sdgs/ensure-healthy-lives-and-promote-well-being-for-all-at-all-ages/32-by-2030-end-preventable-deaths-of-newborns-and-children-under-5-years-of-age/321-under-5-mortality-rate/>.

⁶ INSTAT, Income and Living Conditions in Albania 2019, available at <https://www.instat.gov.al/sq/temat/kushtet-sociale/anketa-e-te-ardhurave-dhe-nivelit-te-jeteses-aanj/publikimet/2021/matja-e-te-ardhurave-dhe-nivelit-te-jeteses-ne-shqiperi-2019/>.

⁷ INSTAT, Income and Living Conditions in Albania 2024, available at <https://www.instat.gov.al/media/gsf15zlg/silc-2024.pdf>.

⁸ INSTAT, "Youths 15–24 years old not in employment/education/training (NEETs)", available at <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/children-and-youth-official-statistics/training-and-employment/youths-15-24-years-old-not-in-employmenteducationtraining-neets/>.

Human Development Index level, which is estimated at around 0.705,⁹ notably below the European Union average (0.842).¹⁰

4. The 2023 concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child for Albania underscore some of the most pressing challenges facing children, calling for urgent action to address persistent non-discrimination, the prevalence of violence against children, gaps in ensuring an adequate standard of living for all children, and inequities in access to quality education, including vocational training and guidance.

5. Gender disparities compound disadvantage for girls and women across the life cycle. The 2020 Gender Equality Index (60.4) is seven points below the European Union average.¹¹ Prenatal sex selection persists, with a sex ratio at birth of 107.8 boys per 100 girls.¹² The at-risk-of-poverty rate is higher for girls (26.8 per cent).¹³ Among young people aged 20–24 years, 62.7 per cent of boys have completed secondary education, compared to 48.5 per cent of girls.¹⁴ Women’s labour force participation is 12.5 percentage points lower than men’s.¹⁵

6. Public expenditure on children’s services remains significantly below European Union averages across sectors. Education spending reached 2.6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2024, compared with the European Union average of 4.6 per cent.¹⁶ Social protection spending stands at 9.6 per cent of GDP compared to the European Union average of 20.5 per cent,¹⁷ with only 5 per cent of it allocated to social care services.¹⁸ Local government spending on social services is less than 2 per cent of its budget¹⁹ despite their mandate to ensure availability and access. Health spending stands at 2.77 per cent of GDP,²⁰ compared with the European Union average of 10 per cent.²¹

⁹ United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *Human Development Report 2025*, UNDP, New York, 2025.

¹⁰ The estimated inequality-adjusted Human Development Index for the 27 Member States that currently make up the European Union is based on a weighted average of national scores from the *UNDP Human Development Report 2025*.

¹¹ European Institute for Gender Equality, “Gender Equality Index for the Republic of Albania 2020”, available at <https://eige.europa.eu/about/eu-candidate-countries-and-potential-candidates/albania>.

¹² INSTAT; see <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/children-and-youth-official-statistics/population/sex-ratio-at-birth-number/>.

¹³ INSTAT, Income and Living Conditions Survey 2024, available at <https://www.instat.gov.al/media/gsf15zlg/silc-2024.pdf>.

¹⁴ INSTAT; see <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/children-and-youth-official-statistics/training-and-employment/share-of-youth-20-24-years-old-who-have-completed-the-higher-cycle-of-secondary-education/>.

¹⁵ INSTAT, Labour Market 2024, available at https://www.instat.gov.al/media/ebwma5bq/tregu_i_punes_2024_final.pdf.

¹⁶ European Commission, “Albania 2025 Report”, available at https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/albania-report-2025_en.

¹⁷ Delegation of the European Union to Albania, “Albania’s Human Capital Investment”, 23 October 2025, available at https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/albania/albania%E2%80%99s-human-capital-investment-strategic-partnership-eu-integration-and-sustainable-development_en.

¹⁸ UNDP Albania, “Public Expenditure on Social Care Services”, 6 November 2023, available at <https://www.undp.org/albania/publications/public-expenditure-social-care-services-june-2023>.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ INSTAT; see https://databaza.instat.gov.al:8083/pxweb/en/DST/START__HE__KSH/HE00019/table/tableViewLayout1//.

²¹ EUROSTAT, “Healthcare expenditure statistics by function, provider and financing scheme”, available at https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Healthcare_expenditure_statistics_by_function_provider_and_financing_scheme.

