

SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN IN TRAVEL AND TOURISM IN ALBANIA

FACT SHEET

Terminology

COMMERCIAL SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF CHILDREN (CSEC)

THE USE OF CHILDREN FOR SEXUAL GRATIFICATION BY ADULTS FOR REMUNERATION IN CASH OR KIND TO THE CHILD, OR A THIRD PERSON(S). IT CONSTITUTES A FORM OF COERCION AND VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN, AND AMOUNTS TO FORCED LABOUR AND A CONTEMPORARY FORM OF SLAVERY. IT INCLUDES PROSTITUTION, CSAM, TRAFFICKING AND SALE OF CHILDREN AS WELL AS OTHER FORMS OF SEXUAL EXPLOITATION.

CHILD SEX TOURISM (CST)

SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS CHILD SEX TOURISM - THE SEXUAL EXPLOITATION OF A CHILD BY A PERSON OR PERSONS WHO ENGAGES IN SEXUAL ACTIVITIES WITH THE CHILD WHILE TRAVELING AWAY FROM THEIR OWN COUNTRY OR REGION. THIS USUALLY INVOLVES SOME FORM OF PAYMENT - EITHER CASH OR ITEMS SUCH AS FOOD, CLOTHING OR TRINKETS

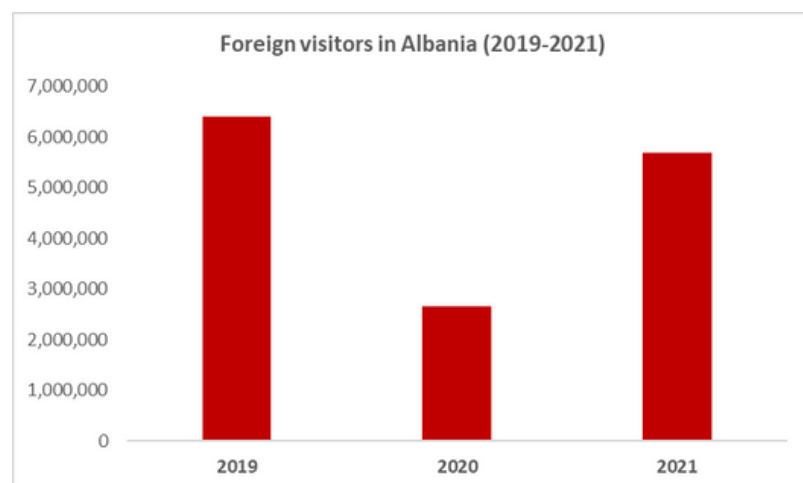
Sexual exploitation of children for profit in Albania appeared after 1990 with the collapse of the communist regime. Political, social and economic changes that took place in the country exposed children to new phenomena. In recent years, online sexual abuse of children and exploitation of children in travel and tourism have emerged as new trends, challenging child protection system and law enforcement.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Economic Impact Report 2018 of the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), during 2017, the tourism sector in Albania recorded a direct contribution of \$ 1.12 billion, accounting for about 8.5% of Gross Domestic Product (GDP), including the multiplier indirect effects, the total contribution is almost three times higher of \$ 3.47 billion, accounting for about 26.2% of GDP, positioning this sector as one of the main contributors to the development of the national economy.

Info-data

In 2021 Police reported the following sexual crimes against children and juveniles in Albania:

- 28 cases of sexual violence against children under 18 years old, majority of them against underage children.
- 22 cases of indecent behaviour against juveniles.
- 32 juveniles reported being victims of sexual harassment
- 9 cases of child trafficking and 1 case of CSAM



Data available shows that girls make up the majority of the victims of online and offline sexual violence and exploitation. Cities where the girls are sexually exploited in the tourism industry include: Tirana, Durrës, Vlora, Saranda and Shëngjin, mostly during summer season. The tourists include internal and external visitors.

TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN ALBANIA

Europe is the main source of tourists visiting Albania, occupying a volume of about 92.4% of all tourists, which reflects that access > 3 hours from one destination to another, is still an important factor for the flow of travelers for tourism purposes. Recently, tourists from the United States, Asia and especially China, have shown a significant growing interest.



