



Kosovo Women's Network

Serving, Protecting and Promoting the Rights of Women and Girls



How Much Does Protection Cost?

Costing Services Provided by the Albanian Women's Empowerment Network for Addressing Gender-based Violence in Albania

March 2025

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Acronyms

ALL	Albanian lek
AWEN	Albania Women's Empowerment Network
CoE	Council of Europe
CCLI	Centre for Civic Legal Initiatives
CRM	Coordinated Referral Mechanisms
CSO	Civil society organisation
DV	Domestic violence
EU	European Union
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GBVIMS	Gender-based Violence Information Management System
GoA	Government of Albania
GRB	Gender-responsive budgeting
GREVIO	Group of Experts on Action against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in Europe
IC	Istanbul Convention
KWN	Kosovo Women's Network
LGBTIQI	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, intersex, queer, and other identifying persons
MoHSP	Ministry of Health and Social Protection
MTBP	Medium-Term Budget Program
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NSDI	National Strategy for Development and Integration
NTEC	National Transitional Emergency Centre
PEFA	Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
VAW	Violence against women
VoV	Victims of violence
WCSOs	Women's rights civil society organisations
WFE	Women's Forum Elbasan

Executive Summary

The Government of Albania has committed to implementing the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (IC), which requires offering comprehensive, victim-centred services to persons who have suffered gender-based violence. The IC calls on state parties to allocate appropriate financial and human resources for implementing integrated policies to combat all forms of violence, including support for civil society organisations (CSOs) engaged in addressing gender-based violence. Amid insufficient state services, CSOs offer several expert services towards implementing the IC in Albania.

Despite their vital role, CSOs are insufficiently funded by the Government. The Albania Women's Empowerment Network (AWEN) and Kosovo Women's Network (KWN) have assessed the costs of CSOs' services to address gender-based violence to inform Government budget allocations. This paper outlines AWEN members' costs for providing emergency support, shelter, legal aid, and reintegration services, as among the main providers of such services in Albania. It does not assess the costs of services provided by the state or other CSOs, which also should be analysed annually to ensure adequate state budget allocations in line with the IC. Nor does this paper estimate the cost of services not yet in place but needed in accordance with the IC, which requires further inquiry and address. Providing improved quality services could involve additional costs, such as for upgrading existing services to meet best practice standards outlined in the IC (i.e., access for persons with disabilities, extending services to new geographic areas, comprehensive rehabilitation services). Such costs should be considered in the future.

On average, service providers assisted approximately 2,000 persons per year between 2020 and 2024. This can be used to forecast the anticipated number of beneficiaries in future years: 2,000. The need for such services could increase, particularly if awareness-raising and outreach encourage more persons who have suffered violence to seek services. Meanwhile, it is inadvisable to cost services based only on persons assisted because services must always be available, particularly in emergency situations. Service providers must consistently have staff available and working to assist persons in need. Thus, total costs of organisations' services must be estimated to ensure consistent, available services. Trends in operating costs can be used to predict the cost of holistic, uninterrupted services, as foreseen by the IC.

Overall, the Government of Albania needs to increase the state budget by 196 million ALL for 2026, 197 million ALL for 2027, and 199 million ALL for 2028 in the forthcoming Medium-Term Budget Program (MTBP), towards financing AWEN members' existing services in line with the IC and Group of Experts on Action against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in Europe (GREVIO), recommendations, thereby upholding the Government's responsibility of providing holistic services. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) should allocate these funds, distributing them through districts, as the currently applied modality for funding Vatra and the Counselling Line, for example. The Ministry should increase its budget line to ensure full coverage of these CSOs and their current services. Future and continual funding should be provided to these and other CSOs service-providers following monitoring of their transparent use of state funds. Costs can vary annually due to factors such as changes in demand for services and inflation. Expanding services to meet the level of need would require further costs related to construction or reconstruction of buildings, purchasing additional equipment, and human resource costs, among others. These should be considered in planning medium term budget priorities towards scaling up existing services to meet the level of need in line with the IC and commitments in the National Strategy for Gender Equality. Thus, costing exercises should be performed annually in close collaboration with service providers, and midterm budget predictions should be updated annually, using best practices in gender-responsive budgeting.

Meanwhile, MHSP can improve the accuracy of collecting, maintaining, and analysing data in the REVALB (Recording Violence) data management system to support gender analysis that can inform predicting the level of demand for services, particularly in underserved areas. The Ministry should ensure continued obligatory training of officials engaged in data entry to enhance quality, as recommended by GREVIO and allocate additional resources for shelter and Rape Crisis Centres to implement obligations according to the IC. MHSP should allocate sufficient, sustained funds for covering all costs of service providers offering services as per IC requirements, continuing similar costing exercises annually.

1. Introduction

The Government of Albania has committed to implementing the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, also known as “the Istanbul Convention” (IC),¹ which requires offering comprehensive, victim-centred services to persons who have suffered gender-based violence. The Government does not have sufficient expertise and capacities for providing these services alone. Therefore, it relies on services provided by women’s rights civil society organisations (WCSOs), which have decades of expertise offering such services. Yet, the Government has not allocated adequate financing for these services, which places the existence of centres offering these services and thus victims of violence at risk. To implement its commitments under the IC, the Government of Albania urgently needs to allocate resources from the Government budget for WCSO service providers. To do this, adequate budget estimates are needed.