7. Despite overall economic progress, the risk of poverty or social exclusion remains high, at 40.5 per cent,²² nearly double the European Union average of 21.0 per cent.²³ This burden is disproportionately borne by children and youth with disabilities, single-parent households, families with dependent children, and Roma and Egyptian households.²⁴ Albania lacks a comprehensive universal child benefit programme.

8. Fragmented social and child protection systems, underfinancing, and limited technical and administrative capacities persist. The European Commission's 2025 report noted that child protection services remain insufficient and that implementation of the legal framework needs improvement, particularly regarding integrated child protection systems. The number of child protection workers – 241 across 61 municipalities²⁵ – is far below needs. In 2024, child protection units managed 2,451 cases, of which 1,386 were newly identified, and 1,913 children were registered as victims of violence.²⁶ Abuse against children, including online and sexual violence, remains a critical concern. Access to justice for children is hindered by delays, limited legal aid and inadequate institutional coordination.²⁷ A deinstitutionalization plan is in place, although investments remain insufficient to prevent family separation or provide quality alternative care options.²⁸

9. Early childhood education reaches approximately 78.8 per cent of children aged 3 to 6 years,²⁹ but only 24 per cent of babies and toddlers aged 0–3 years have access to 1–29 hours a week to formal childcare.³⁰ The insufficient supply of affordable childcare hinders child development and reinforces women's disproportionate burden of unpaid care work, as their participation in the labour force is constrained.

10. Foundational learning remains the central education challenge. Results from the 2022 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) show that only 26 per cent of 15-year-olds achieved minimum proficiency in literacy and mathematics, among the lowest in the Western Balkans. Learning disparities are most pronounced among students from low-income households and rural areas. Gender gaps are evident, with boys performing significantly worse than girls, including a 40-point gap in reading and weaker outcomes in mathematics.³¹

11. Educational quality remains inconsistent across geographical areas and public/private institutions with inadequate resources, outdated teaching methods, insufficient professional training for teachers, and a fragmented approach to digital infrastructure in education showing the importance of fostering life skills within the

²² INSTAT, *Income and Living Conditions in Albania 2024*.

²³ EUROSTAT; see https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=Living_conditions_in_Europe_-_poverty_and_social_exclusion.

²⁴ INSTAT, "Children and Youth in Albania: Thematic Insight Report, Census 2023".

²⁵ European Commission, "Albania Report 2025".

²⁶ European Commission, "Albania 2025 Progress Report".

²⁷ European Commission, "Albania 2025 Progress Report".

²⁸ United Nations Convention on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania, CRC/C/ALB/CO/5-6, 23 October 2023.

²⁹ INSTAT, "Net enrolment ratio (NER) in pre-university education", available at <https://www.instat.gov.al/en/children-and-youth-official-statistics/education/net-enrolment-ratio-ner-in-pre-university-education/>.

³⁰ EUROSTAT; see https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_caindformal/default/table?lang=en&category=livcon.ilc.ilc_lv.ilc_ca.

³¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), PISA 2022 Results, Albania GPS Education profile, available at <https://gpseducation.oecd.org/CountryProfile?primaryCountry=ALB&treshold=10&topic=PI>.

educational framework. Despite the adoption of a competency-based curriculum, the practical integration of life skills remains limited.³²

12. A significant share of youth (aged 15–29 years) remains outside employment, education or training, with higher rates among young women than men (22.3 per cent compared to 19.5 per cent)³³, underscoring persistent barriers to inclusion and access to opportunities. Unemployment of youth aged 15–24 years old stands at 22.8 per cent, more than double the overall rate of 8.5 per cent,³⁴ highlighting a structural mismatch between education outcomes and labour market demands.

13. Progress towards a more relevant and inclusive vocational education and training system has been limited and uneven. Enrolment in vocational education reached 19 per cent in 2024–2025, reflecting a gradual upward trend from 17.9 per cent in 2023–2024.³⁵ However, progress remains insufficient to close the gap with the 2030 target of 30 per cent. Female participation in vocational education shows a gradual but positive trend, reaching 16.9 per cent in 2024–2025.³⁶

14. Access to healthcare remains inequitable. 10.6 per cent of households living in poverty report unmet medical needs, compared to 4.9 per cent in European Union countries.³⁷ Measles immunization coverage for the first dose (MCV1) at 81 per cent remains below the 95 per cent threshold,³⁸ while psychological and mental health support services for children and adolescents are limited.³⁹