In CSEC, children become "toys" for visitors and exploitation becomes a way to earn income for themselves or their families. Sexual and labor exploitation of children can lead to serious consequences that can last a lifetime for both physical and psychological development. Sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism occurs wherever tourism occurs. Travel and tourism are an integral part of everyday life in many countries, and international travel has become a common event for many people.

Code of Conduct for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation in Travel and Tourism (Code)

The Code is a multi-stakeholder initiative with the mission to provide awareness, tools and support to the tourism industry to prevent the sexual exploitation of children. Many offenders take advantage of hotel and other tourism facilities and services to commit their crimes. That's why working with the travel and tourism industry is essential to keeping children safe and ending the impunity of offenders. By becoming a member of The Code, travel and tourism companies gain access to tools and resources to use in their daily operations. They demonstrate their commitment and leadership in the industry to keeping children safe - (ECPAT International).

In Albania the Code was signed in November 2007 by about 22 tour operators and hotels in Albania. In 2022 CRCA/ECPAT Albania with the support of ECPAT Germany started their work towards better policies and awareness on child sexual exploitation in travel and tourism in Albania, including informing hotels and travel agents on the Code and how together we can contribute to better protection of children and young people from online and offline sexual violence and exploitation.

FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

CRCA/ECPAT Albania with the support of the ECPAT Germany developed a desktop research on protection of children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism during 2022. Below we will present the major findings and recommendations of this important study for Albania.

FINDINGS

The Albanian criminal legislation does not have any specific provisions regarding child sex tourism (although most criminal acts are covered in other articles related to child abuse, rape, child pornography, etc.). Data on criminality show very little or nothing at all related to sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.

National policies, such as the anti-trafficking strategy or the National Strategy for Children, do not have measures to protect children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism.

Law enforcement agencies and travel & tour operators have limited knowledge and information on exploitation of children in travel and tourism and how children should be protected from exploitation in this sector. Therefore they have not adopted a proactive approach for protecting children from exploitation by the travel and tourism industry.

The Government of Albania, especially at local level, has not implemented any measures for the protection of children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, at a time when tourism sector in Albania is growing significantly.

There is a marked lack of engagement from the travel and tourism sector in Albania, in the fight against sexual exploitation of children and young people. Lack of data on the sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism should be seen as a major concern from both the authorities and the tourism sector.

Lack of or non-use of available data, poor planning and coordination mechanisms, and insufficient consultation with appropriate local actors, including children and parents, make it difficult to monitor the situation for children exposed to sexual exploitation or trafficking.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Albanian Government serious and appropriate measures to protect children from sexual exploitation in travel and tourism, by including CSEC also at the Tourism Strategy. Travel and tourism sector are responsible to protect children from harm and exploitation.

Albania needs to establish unified protocols between travel and tour operators, the ministry of tourism and local authorities (that run child protection system in their territory, as well as a monitoring system jointly with the law enforcement agencies. The initiative to establish a tourist police may serve better towards the achievement of such objective.

Albania needs to develop new policies for the protection of children and young people from online and offline sexual violence and exploitation, including in travel and tourism. In this regard we encourage the authorities to start the preparation of a new 3 to 5 year action plan in respect of the child protection policy that has already been approved.

As it has been mentioned before in other reports of ECPAT International and CRCA/ ECPAT Albania there is an urgent need from the authorities to develop the criminal legislation to bring it in line with the international standards. This should include better protection for children who survive sexual violence and exploitation.

Training of police force, prosecutors and judges, and child protection officers on new forms of child sexual exploitation for commercial purposes, especially in travel and tourism shall be a priority for the Albanian Government.

Better awareness and information is required to increase the knowledge on the Code and while travel and tourism industry in Albania needs to adhere to its standards.

Finally, a better coordinated approach from all the institutions responsible for protecting children from online and offline sexual violence and exploitation is required in order to provide child survivors with better services for their rehabilitation and reintegration.

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