Building on its prior research and experience in Kosovo,² where it successfully advocated for the Government to fully finance shelters, the Kosovo Women’s Network (KWN) has developed a methodology for costing services provided by WCSOs to address gender-based violence, including existing services and those still needed in accordance with the IC.³ This methodology focuses on WCSOs’ costs for providing emergency support, shelter, and reintegration services. This methodology has informed this analysis. Albania Women’s Empowerment Network (AWEN) members, among the main providers of such services in Albania, are the main unit of analysis. Other service providers exist, and additional services are needed as per the IC; however, these were not the focus of this analysis and should be examined through future analyses. AWEN aims to use findings to inform specific budget proposals to the Government of Albania for appropriately financing these services. AWEN members also can use the methodology to calculate costs in future years.

To ensure the methodology is grounded in current best practices, a rapid literature review was conducted based on the provisions of the IC. This review sought to build on international guidelines and procedures for costing methodologies. While there is no “one size fits all” approach to gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) for gender-based violence services, there is a growing body of knowledge about what works and guidelines for implementation. Two key approaches are “impact costing” and “unit costing”. While impact costing focuses on determining the overall price of domestic violence for society and revealing hidden costs, unit costing involves measuring costs to institutions and service providers. Unit costing often is used to estimate costs related to addressing responses to violence against women (VAW), thereby providing evidence for future funding and facilitating measurement of progress towards international obligations.⁴ This methodology employs unit costing as it is also more suitable to the objectives of identifying and budgeting for service providers’ costs. Unit costing involves a detailed examination of budget lines to help determine exact expenditures. Determining these micro-costs sits within existing GRB methodologies and procedures for costing.

KWN drew from internationally acknowledged sources to inform this costing exercise. Specifically, UN Women’s “Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence Module 7” provides detailed guidance on estimating resource requirements for services for women and girls subject to violence.⁵ Logar Rosa’s “Shelters for Victims of Gender Based Violence in Europe Best

¹ Council of Europe, [Albania’s Commitment entry into force](#), 2014.

² KWN, [At What Cost? Budgeting for the Implementation of the Legal Framework against Domestic Violence in Kosovo](#), 2012.

³ Collaboration on this analysis built on pre-existing cooperation between KWN and AWEN.

⁴ Appelt, B., Romanin, A. & Perttu, S. “Away from violence: Guidelines for setting up and running a women’s refuge”, Vienna: WAVE, 2004.

⁵ UN Women, “Essential Services Package for Women and Girls Subject to Violence Module 7, Guidance on estimating resource requirements for a minimum package of services for selected interventions in the United Nations Joint Global Programme on Essential Services for Women and Girls Subject to Violence and beyond”, 2020.

Practices and Challenges” also was consulted, which includes a useful overview of IC obligations.⁶ The Group of Experts on Action against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in Europe (GREVIO) baseline assessment questionnaire provides guidelines on unit costing and was consulted as well.⁷ Additionally, Albania’s legal framework and the country’s current landscape of shelters and services for survivors of violence were reviewed to understand legal commitments, funding available, infrastructure, and needs.

2. Relevant Legal Framework

This section examines the legal framework relevant to costing services, including international commitments, laws, and secondary legislation.

2.1. International Commitments

2.1.1. The Istanbul Convention

Albania has committed to implementing the IC.⁸ It sets forth clear requirements for state parties related to service provision. The IC foresees a range of specialised protection and support services for women, their children, and girls subjected to violence. Parties need to “provide or arrange for specialist women’s support services to all women victims of violence and their children”.⁹ Three main types of specialist support services exist, examined in this costing exercise:

1. Women’s shelters as residential services that provide safe accommodation and support
2. Women’s centres, including rape and sexual assault centres, offering non-residential support, such as crises intervention and counselling, advocacy support in accessing rights, including social and economic rights, court accompaniment, pro-active support, outreach, and other services
3. Women’s helplines providing telephone counselling and online support via e-mail and through help-chats

Related to shelters, the IC calls for:

shelters to be set up in sufficient numbers to provide appropriate temporary accommodation for all victims. Each type of violence requires a different kind of support and protection, and staff need to be trained to provide these. The term “sufficient numbers” is intended to ensure that the needs of all victims are met, both in terms of shelter places and specialised support. The Final Activity Report of the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (EG-TFV (2008)6) **recommends safe accommodation in specialised women’s shelters, available in every region, with one family place per 10 000 head of population.** However, the number of shelter places should depend on the actual need. For shelters on other forms of violence, the number of places to be offered will again depend on the actual need.¹⁰

On women’s centres, including rape crisis centres, the IC includes:

⁶ Logar Rosa, “Shelters for Victims of Gender Based Violence in Europe: Best Practices and Challenges”, EUROSOCIAL Programme, 2021, p. 23.

⁷ Gender-Based Violence Information Management System (GBVIMS), “Linking Data Analysis to Programming Series”, undated, GREVIO, 2016. The full [questionnaire](#) is available online.

⁸ Law No. 47/2018, On Some Additions and Amendments, 2018, to Law No. 9669, 2006, On Measures Against Violence in Family Relations.

⁹ Council of Europe, [The Istanbul Convention](#), 2012, Article 22.2.

¹⁰ Council of Europe, [Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence](#), 2011, p. 25.

The requirement to provide for the setting up of such centres places an obligation on Parties to the Convention to ensure that this is done in sufficient numbers, but also to ensure their easy access and that their services are carried out in an appropriate manner. The Final Activity Report of the Council of Europe Task Force to Combat Violence against Women, including Domestic Violence (EG-TFV (2008)6) **recommends that one such centre should be available per every 200,000 inhabitants and that their geographic spread should make them accessible to victims in rural areas as much as in cities.** The term “appropriate” is intended to ensure that the services offered are suitable for the needs of victims.¹¹

The IC thus offers guidance regarding the number of shelters and rape crisis centres that Albania should have available. Notably, it foresees ensuring that they are in geographic areas where services are available and accessible; and calls for quality services in line with victims’ needs. As a State Party, Albania should utilise this guidance to inform the extent of need and budget accordingly to address these needs.