15. The full and equitable realization of children’s rights is constrained by gaps in governance, accountability, data and evidence systems. Only 62 per cent of the measures in the National Agenda on the Rights of the Child 2021–2026 have been implemented.⁴⁰ Significant data gaps limit the institutions’ ability to identify which children are left behind: 60 per cent of child-related Sustainable Development Goal indicators are reported,⁴¹ and the absence of a comprehensive, regularly updated child rights situation analysis weakens the evidence base for policy prioritization. Administrative data systems lack sufficient disaggregation by sex, disability and ethnicity, constraining equity-focused planning at both national and municipal levels.

16. Accountability mechanisms continue to face constraints. The European Union’s 2025 Rule of Law Report notes that the overall implementation rate of the Ombudsperson’s recommendations remains low.⁴² Similar gaps are evident in the

³² United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization–International Institute of Educational Planning, 2024. Education Sector Analysis: Republic of Albania, Paris, <https://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/publication/education-sector-analysis-republic-albania>.

³³ INSTAT, “Youths 15–24 years old not in employment/education/training (NEETs)”.

³⁴ INSTAT, Labour Market 2024.

³⁵ European Commission, “Albania 2025 Progress Report”.

³⁶ INSTAT database; see

https://databaza.instat.gov.al:8083/pxweb/en/DST/START__ED__REG/ArSm01/.

³⁷ EUROSTAT; see

https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/ilc_hch14/default/table?lang=en&category=livco_n.ilc.ilc_lv.ilc_hchc.

³⁸ WHO immunization dashboard, Albania, available at

<https://immunizationdata.who.int/dashboard/regions/european-region/ALB>.

³⁹ Eurochild, “Unequal Childhoods: Rights on paper should be rights in practice”, available at <https://www.eurochild.org/en/inequality-childhoods-rights-on-paper-should-be-rights-in-practice.pdf>.

⁴⁰ Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, “Monitoring Report of the National Agenda for Children’s Rights 2021–2026”, available at

https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/8901/file/ENG_Raporti%20i%20Monitorimit%20te%20AKDF%20.pdf.pdf.

⁴¹ UNICEF, “Child-Related SDG Progress Dashboard”, available at

<https://www.transmonee.org/child-related-sdg-progress-dashboard>.

⁴² European Commission, “2025 Rule of Law Report: Country chapter on the rule of law situation in Albania”, available at https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/3732ae59-5ab4-48a6-a3e6-0ef9aa593863_en?filename=2025+Rule+of+Law+Report++Country+Chapter+Albania.pdf.

work of the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination.⁴³ While decentralization reforms have expanded municipal responsibilities for service delivery, local governments often lack the capacity, financial resources and accountability mechanisms needed to ensure equitable services for children.

17. Albania is exposed to multiple natural hazards that threaten children's well-being. The country ranks 84th among 163 countries on the UNICEF Children's Climate Risk Index, with a score of 4.8 out of 8.7, the highest in the Western Balkans.⁴⁴ Seasonal floods and vulnerability to earthquakes persist.⁴⁵ Continued outward migration risks leaving children in households with reduced economic capacity.

18. The selected programme priorities derive from the identification of critical gaps in child rights realization. Aligned with the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) 2027–2031, the Sustainable Development Goals and the National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022–2030, the programme will focus on opportunities for accelerated action to achieve child-centred national priorities aligned with European Union accession targets, enabling system-level change and reducing equity gaps at scale.

Programme priorities and partnerships

19. The country programme was developed through consultations with the Government, United Nations organizations, international development partners, academia, the private sector, civil society, and children and adolescents, including those with disabilities. Their collective inputs reinforced the country programme's vision of placing the most vulnerable children at the centre of change, driving results that extend beyond individual outcomes to strengthen the systems and institutions that deliver rights for every child in Albania.

20. The programme was informed by the evidence synthesis and country analysis, the child and youth-targeted secondary analysis of the 2023 Albanian Population and Housing Census, the recommendations from relevant human rights treaty bodies, the UNSDCF 2022–2026 evaluation, and the insights from the midterm review of the UNICEF 2022–2026 country programme. Lessons learned from these processes sharpened the programme's strategic focus, reinforcing the need to deepen and diversify partnerships, across Government, civil society, the private sector and academia, to drive efficiency, scale and lasting change for every child in Albania.

