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2014 Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union



**Effective responses to emigration of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) from Albania toward European Union Member States**  
**15 October 2014**

**Background paper for the workshop**

**Objective:** To initiate a dialogue among Albanian authorities, European Union member states and other actors for identifying effective responses to the phenomena of emigration of unaccompanied minors from Albania toward the European Union (EU) Member States.

**Background:**

Emigration of Albanians toward the European Union (EU) in the last two decades has been a dynamic phenomenon, characterized by various typologies of emigration and migrants’ behaviours, and with a strong impact on the socio-economic development of Albania. Within this process, the emigration of unaccompanied minors (UAMs) has emerged as a ‘silent’ form of migration, escaping the attention of most researchers and policy-makers in Albania, leading to limited policy provisions and programmatic interventions to address such phenomenon. By the end of August 2014, the presence of 923 Albanian UAMs in the Italian territory was reported by the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policies<sup>1</sup>. Other EU member states such as the United Kingdom (UK), France, Germany, etc. are also reporting an increase of the presence of unaccompanied children from Albania who are either irregular or seek asylum in these countries. The Eurostat statistics on asylum seeking cases of unaccompanied minors shows a substantial rise as of 2010 as illustrated in the below table.

| Asylum requests from UAMs | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|
| Albania                   | 55   | 170  | 345  | 535  |

The steady presence of this category in several EU countries shows for a migration trend that requires a careful analysis of the push and pull factors. Such analysis would be essential in addressing the phenomenon appropriately and in protecting the best interest of the affected minors, in particular when there is evidence that emigration of UAMs is emerging as a new form of irregular migration toward the EU.

Evidence collected by IOM in the case of Italy, as well as from other countries shows that the Albanian UAMs belong primarily into the group of the so-called “*Dispatched Minors*”, driven to migrate for economic reasons in search of job opportunities. The minors, often with the support of their families exploit the social support opportunities provided by the legislation of the Countries of Destination (CoD) to enter and stay in these countries through various protection mechanisms (including the asylum system). In the case of Italy, the majority of minors enter to this country with a valid biometric and in several cases the minor is being

<sup>1</sup> Report Nazionale, Minori Stranieri non- Accompagnati, 31 Agosto 2014, Ministero del Lavoro e delle Politiche Sociali



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accompanied by the parent/s given the facility of entry through the visa liberalization regime between Albania and the EU Schengen area. Hence, the misuse of the visa liberalisation regime for irregular entry of UAMs to

other EU countries needs to be further examined in an effort to better understand and prevent irregular migration of Albanian UAMs toward the EU.

In terms of **preventive** measures and actions, the IOM Mission in Albania has identified the need to raise awareness of minors' families on the risks the minors can be exposed while emigrating and being without the care of the family. Provision of information on the Albanian legislation with regard to child protection should be widely pursued in particular in the regions with the highest influx of UAMs. Other possible prevention activities may also include actions in support of families of the minors (through education, job placement, etc).

On the EU side, there is a growing recognition among the European Union (EU) member states that the challenges related to the presence of UAMs in the EU are increasing. A considerable number of third-country nationals or stateless persons below the age of 18 arrive on EU territory unaccompanied by a responsible adult, or are left unaccompanied after they have entered EU territory. A 2012 report of the European Commission informs that there has been no substantial reduction in the numbers of children arriving in the EU, and this is unlikely to change in the coming years. From the EU perspective, four main strands for action have been identified, including *data collection, prevention, reception and identification of durable solutions* as reflected in the EU Action Plan on Unaccompanied Minors (2010- 2014). All member states recognize that *prevention* of unsafe migration and trafficking of children is the first step for effectively tackling the issue of unaccompanied minors. To this end, the Action Plan envisions support for third countries in improving their legislative and administrative capacity to identify UAMs asylum seekers and victims of trafficking (VOTs) and set up specific assistance programmes. In terms of identifying *durable solutions*, the EU encourages Member States to develop innovative partnership solutions with third countries of origin and transit, for example through funding a range of educational and training activities, studies and research; support for projects and policies creating study and training opportunities in the countries of origin, open to all minors.

The situation demands also an enhanced coordination between EU member states and the Albanian authorities responsible for migration management in the country. Some actions at the bilateral level are taking place such as: Italy continues to carry out family and reintegration assessment as of 2008 with the support of IOM; a cooperation agreement with the UK on the exchange of information on asylum and migration has been signed by the Albanian Ministry of Internal Affairs. In some instances, France has cooperated with the Albanian Border Police and State Social Service for tracing families of origin in Albania to prepare a social economic profile of the family and to determine whether the best interest of the minor is to return or not. Other EU countries such as Belgium, Netherlands are examining the options of assisted voluntary return and reintegration of UAMs. Nevertheless, all concerned parties at the EU level and in Albania would benefit from an enhanced coordination. The role of the migration management agencies such as IOM, PAMECA mission and other actors is seen as increasingly important for understanding the phenomenon and for articulating effective programmatic responses.

The main areas for future intervention include therefore:

- Understanding the phenomenon and push/pull factors (country analysis and trends event at the WB region level);



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- Examining country responses to the phenomenon (policies, legislation and implementation and institutional frameworks and attitudes);
- Establishing dialogue between Albania with EU members states in addressing the phenomenon to identify effective prevention and protection measures for minors;
- Developing and implementing prevention and protection programmatic interventions (specific national and international projects);

The proposed workshop will “kick off” actions in addressing the emigration of UAMs from Albania. It will initiate a dialogue among Albanian authorities, European Union member states and other actors for identifying effective responses to the phenomena of emigration of unaccompanied minors from Albania toward the European Union (EU) Member States.

**Organizers:**

**IOM, the EU Delegation in Albania, PAMECA IV Mission in Albania, the Government of Albania and the Italian Embassy in Tirana.**

The workshop takes place in the framework of the project “**Foster social inclusion of Roma communities in Albania through targeted interventions for vulnerable children**”, funded by the EU Delegation in Albania through IPA 2012 facility for civil society and co-funded by IOM. The project is implemented by the local NGO Union for Development and Integration of Roma Minority in Albania ‘Amaro Drom’ and IOM. The workshop is also technically and financially supported by PAMECA IV Mission in Albania.

**Agenda:** Please find it enclosed in Annex A