Articles 8 and 9 of the Convention call for supporting non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society engaged in addressing gender-based violence and offering services. It states that the signing party, thus Albania, should allocate “appropriate financial and human resources for the adequate implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the scope of this Convention, including those carried out by non-governmental organisations and civil society”.¹² Article 9 specifically states that “Parties shall recognise, encourage and support, at all levels, the work of relevant non-governmental organisations and of civil society active in combating violence against women and establish effective co-operation with these organisations.”¹³ Related to these articles, the 2024 GREVIO report:

strongly encourages the Albanian authorities to: a. to plan/allocate appropriate, sufficient and sustainable funds for policies, programmes and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women, both at central and municipal level; b. to ensure, through adequate funding, a sustainable role for women's rights NGOs that provide support services to victims of all forms of violence against women and all categories of victims, including legal aid, for example, through long-term grants based on transparent procurement procedures, and to remove unnecessary bureaucratic obstacles in the funding application process.¹⁴

Additionally, IC Article 13 requires parties to regularly promote or conduct awareness-raising campaigns and programs in collaboration with human rights institutions, equality bodies, and CSOs, especially WCSOs, to educate the public on all forms of violence covered by the IC and their impacts, including on children. It also mandates the broad distribution of information about measures available to prevent such violence.¹⁵ Thus, such awareness-raising efforts should be financed by State Parties, as well.

2.2. Albania’s Regulatory Framework

The provision of social services related to gender-based violence in Albania is governed by a regulatory framework that outline the standards, criteria, and indicators mandatory for service providers, including WCSOs. It should ensure that services such as emergency support, shelter, and reintegration for persons who have suffered all forms of gender-based violence meet quality and safety standards in compliance with the IC. This section outlines the relevant legal framework.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 26.

¹² Ibid., Article 8.

¹³ Ibid., Article 9.

¹⁴ Council of Europe, GREVIO [report on Albania](#), 2024, p. 14.

¹⁵ Council of Europe, [The Istanbul Convention](#), 2012, Article 13.

2.2.1. Law on Gender Equality in Society

The purpose of this Law is to ensure effective protection against gender-based discrimination. It aims to establish measures that guarantee equal opportunities between women and men, eliminating all forms of gender-based discrimination.¹⁶ Additionally, the Law defines the responsibilities of central and local government authorities to draft and implement normative acts and policies that support the development and promotion of gender equality in society. This Law is grounded in the principle of equality and non-discrimination, as well as other principles outlined in the Constitution of the Republic of Albania, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and other international acts ratified by Albania. The Law is relevant to addressing gender-based violence as among the worst forms of gender-based discrimination. It also relates to ensuring access to services without discrimination based on gender, among other factors like geographic location, disability, and ethnicity.

2.2.2. Law on Measures against Violence in Family Relations

This Law amends a previous law, aiming to prevent and reduce domestic violence in all its forms through appropriate legal measures and other necessary actions, while ensuring the protection of family members who are victims of domestic violence. It specifically focuses on providing legal and other necessary protections to vulnerable groups such as children, the elderly, persons with disabilities, and other individuals who require special protection.¹⁷ Further, Article 7.4 on the Duties of responsible line authorities states that “Local self-government units, based on the provisions of the legislation in force for local self-government, within the framework of the implementation of this law, have the following duties: establishing social and rehabilitation centers for victims and providing services to them; coordinating work with existing centers, giving priority to specialized centers in relevant fields and emergency centers for the immediate treatment of victims of domestic violence”¹⁸

2.2.3. Law on Social Services

Article 31 outlines the right to housing. It commits to measures to “1) promote access to housing of an adequate standard; 2) prevent and reduce the number of homeless people with the aim of gradually eliminating homelessness; 3) make housing affordable for those without sufficient resources.”¹⁹ Further, Article 17 focuses on the rights of children and youth to economic, legal, and social protection, aiming to protect them from neglect, violence, and exploitation.²⁰ The right to housing relates to the right to shelter and adequate housing following emergency shelter as part of comprehensive rehabilitation services for persons who have suffered violence.

2.2.4. Law on Social Housing

In 2018, to align its policies with the IC, the Albanian Government passed this law which ensures appropriate and safe housing for victims of gender-based violence. The Centre for Civic Legal Initiatives (CLCI) has stated that the law was passed in coordination with civil society during the consultation process and aligned with international standards set by the IC, to extend housing specifically to women as victims of gender-based violence, defining beneficiaries as “1. Victims of domestic violence; 2. Victims of trafficking; 3. Potential victims of trafficking.”²¹ The Law states that there should be affordable and adequate housing for victims, which offers security, respect, participation, transparency, public information, and non-discrimination.²²

¹⁶ Law [No. 9970/2008](#) on Gender Equality in Society, 2008.

¹⁷ [Law No. 47/2018, on Additions and Amendments](#) to Law No. 9669, 2006, on Measures against Violence in Family Relations, particularly Article 3.

¹⁸ Ibid., Article 7.4.

¹⁹ Law [No. 7703](#), dated 11.5.1993 on Social Services, p. 89.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 85.

²¹ Law No. 22/2018 “On Social Housing” mentioned in CLCI, law No. 22/2018 “on Social Housing”, 2018.

²² UNDP, Social Housing Design and Construction, 2019, p. 23.

2.2.5. Law on Social Care Services

The Law “On Social Care Services”²³ stipulates central level and municipal responsibilities for planning, financing, and delivering at least a minimum set of services. It outlines several possible funding sources for these services: a) state budget allocations (delegated funds), b) local government budgets, c) ring-fenced revenues/sources, and d) service fees paid by beneficiaries.