21. Aligned with the National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022–2030, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2026–2029, the UNICEF Gender Equality Action Plan, 2026–2029, and the UNICEF Disability Inclusion Policy and Strategy 2022–2030, the programme's overarching vision is to drive systemic change that ensures that all boys and girls in Albania, especially the most vulnerable, benefit from equitable, resilient national systems that protect their rights and advance their development.

22. A cross-cutting focus of all programme components will be the social inclusion of the most vulnerable children, particularly boys and girls living in poverty, Roma and Egyptian children and children with disabilities. UNICEF will leverage evidence, financing and partnerships to influence policies and investments that prioritize equity

⁴³ United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of Albania, [CRC/C/ALB/CO/5-6](#), 23 October 2023.

⁴⁴ UNICEF, Children's Climate Risk Index, 2021, available at <https://data.unicef.org/resources/childrens-climate-risk-index-report/>.

⁴⁵ UNICEF Albania, *Climate Landscape Analysis for Children in Albania*, available at <https://www.unicef.org/albania/media/8156/file/Albania%20CLAC%20.pdf.pdf>.

and introduce targeted measures to reach excluded children at scale. Gender equality and disability inclusion will be mainstreamed through sex- and disability-disaggregated monitoring, targeted programme design and accountability for results.

23. The country programme has three components:

- (a) Care and protection;
- (b) Learning and skills;
- (c) Governance and accountability for child rights.

24. The programme will contribute to UNSDCF outcomes one and three. UNICEF will partner with United Nations organizations in advancing common goals, particularly in addressing violence and negative social norms, strengthening governance and ensuring inclusive services for the most vulnerable boys and girls.

25. In line with the upper-middle-income status and European Union accession trajectory of Albania, UNICEF will provide catalytic support to national systems and institutions through the following strategies:

- (a) Providing evidence-based policy advice and influencing budget allocations and investments for children, particularly those who are most excluded;
- (b) Generating and harnessing evidence, strengthening data systems and monitoring child rights to inform decision-making and accountability;
- (c) Expanding strategic partnerships with key public and private stakeholders to leverage resources and mobilize support for child rights at scale;
- (d) Modelling integrated social-service delivery systems for scale-up.

26. Partnerships will focus on building a more structured child rights ecosystem. UNICEF will strengthen collaboration with the Government, civil society (including organizations led by women and girls), academia and think tanks, and deepen engagement with international financial institutions and the private sector to mobilize expertise, evidence and resources in a more coordinated way.

Care and protection

27. This programme component will support UNSDCF outcomes one and three and the country's National Social Protection Strategy 2024–2030, the Justice for Children Strategy, the National Plan of Action of Child Guarantee and the National Agenda for Child Rights. It aims to ensure that fewer children live at risk of poverty and exclusion in Albania and that children at risk, in conflict and in contact with the law are better protected from violence, have access to legal remedies, and are healthy, well-nourished and developmentally on track.

28. UNICEF will seek to catalyse an enabling environment that strengthens governance, coordination, and accountability for childcare and child protection. This includes supporting the establishment of effective intersectoral coordination mechanisms for the implementation of the National Plan of Action of Child Guarantee, the main policy framework addressing child poverty and exclusion, as well as strengthening results-based monitoring of social protection policies. This will include generating evidence and providing technical expertise to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the State Social Service, the Agency on Child Rights Protection and local government, with the aim of reducing the number of children living at risk of poverty.

29. UNICEF will provide technical assistance to operationalize the universal child benefit and establish efficient delivery mechanisms for integrated cash and care

support. This will include supporting the Government to design and implement the most cost-effective options through evidence-based analysis, system strengthening, and alignment with existing social protection platforms. UNICEF will also support the development of streamlined, transparent delivery systems that ensure timely and equitable access, alongside the establishment of a robust monitoring framework to track coverage, efficiency and impact, enabling continuous improvement and accountability in implementation.

30. UNICEF will address systemic gaps in the integration of social care, health and child protection services by focusing on strengthening the universal progressive home-visiting programme and intensifying support for the most vulnerable newborns and parents. This will be achieved by upgrading the home-visiting package to address developmental, nutritional and immunization risks.

31. UNICEF will support the Government in the modelling and scale-up of strengthened, integrated, community- and school-based mental health services for children.