In 2018, the Council of Ministers approved the establishment of the Social Fund²⁴ (SF), allocating 150 million ALL (approximately €1.28 million) in the 2019 social protection budget. A ministerial instruction also was issued, detailing a competitive procedure for municipalities to access this fund. The SF aims to support municipalities in enhancing and sustaining existing services, creating new ones, and expanding them nationwide. This support is aligned with approved Local Social Plans and emphasises long-term sustainability by gradually transitioning to financing from locally mobilised resources.

2.2.6. Law on the Management of the Budget System in the Republic of Albania

This 2008 Law mentions that a principle of the budgetary system is gender equality, which “refers to the situation where men and women enjoy equal opportunities and access to rights and benefits of the same nature”.²⁵ The Law does not mention gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) explicitly, which could have supported institutionalising GRB into the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of public resources, affecting more accurate, transparent, efficient, effective, and impactful budgeting across various sectors, including towards better addressing gender-based violence. The Law could be better harmonised with the Public Expenditure and Financial Accountability (PEFA) Gender Responsive Public Financial Management and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.c.1. guidance.²⁶

2.3. Secondary Legislation and Policy Framework

2.3.1. National Strategy for Gender Equality 2021-2030 and Action Plan on Gender Equality

As the fourth such consecutive Strategy, it includes “reduction of gender-based and domestic violence” among its aims.²⁷ The Strategy mentions the IC and obliges authorities to implement it. The Strategy plans to increase the number of emergency and long-term shelters as well as to enhance the quality of services they provide and to increase support for CSOs offering specialist services.²⁸ Meanwhile, GREVIO has observed that the Strategy focuses on domestic violence without sufficient attention to other forms of violence addressed by the IC, including sexual violence.²⁹ Notably, it does not include sufficient budget allocations to finance implementation of strategic commitments to addressing gender-based violence, relying substantially on foreign aid rather than state resources.³⁰

²³ Law [No. 121](#) on Social Care Services, 2016

²⁴ Law no. 111/2018 on the creation and the functioning of the Social Fund, 2018.

²⁵ Law Nr. [9936](#), dated 26.6.2008 on the Management of the Budgetary System in the Republic of Albania, amended by Law No. 114/2012, approved on 7.12.2012 and by Law No. 57/2016, approved on 2.6.2016, Article 4.

²⁶ PEFA Secretariat, [Supplementary Framework for Assessing Gender Responsive Public Financial Management. Guidance for Assessment Teams](#), Washington DC: 2020. Further information about PEFA is available [online](#). UN SDG 5.c.1. indicator refers to the “Proportion of countries with systems to track and make public allocations for gender equality and women’s empowerment”. Criteria developed by UN Women exist for assessing countries’ systems, at: UN, [SDG indicator metadata](#), last updated March 2023.

²⁷ Government of Albania, “National Strategy for Gender Equality of Albania (2021-2030)”, p. 10.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 35.

²⁹ GREVIO, “Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice: Albania: First thematic evaluation report”, GREVIO(2024)6, 2024, p. 12, para. 15.

³⁰ Ibid.

2.3.2. National Strategy on Social Protection 2024-2030

This Strategy focuses on reducing poverty and enhancing the quality of life for individuals in need, particularly persons with disabilities, by providing financial support through inclusive, gender-responsive, transparent, and crisis-resilient schemes. Policy Goal B emphasises expanding integrated, accessible, high-quality, and gender-responsive social services, along with promoting the deinstitutionalisation of residential care in collaboration with local governments and other stakeholders.³¹

2.3.3. National Public Financial Management Sectoral Strategy 2023-2030

This Strategy commits to planning sustainable and efficient funding for public services, as well as to transparency and reliability of data pertaining to financing. Pillar two calls for integrated strategic and budget planning, monitoring, and transparent reporting, as well as to enhance budget execution. This includes integrated strategic planning, medium-term budget planning, public investment management, local finance, and budget execution monitoring.³² The Strategy states that “All central and local government institutions present their policies and budgets in accordance with Gender Equality principles”. Measure 2.2.4 involves developing and introducing GRB and climate-responsive budgeting, including “ex ante and ex post gender analysis”.³³ Costing exercises such as this can inform such gender analyses that contribute to evidence-based budget planning. The Economic Reform Programme relates indirectly to this Strategy, outlining government priorities for 2024-2026.

2.3.4. National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Decentralisation and Local Governance 2023-2030

This Strategy includes “efficient implementation of the functions of the municipalities”, which can relate to ensuring adequate social protection services, including related to addressing gender-based violence.³⁴

2.3.5. Ministry of Health and Social Protection Instruction: Standards for Safe Emergency Shelter

This Instruction presents standards, indicators, and guidelines for each standard in offering emergency services to children and other people in need of shelter.³⁵ Beneficiaries of the emergency shelter service include: a) any child in need of protection, both accompanied and unaccompanied, abused, victims of domestic violence, victims of trafficking, and possible victims of trafficking; b) children with special needs (with mild disabilities); c) adults, in cases where they are parents accompanying their children, with social problems, victims of violence, trafficking, or those with proven addiction to drugs and alcohol; d) pregnant girls or mothers with children; e) minors and youth in conflict with the law, who have completed their sentence or who have left residential care institutions and are in need of temporary emergency safe shelter services under protection conditions. The Standards include objectives, types of services, rights, personal data protection, administration of services, safety of beneficiaries and staff, evaluation and monitoring, and budgeting of services.

2.3.6. Standards of Social Care Services for Trafficked Persons or at Risk of Trafficking in Residential Centres

These Standards for trafficked persons or those at risk of trafficking aims to enhance the quality of social services provided in residential centres.³⁶ These standards, which emphasise principles of

³¹ Albania's [National Strategy on Social Protection 2024-2030](#), 2024.

³² [National Public Financial Management Sectoral Strategy 2023-2030 and Action Plan 2023-2026](#), p. 18.

³³ Ibid., p. 21.

³⁴ Albania Ministrial Commission No.252, [National Cross-Sectoral Strategy for Decentralisation and Local Governance 2023-2030](#), 2023.

³⁵ Albania Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MHSP) No. 354, [on the Approval of Standards for the Service of Safe Emergency Housing](#), 2022.

³⁶ Government of Albania (GoA), [Decision No. 195 Adopting Standards of Care Services Social, in Residential Centers, for Trafficked Persons or at Risk of Trafficking](#), 2007.

equality, non-discrimination, and comprehensive support, outline state obligations to offer social, medical, psychological, and material assistance. They ensure professional service delivery, safety, and collaboration among local structures, CSOs, and other stakeholders. These standards serve as a practical guide for service providers, detailing criteria for efficient and professional care. They also form the basis for licensing, inspection, and evaluation by authorities to ensure high-quality support for trafficked individuals.

2.3.7. Standards for the National Emergency Transit Centre

Emergency service standards for the National Transit Emergency Centre (NTEC) aim to safeguard and further human rights as enshrined in the Constitution, Albanian legislation, and international conventions ratified by the Government.³⁷ The standards aim to offer comprehensive support in emergency situations, especially for families and vulnerable individuals like the elderly or those with disabilities, who may need urgent help or shelter. These standards require quality services, respecting principles such as equality, non-discrimination, and social inclusion. The standards are based on current legislation and practices at the NTEC. They are a legal requirement for central and local authorities for measuring and improving service quality for human rights protections. By implementing these standards, the authorities should be better equipped to plan and provide integrated services to meet urgent social needs, fostering regional and local cooperation networks.

2.3.8. Standards of Social Care Services for Victims of Domestic Violence in Public and Non-Public Residential Centres

This Decision of the Council of Ministers contains seven basic standards for services for victims of domestic violence in residential, public, and non-public centres.³⁸ It includes evaluation criteria, quality indicators, guidelines, and expected outcomes. The standards are mandatory for all service providers and are necessary for licensing, control, and evaluation of these services. The first standard focuses on providing services that meet the individual needs of victims for protection and support. The minimum required services include shelter, clothing, food, social work, psychological support, referrals, and daily access. Additional services may be offered including psychological, medical, legal, professional training, financial, and educational/academic assistance. The beneficiary should participate in the program by identifying their own needs, taking responsibility for their personal space, children, cooking, cleaning, and childcare, either individually or in groups with other beneficiaries.

Standard two ensures that beneficiaries' needs are thoroughly assessed to create individualised care plans, developed collaboratively with each beneficiary, detailing necessary actions to address these needs. Under this standard, emergency needs assessments must be completed within 72 hours, followed by a comprehensive needs assessment by the centre's multidisciplinary team, which will also develop a long-term care plan. The other standards relate to the rights and responsibilities of beneficiaries, personal data of beneficiaries and its management, management of the service centre, security of beneficiaries and staff, and monitoring and evaluation. Fulfilling these standards has budget allocations, which this methodology has sought to consider.

2.3.9. Standards for Social Care Services for Victims/Survivors of Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence

The 2019 Council of Ministers Decision established minimum standards for social care services for victims/survivors of gender-based violence and domestic violence in public emergency (short-term) residential centers and non-public (emergency shelters).³⁹ The standards incorporate international and

³⁷ GoA, [Decision No. 572 for Adoption of Service Standards at the National Center Emergency Transit](#), 2015.

³⁸ GoA, CoM, [Decision No. 505 On the Adoption of Standards of Social Care Services for Victims of Domestic Violence in Residential, Public and Non-Public Centres](#), 2011.

³⁹ GoA, Decision No. 744, dated 15.11.2019, [“On the approval of the minimum standards of social care services for victims / survivors of gender-based violence and domestic violence, in public emergency \(short-term\) residential centres and non-public \(emergency shelters\)”](#).

national principles of equality, dignity, individual protection, and security, towards high-quality services for all beneficiaries regardless of age, ethnicity, disabilities, religion, gender identity, or sexual orientation, with temporary solutions until longer-term housing and support alternatives are found.

2.3.10. Standards for the Provision of Services and Functioning of Crisis Management Centres for Cases of Sexual Violence

This 2018 Instruction outlines standards for crisis management centres for cases of sexual violence.⁴⁰ The service standards for crisis management centres for cases of sexual violence aim to protect the lives of victims, including women and girls, boys and men, children, adults, and minors, as well as their family members. These centres provide integrated, 24/7, short-term emergency services lasting between 24 and 72 hours. Based on survivors' needs, after receiving emergency treatment, they are referred to specialised centres for long-term care.

2.3.11. Decision on Gender Integration in the Medium-term Budget Program

The Council of Ministers mandated the integration of gender perspectives into Albania's medium-term budget program (MTBP) for 2013-2015, as per constitutional and legal requirements.⁴¹ In 2013, all line ministries had to include at least one objective towards gender equality in their budgets and use indicators to measure resulting changes. The Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities, with the Ministry of Finance, is tasked with guiding and overseeing this process. Grants from regional development funds should promote gender equality, and budget programs should align with national gender equality strategies. This has relevance for using GRB to inform budgeting for services related to addressing gender-based violence.