32. UNICEF will support child-responsive public finance at national and local levels, institutionalizing child budgeting, improving equity-focused analysis of social spending, and strengthening evidence-based budget through advocacy and partnership with the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of State for Local Government and the Parliament. The programme aims to ensure that all social sector policy goals have costed implementation plans adequately funded in the budget. Municipalities will be supported to improve shock-responsive and disability-inclusive social planning, budgeting and service delivery.

33. UNICEF will aim to ensure that children at risk of violence (including gender-based), abuse or neglect receive a coordinated, timely response through strengthened child protection and justice systems. Technical support will be provided to the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child, the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of the Interior to strengthen legal and policy frameworks, enhance intersectoral case management, and develop a national competency framework for the child protection workforce, including institutionalized continuous professional development. Justice for children will be strengthened through diversion measures, and child-friendly, gender-equitable and trauma-informed procedures and rehabilitation services.

34. The programme will support the Government to advance deinstitutionalization of children from residential care to family-based and community-based alternatives. UNICEF will leverage resources through the European Child Guarantee, European Union financial instruments and international financial institutions to expand essential care and protection services.

Learning and skills

35. This programme component will support UNSDCF outcome one as well as the implementation of the National Education Strategy 2021–2026 and the Implementation Plan of the Youth Guarantee 2026–2028. The programme aims to ensure that children and young people in Albania access quality education from early childhood through secondary education, achieve stronger learning outcomes, and acquire relevant skills to transition successfully into decent work.

36. UNICEF will provide technical assistance to the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Economy and Innovation, the Ministry of Local Government and municipalities to strengthen education policies, governance and financing aligned with international best practices. These reforms are aimed at ensuring that a child's learning outcomes are determined by the quality of teaching. Support will include

advancing school network optimization, equity-based funding formulas and human resource management reforms, ensuring that changes are implemented with measurable impact and reduced regional and social disparities.

37. UNICEF will support the development of costed expansion models, financing frameworks and municipal planning tools for early childhood education and care and women's empowerment, with a focus on municipalities that currently lack any provision of services for children aged 0 to 3 years. Support will include renewal of early childhood curricula for preschool education. UNICEF will convene public and private partners to develop blended financing approaches that sustain quality and inclusion at scale.

38. UNICEF will support the upgrading of inclusive and gender-responsive curricula that integrate digital competencies, twenty-first-century skills, and career education. UNICEF will also strengthen teacher professional development systems, including the integration of digital competencies into pre-service and in-service training.

39. The programme will expand early warning systems to identify boys and girls at risk of dropout and scale up after-school programmes that strengthen foundational learning and support the transformation of special schools into inclusive resource centres, ensuring that children with disabilities and diverse learning needs are integrated into mainstream education.

40. UNICEF will support inclusive digital solutions - including blended learning approaches and assistive technologies - to ensure equitable access to learning for girls, children with disabilities and those in remote areas, while strengthening digital safety through the integration of safe and responsible use of artificial intelligence aligned with European digital standards and data protection frameworks. Safe and supportive school environments will be reinforced through whole-school approaches, including strengthened protocols for the prevention, early identification and referral of violence, including gender-based violence, in partnership with the private sector and civil society.

41. UNICEF will support the scale-up of the Youth Guarantee programme by strengthening system design and advising on effective delivery to support smooth transitions for young people. This will include reducing fragmentation across general education, vocational education and training, and systems for the recognition of prior learning. UNICEF will promote integration of life skills, digital competencies and entrepreneurship pathways within the education system, with a focus on the most vulnerable adolescents. These efforts will contribute to reducing the share of young people not in employment, education or training, narrowing gender disparities.

42. UNICEF will strengthen mechanisms for meaningful child and adolescent participation, ensuring that youth feedback informs policy reforms, service design and accountability at national and municipal levels. Adolescent girls' engagement will be strengthened through U-Report and the Adolescent Advisory Board, ensuring that young men and women equally inform and shape programmes that affect them.

Governance and accountability for child rights

43. This programme component will support UNSDCF outcome 3 and the national child rights agenda, providing cross-cutting support to strengthen evidence, coordination and accountability, so that every boy and girl in Albania benefits from accountable, evidence-based governance systems, strengthened through multi-stakeholder partnerships, and delivering results for children in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights treaties.

44. UNICEF will support the Institute of Statistics, the State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child, line ministries and municipalities to strengthen the national child-sensitive data ecosystem by improving the quality, disaggregation, timeliness, and accessibility of data from administrative sources and child- and gender-sensitive surveys, to effectively monitor the Convention on the Rights of the Child commitments, child rights national indicators, and Sustainable Development Goals progress.