2.3.12. Guidelines for Standard Procedures of Program Preparation Medium-term Budget

Based on the amended Law “on Management of the Budget System in the Republic of Albania”, these Guidelines state that:

all budgetary programs, must define at least one gender-based objective accompanied by indicators respective performance at the objective and product level. Where applicable, programs budgets must define or reflect policy goals in full accordance with the goals strategies for achieving gender equality defined in National Strategy for Development and Integration (NSDI), cross-sectoral strategies and sectoral, clearly evidencing the relevant performance indicators.⁴²

This requirement seeks to ensure that gender perspectives are systematically integrated into budget planning and implementation, aligning financial resources with gender equality objectives. It has relevance to applying GRB principles to costing and budgeting for addressing gender-based violence.

2.4. Conclusion

Albania has committed to implementing the IC and has a legal framework that foresees providing shelter, tele-counselling, and other services for persons who have suffered gender-based violence. While Albania has made progress, its legal framework pertaining to GRB is not sufficiently detailed to institutionalise gender analysis as part of evidence-based budgeting that informs medium-term and annual budgets, including towards addressing gender-based violence. Further official guidance or instructions could support officials in conducting gender analysis and utilising existing data management systems to inform more accurate budgeting towards addressing and preventing gender-based violence.

⁴⁰ GoV, Instruction No. 816, dated 27.11.2018, [“On the approval of standards for the provision of services and the functioning of crisis management centers, for cases of sexual violence.”](#)

⁴¹ GoA, [Decision No. 465 For Gender Integration in the Medium Term Budget Programme](#), 2012.

⁴² GoA, [Decision No. 7 For Standard Procedures Preparation of the Program Medium Term Budget](#), 2018, p. 56.

3. Services Available

This section describes the services available in Albania in comparison with commitments to the IC. The IC calls for States Parties to ensure that support services are “adequately resourced and that the staff are adequately trained on the different forms of violence against women and able to respond to victims in a supportive manner.”⁴³ Further, the IC foresees “specialist support services” that “ensure the complex task of empowering victims through optimal support and assistance catered to their specific needs [for a] trust-based system of protection and support”, observing that “much of this is best ensured by women’s organisations”.⁴⁴

3.1. Shelter and Rape Crisis Centres

The Albanian authorities have established 13 municipal emergency shelters. Primarily operated by municipalities, these provide 72-hour accommodation and several offer psycho-social and legal services.⁴⁵ However, for long-term shelters, GREVIO reported that challenges persist.⁴⁶ In 2023, Albania had 24 shelters accessible to women and children, with only eight offering long-term accommodation and a total of 153 beds, falling short of IC standards.⁴⁷ Shelters are mainly located in major cities, including Tirana, Vlorë, Elbasan, Dibrë, Shkodër, Durrës,⁴⁸ Gjirokastrë, and Fier. Funding comes from the state, donations from local sources, and international funders, as discussed in the next section. Only one shelter for women who have suffered domestic violence receives financing from the MHSP directly, though others receive funding from other ministries, municipalities, and programs.⁴⁹ It has 40 beds in eight rooms, which, at times of low occupancy, are used as “family places” as per the IC.⁵⁰ However, only victims who have reported crimes and have a protection order can use the shelter; it regularly turns victims away even when it is not at full occupancy.⁵¹ This is in violation of the rights foreseen by the IC. MHSP also finances the CSO-run “Vatra” Psycho-Social Center through the Vlorë District Council, including 12 employees who provide direct services at the shelter for victims and their children.

Six shelters are run by WCSOs. GREVIO observed that they help address the need for services but operate with “very limited funding, dependent fully or for the most part on outside donors, which does not fully remedy the geographical disparity in the availability of services.”⁵² An additional shelter supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans*, intersex, queer, and other identifying persons (LGBTIQI+). Shelters support diverse women, including those who are undocumented, with disabilities, of various ethnicities, homeless, and transgender. Services offered include specialised counselling, housing, food, healthcare, legal assistance, psycho-social rehabilitation, employment empowerment, and reintegration services.

IC Article 25 calls for supporting victims of sexual violence with holistic services, including specialised staff responding to needs “preferably within rape crisis or sexual violence referral centres established in sufficient number through the country to ensure their easy access”, recommending one per every 200,000 inhabitants.⁵³ The first and initially only rape crisis centre, the Lilium Centre in Tirana, provides specialist forensic and medical care, psychological care, and advocacy, supporting 31 minor girls,

⁴³ GREVIO, 2024, p. 26, para. 86.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 29, para. 102.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 29, para. 103.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 30, para. 104.

⁴⁷ WAVE, [Country Report](#), 2023, p. 25.

⁴⁸ Durrës has an emergency shelter for children and women, established with support from the Social Fund mechanism and operated by the municipality. Other emergency centers exist in other cities supported by the Social Fund, including in Gjirokastra.

⁴⁹ GREVIO, 2024, p. 13, para. 23.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 30, para. 104.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ GREVIO, 2024, p. 32, para. 114.

one woman, and four minor boys in 2022.⁵⁴ GREVIO has expressed concern regarding the low number of beneficiaries assisted by Lilium, particularly considering the extensive prevalence of sexual violence (8.6% of women have suffered sexual violence).⁵⁵

Table 1. Lilium Centre Beneficiaries

Age	2019	2020	2021	2022	AVG
Women	8	3	6	1	5
Girls	23	21	22	31	24
Total	31	24	28	32	29

GREVIO suggested that this may be due in part to Government requirements to report cases to police in order to receive services, which the IC prohibits in Article 18. This requirement to report may deter people from seeking services, thereby contributing to low reporting. Emergency shelter is short-term, and GREVIO observed that “there do not appear to be systematic referrals of victims from Lilium Centre to women’s NGOs that offer such services”. Overall, services for sexual violence survivors are significantly underfunded, with a 91% shortfall in required rape crisis centres as per the IC.⁵⁶ In the National Strategy for Gender Equality, the Government has planned to establish four more regional centres for victims of sexual violence, two long-term trauma centres for victims of sexual violence, and centres based on the Lilium model in other hospitals, towards enhancing geographic coverage in line with the IC.⁵⁷ In 2025, MHSP established two additional Rape Crisis Centres. Nevertheless, medium to long-term expert services are still needed after emergency shelter, which are largely provided by WCSOs and require adequate financing to meet commitments to providing adequate rehabilitation services.