45. To ensure that policies affecting children are informed by up-to-date, equity-focused evidence, UNICEF will contribute to a government-led process to develop a comprehensive child rights situation analysis involving line ministries, civil society, academia, and youth networks. UNICEF will support the development of standardized evaluation guidance to strengthen national evaluation capacities and improve the quality and diversity of evidence for policy making.

46. UNICEF will support the National Council for Child Rights and Protection, the central coordination and policy advisory body mandated to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and child rights policies, ensuring that commitments for children systematically inform cross-sectoral planning, policymaking and implementation frameworks. In parallel, UNICEF will strategically broaden engagement across the child rights ecosystem to foster a more inclusive and coordinated governance network.

47. To ensure that boys, girls and their families have accessible and gender-responsive avenues to claim their rights, the programme will build the capacity of national human rights institutions and equity bodies - including the Office of the People's Advocate, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the Commissioner for the Right to Information and Data Protection - to receive and address complaints related to child rights and provide actionable recommendations, while strengthening their dialogue with children. Parliamentary oversight will be strengthened through the Friends of Children Parliamentary Group, facilitating evidence-informed hearings, policy dialogue and legislative scrutiny.

48. UNICEF aims to expand strategic partnerships to mobilize expertise and resources, focusing on strengthening structured engagement with key partners for the child rights agenda. UNICEF will reinforce coordination with civil society and deepen collaboration with academia and research institutions to support evidence generation and policy dialogue. Engagement with the private sector, through mechanisms such as the Business Advisory Board, will be further developed to leverage innovation, technical expertise, and investment for child-focused initiatives. UNICEF will support the development of an enabling legal and policy framework to facilitate structured private sector engagement and sustainable resource mobilization for children.

Programme effectiveness

49. Programme effectiveness will support the efficient and effective management of the programme and financial and human resources. For this purpose, UNICEF will prioritize (a) managing external relationships and communication to support programming and enhance the visibility of children's rights; (b) coordinating cross-sectoral efforts and strengthening intersectoral synergies and convergence of programming where possible; (c) embedding human rights, equity, inclusion, accountability to affected populations and gender across all programmes planning and delivery; (d) closely monitoring adherence to the harmonized approach to cash transfers as the mechanism for managing programme financial resources, alongside enforcing the zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse.

50. UNICEF will further strengthen risk-informed, climate and crisis-sensitive programming across both programme implementation and operational management.

Summary budget table

<i>Programme component</i>	<i>(In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
	<i>Regular resources</i>	<i>Other resources</i>	<i>Total</i>
Care and protection	1 550	5 150	6 700
Learning and skills	1 550	5 150	6 700
Governance and accountability for child rights	650	2 240	2 890
Programme effectiveness	500	166	666
Total	4 250	12 706	16 956

Programme and risk management

51. This country programme document outlines UNICEF contributions to national results and serves as the primary unit of accountability to the Executive Board for results alignment and resources assigned to the programme at the country level. Managerial accountabilities at the country, regional and headquarters levels with respect to country programmes are prescribed in the organization's programme and operations policies and procedures.

52. The programme will be implemented and monitored in collaboration with the Government of Albania under the coordination of the Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs and the State Agency for Strategic Programming and Aid Coordination, in line with the UNSDCF 2027–2031.

53. Key risks to achieving include potential reductions or shifts in international and domestic financing for social sectors, leading to funding gaps, as well as institutional capacity constraints that may slow absorption of European Union pre-accession funds. To mitigate these risks, UNICEF will monitor the situation and reassess planning assumptions to remain agile and responsive, while ensuring effective stewardship of financial resources through strengthened governance and oversight with a focus on cost-efficiency, pursuing a strategic partnership approach, leveraging partners' capacities and resources, and optimizing the organizational structure to be fit for purpose.

54. The country's exposure to climate and environmental risks, particularly floods, earthquakes and extreme weather events, exacerbates child rights deprivations when they occur. To mitigate these risks, systematic emergency preparedness measures are incorporated across programme components. Early warning mechanisms and corporate risk management tools will be used to track trends and impacts of emergencies and mitigate risks.

55. UNICEF will work closely with the Government to mobilize resources from public and private sources, in accordance with national laws and regulations and in compliance with UNICEF rules, regulations and policies, to support the programme of cooperation. UNICEF will leverage financial and non-financial contributions from the Government, individuals and the private sector to advance children's rights. Strategic partnerships with corporations, philanthropies and foundations will be

strengthened to enhance trust, expand fundraising opportunities and increase awareness of children's rights.

Monitoring, learning and evaluation

56. The results and resources framework and the costed evaluation plan will guide outcome and output monitoring and reporting. Data and other evidence, including evaluation findings, and annual reviews with the Government and other partners will be used to adapt programme interventions when necessary. UNICEF will contribute to the UNSDCF monitoring framework and steer collective action and will report its contributions through the UNInfo platform.

57. UNICEF will support the Government on: (a) assessments of policies and programmes to measure results, strengthen evidence-based decision-making and scale up successful models; (b) monitoring of recommendations made by human rights treaty bodies, in particular the Committee on the Rights of the Child; (c) collaborate with the Institute of Statistics to strengthen data systems and track progress towards child-related Sustainable Development Goals, including through the Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS).

58. UNICEF will conduct evaluations as planned in the costed evaluation plan prioritizing joint evaluations to document lessons learned and inform programming for children.

Annex

Results and resources framework

Albania – UNICEF country programme of cooperation, January 2027–December 2031

<p>Convention on the Rights of the Child: articles 1–42</p> <p>National priorities: National Strategy for Development and European Integration 2022–2030; National Plan of Action of Child Guarantee 2026–2030; National Social Protection Strategy 2024–2030; National Education Strategy 2021–2026; Implementation Plan of the Youth Guarantee 2026–2028; Digital Education Strategy and Action Plan 2025–2030; National Youth Strategy 2022–2029; National Strategy of Employment and Skills 2023–2030; National Child Rights and Protection Agenda; Justice for Children Strategy; National Programme of Official Statistics; Sustainable Development Goals 1–5, 10, 16–17</p>
<p>UNSDCF outcomes involving UNICEF: 1, 3</p>
<p>Related Impact Results of the UNICEF Strategic Plan, 2026–2029: 1–5</p>

<i>UNSDCF outcomes</i>	<i>UNICEF outcomes</i>	<i>Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)</i>	<i>Means of verification</i>	<i>Indicative country programme outputs</i>	<i>Major partners, partnership frameworks</i>	<i>Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
						<i>RR</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Total</i>
Outcome 1: By 2031, all people in Albania – especially women and girls and those at risk of being left behind – enjoy improved learning outcomes, future-ready skills, decent work prospects, equitable access to quality, gender-responsive	1. By 2031, children and adolescents, particularly the most vulnerable, experience reduced poverty and are protected from adverse experiences through strengthened, integrated and shock-responsive social protection, health, child protection and justice systems.	<p>At-risk-of-poverty rate for children* B: 26.6% (2024) T: 25.6%</p> <p>Proportion of children aged 24–59 months developmentally on track* B: MICS 2026 (to be updated) T: 10 percentage points increase from baseline</p> <p>Percentage of children aged 1–14 years who experienced any violent discipline by caregivers in the past month* B: 47.5% (Albanian Demographic and Health Survey)</p>	<p>INSTAT</p> <p>MICS</p> <p>Ministry of Health and Social Welfare</p> <p>State Social Service</p>	<p>1.1. By 2031, national and local governments have strengthened capacities, policies and financing to deliver integrated and shock-responsive social protection systems.</p> <p>1.2. By 2031, the capacities of the child protection and justice system</p>	<p>Ministry of Health and Social Welfare</p> <p>State Social Service</p> <p>State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child</p> <p>Ministry of Finance</p> <p>Ministry of Justice</p> <p>Ministry of the Interior</p> <p>Municipalities</p>	1 550	5 150	6 700

<i>UNSDCF outcomes</i>	<i>UNICEF outcomes</i>	<i>Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)</i>	<i>Means of verification</i>	<i>Indicative country programme outputs</i>	<i>Major partners, partnership frameworks</i>	<i>Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)</i>		
						<i>RR</i>	<i>OR</i>	<i>Total</i>
<p>health, and inclusive social and child protection systems, contributing to demographic resilience and social cohesion.</p> <p>Outcome 3: By 2031, Albania's institutions demonstrate greater effectiveness, transparency and accountability, uphold human rights, the rule of law, and gender equality, and are more effective in preventing and combating corruption, organized crime and cybercrime, in line with European Union and international standards.</p>		<p>2019); male: 49.4%; female: 45.4% T: 30%</p> <p>Percentage of children in residential care of the total number of children in all forms of formal alternative care* B: 59.4% (2024) T: 40%</p>		<p>are strengthened, with decision makers and front-line professionals able to enhance the regulatory framework and deliver services that effectively protect children from adverse experiences.</p>	Civil society organizations			