Indeed, the 2024 GREVIO report stated that the Government needs to “ensure that all women victims of gender-based violence and their children have access to emergency and long-term shelters and that this access is not contingent on their will to report the violence”.⁵⁸ GREVIO emphasised the need to increase the “number and geographical distribution of appropriate, easily accessible and specialised emergency and long-term shelters, providing safe accommodation for women victims of violence.”⁵⁹ Related, GREVIO also noted the need for risk assessment and management for all forms of violence, which includes “women’s specialist services” and “social welfare”, usually provided by WCSOs. Thus, to fulfil its obligations under the IC and to address issues identified by GREVIO, the Government needs to allocate additional resources for both shelter and Rape Crisis Centres.

The IC states that in addition to estimates provided based on the size of the population, the availability of services also should depend on the level of need. The precise level of need can never be assessed as the extent of gender-based violence and cases reported cannot be accurately predicted for several reasons. First, several factors may contribute to increases or decreases in reporting from year to year. Second, not all cases of violence are always reported to institutions, and the IC explicitly prohibits any requirement to do so. Prevention campaigns may contribute to stark increases in reporting. Considering these challenges to accurately identifying the number of persons who may need services, GRB tools can be used to predict potential demand each year. Gender analysis, which involves drawing from various sources and triangulating them, can provide evidence to inform budget planning as to the potential extent of need in future years. In Albania, institutional statistics and the REVALB data management system⁶⁰ hold potential to serve as key tools for informing gender analysis and predicting the level of need and future expenditures, though these have not yet been fully operationalised.

⁵⁴ WAVE, 2023.

⁵⁵ GREVIO, “Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice: Albania: First thematic evaluation report”, GREVIO(2024)6, 2024, p. 32, para. 116.

⁵⁶ According to the [2023 census](#), Albania's population is 2,402,113. GREVIO recommends that there should be one rape crisis centre or sexual violence referral centre for every 200,000 inhabitants. Based on this standard, Albania would need approximately 12 such centres ($2,402,113 \div 200,000 = 12.01$). Currently, with only one rape ([GREVIO page 5](#)) crisis centre, Albania falls short by about 11 centres to meet GREVIO's recommended standard.

⁵⁷ Specific measures III.2.1.a and III.2.1.b, respectively, cited in *ibid.*, para. 118

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 31, para. 111(b).

⁶⁰ MHSP is responsible for data collection related to treatment of domestic violence cases. It established the REVALB system for tracking domestic violence victims’ paths through institutions and structures. The system includes data on victims using standardised indicators, which all coordination referral mechanisms should use (GREVIO, 2024).

Moreover, as evidence attests, many women do not seek support from institutions. They may fear losing custody of their children, economic stability, or losing important family and social support networks if they report violence. They may not trust institutions. Evidence shows that the level of violence is substantially higher than that which is reported. Meanwhile, some persons experiencing violence feel safer and more comfortable approaching WCSOs rather than institutions. Thus, examining trends in services provided by WCSOs is crucial for estimating the level of need in accordance with IC requirements. Additionally, GREVIO has observed that the Government must attend better to the needs of women with disabilities and Roma women when planning the accessibility of services.⁶¹

Social care services in Albania are provided in three levels, which are the national, local, and regional. According to a 2024 assessment report, there are 21 municipalities in Albania where social care services are not yet provided, located largely in urban areas (90%).⁶² NGOs, charities, and development partners have tried to provide access to social care services where they are lacking. Only 8% of beneficiaries of such services are “victims of violence”, and only 1.5% of them are “victims of trafficking” as a UNDP report stated in 2023.

3.2. National Helpline

Albania has one national, free of charge helpline that operates 24/7: The Counselling Line for Women and Children [*Linja Kombetare e Keshillimit per gra e vajza*, tel.: +355 11 611 7]. In 2022, the helpline received 3,117 calls, involving psychological violence (62% of cases), physical violence (55%), and economic violence (29%).⁶³ It provides services for addressing all types of violence against women in Albanian, English, and Italian languages. Despite formalised cooperation with MHSP, the Line still must reapply for financing annually.⁶⁴ It also relies on donations and international funding to function seamlessly. GREVIO has encouraged the Albanian authorities to ensure that the national helpline is “continuously supported through sufficient and sustainable financing.”⁶⁵

Additionally, a regional helpline covers Durres and Tirana counties, while receiving calls from other cities, as well. It is run by the Albanian Community Centre. AWEN and its members also provide support and referrals via email and other electronic means, as foreseen by the IC. Thus, generally, Albania meets the IC criteria regarding helplines. However, they are not sufficiently financed by the Government to cover all costs.

3.3. Legal Counselling

A 2017 law ensures access to legal aid in terms of counselling and court representation, provided by the state, including for victims of domestic and sexual violence. Municipalities and CSOs provide these services. Several shelters provide legal counselling as part of their packet of services. Additionally, the Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives in Tirana focuses explicitly on this, including handling court cases referred by other WCSOs and actors. The Centre does not receive any state funding.