UNSDCF outcomes	UNICEF outcomes	Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)	Means of verification	Indicative country programme outputs	Major partners, partnership frameworks	Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)		
						RR	OR	Total
Outcome 1	2. By 2031, girls and boys, especially the most vulnerable, have improved learning, skills development and access to pathways to employability.	<p>Learning proficiency (reading, mathematics, science)* B: PISA 2025 results (to be updated) T: 15-point increase for each area</p> <p>Net enrolment rate (all pre-university levels)* B: Level 0 (2021): Total: 78.8%; male: 79.5%; female: 78% Basic (Levels 1+2) (Census 2023): Total: 89.1%; Male: 89.0%; Female: 89.1% Upper secondary – level 3 (Census 2023): Total: 82.3%; Male: 81.3%; F: 83.4% Target: 6 percentage points increase all levels</p> <p>Youth not in Education, Employment, or Training (15–29 years)* B: 22.2% (2024); young women: 24.7%; young men: 19.7% T: Total: 15%; young women: 18%; young men: 13%</p>	<p>OECD PISA</p> <p>INSTAT</p> <p>Labour Force Survey</p> <p>Ministry of Education</p>	<p>2.1. By 2031, national and local policies, systems and programmes are strengthened to ensure inclusive, quality learning and holistic development for all girls and boys, with a particular focus on the most vulnerable.</p> <p>2.2. By 2031, education, training, employment and youth systems are coordinated and better equipped to deliver relevant skills for life and employability, enabling adolescents and youth to transition successfully into learning, work and civic participation.</p>	<p>Ministry of Education</p> <p>Agency for Quality Assurance</p> <p>Ministry of Finance</p> <p>Ministry of State for Local Government</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <p>National Youth Agency</p> <p>Ministry of Economy and Innovation</p> <p>National Agency for Employment and Skills</p> <p>Private sector</p> <p>Civil society organizations</p>	1 550	5 150	6 700

UNSDCF outcomes	UNICEF outcomes	Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)	Means of verification	Indicative country programme outputs	Major partners, partnership frameworks	Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)		
						RR	OR	Total
Outcome 3	3. By 2031, all boys and girls in Albania benefit from accountable, evidence-based governance systems, strengthened through multi-stakeholder partnerships, that deliver sustainable results for children.	Statistical Capacity Index* B: 83.7 (2024) T: 85.8 Child rights complaints registered from human rights institutions annually* B: 258 cases (2024) T: 310 (20% increase)	World Bank People's Advocate Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination	3.1. By 2031, institutions and oversight mechanisms are strengthened to systematically generate, analyse, and use quality evidence to monitor child outcomes, report on the realization and violations of child rights, and inform policy development and planning. 3.2. By 2031, strategic and multi stakeholder partnerships are strengthened to expand influence, mobilize resources, and accelerate results for children, advancing the national child rights agenda.	INSTAT State Agency for the Rights and Protection of the Child People's Advocate National Council for Child Rights Parliament Ministry of State for Local Government Municipalities Academia Civil society organizations Private sector Media	650	2 240	2 890

UNSDCF outcomes	UNICEF outcomes	Key progress indicators, baselines (B) and targets (T)	Means of verification	Indicative country programme outputs	Major partners, partnership frameworks	Indicative resources by country programme outcome: regular resources (RR), other resources (OR) (In thousands of United States dollars)		
						RR	OR	Total
Outcomes 1 and 3	4. The country programme is effectively designed and managed to high standards and delivers quality results for children.	Standard performance indicators achieved B: Yes (2026) T: Yes	UNICEF Results Assessment Module UNICEF Office Performance Scorecard	4.1. Programme Coordination. 4.2. External Relations and Communication 4.3. Cross- Sectorial Themes	All government counterparts European Union United Nations agencies International financial institutions Private sector Civil society organizations Media Academic institutions Children and adolescents	500	166	666
Total resources						4 250	12 706	16 956

* Indicator included in the UNSDCF Results Framework.