Twice, the Ministry of Justice has authorised Vatra to provide primary legal aid services as defined by Law No. 11/2017 “On State-Guaranteed Legal Aid” for September 2022 - September 2024 and October 2024 - September 2026. As mentioned, Vatra is partially financed by the state, and this provides a positive example of a modality as to how state financing for WCSOs’ legal aid services could work.

⁶¹ GREVIO, “Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice: Albania: First thematic evaluation report”, GREVIO(2024)6, 2024.

⁶² Expertise France Group, Technical Assistance to Gender Equality in Access to Economic Opportunities in Albania, p. 40, 2024.

⁶³ WAVE, [Country Report The status and value of women's specialist services in preventing and tackling gender-based violence against women](#), 2023.

⁶⁴ GREVIO, “Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice: Albania: First thematic evaluation report”, GREVIO(2024)6, 2024, p. 31, para. 109.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 31, para. 113.

GREVIO has encouraged the Albanian authorities to ensure that legal counselling services are “continuously supported through sufficient and sustainable financing.”⁶⁶ Moreover, this funding would need to be carefully designed to prevent political interference, given the nature of the services provided, preserving the full independence of WCSOs assisting cases.

3.4. Summary of Services Provided by AWEN Members

On average, AWEN members alone have supported approximately 2,000 women per year between 2020 and 2024 (Table 2).

Table 2. Beneficiaries of AWEN Services by Year

WCSO	Location	Service	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	AVG
Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives	Tirana	Legal aid	231	242	288	161	363	257
Agritra-Vizioni	Peshkopi	Emergency shelter	30	49	61	63	478	136
Association for Women, Peace, Security	Durres	Psychological and legal counselling services		220	229	160	215	206
Women's Forum Elbasan	Elbasan	Emergency shelter with counselling services	285	336	287	296	256	287
Woman to Woman	Shkoder	Emergency shelter with counselling services	641	744	588	353	317	529
Jona	Saranda	Psychological and legal counselling services	130	146	295	155	180	181
Me, the Woman	Pogradec	Psychological and legal counselling services		110	110	125	136	120
Vatra	Vlora	Psychological, residential (shelter) and/or community services for gender-based violence, including trafficking shelter and legal support	348	265	284	271	341	302
Total			1,665	2,112	2,142	1,584	1,355	1,958

The Government can use this figure to estimate that approximately 2,000 cases will likely need state-funded Government services per year, and potentially more if awareness-raising efforts are planned to contribute to increased reporting and thus treatment of cases. Such information can inform assessments of the level of demand for services, facilitating budget planning for the future.

3.5. Conclusion

Albania does not yet fulfil IC requirements for services, including adequate shelter, Rape Crisis Centres, and a fully state financed 24-hour counselling helpline. Understanding the current services available and the remaining level of need is important for analysing costs for their adequate operations in line with the IC. Key points that must be considered include:

- **Capacity and Demand:** The significant shortfall in bed capacity indicates a need for accurate forecasting of demand and scaling up infrastructure accordingly. This will impact budget allocations for expanding current shelters or building new ones.
- **Geographical Distribution:** There may be additional costs for expanding services to rural areas or underserved regions, including transportation and outreach programs.

⁶⁶ GREVIO, “Building trust by delivering support, protection and justice: Albania: First thematic evaluation report”, GREVIO(2024)6, 2024, p. 31, para. 113.

- **Diverse Needs:** The variety of services provided (e.g., healthcare, legal assistance, psycho-social support) and the diverse populations served (e.g., undocumented women, those with disabilities, LGBTIQI+ individuals) must be factored into the costing. Specialised services entail higher costs, which need to be considered in expanding access to and the quality of services.

By incorporating these considerations as part of gender analysis when conducting gender-responsive budgeting to inform budgets, the Government can address immediate needs while planning for sustainable long-term support and expansion of shelter services as part of MTBP. This would be in line with Government commitments to the IC and within the new National Strategy for Gender Equality.

4. Gender-responsive Budgeting to Finance Services

IC Article 8 calls for “the allocation of appropriate financial and human resources for activities carried out by both public authorities and by relevant non-governmental and civil society organisations.”⁶⁷ Gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) can support analysing needs and allocating resources. Albania has committed to GRB, including to implementing SDG 5.c.i. as part of commitments to SDGs and to implementing the PEFA Gender Framework. In line with best GRB practices, gender analysis such as that in the last section should draw from data to inform budget planning as part of financial planning processes.⁶⁸ Such evidence-based planning is in line with SDG 5.C.i. and the PEFA Gender Framework. It also can contribute to more efficient, effective, accountable, and impactful results through more accurate financial planning.

As described in the [Legal Framework](#) section, Albania adopted GRB in 2010. This commitment was strengthened by the 2012 Council of Ministers decision that integrated gender considerations into the MTBP.⁶⁹ The legal framework was further revised in 2016.⁷⁰ This revised framework, known as the organic budget law, explicitly mandates the inclusion of gender equality principles. It requires all ministries and independent institutions to clearly present their gender policies. Additionally, Instruction no. 7/I highlights the role of GRB and the engagement of civil society in the budget development process.⁷¹

Albania allocated USD 90 million in the 2017-2019 MTBP to gender-related issues. This increased in the 2022-2024 MTBP to USD 410 million. In the 2023 Budget, the Government stated that preventing gender-based violence and protecting victims was a priority.⁷² However, only the justice system seems to have planned results from allocations, such as reducing the response time to domestic violence cases by 2025 and carrying out expert acts, including 135 cases of sexual violence.⁷³ GREVIO observed that although the share of “gender budgeting in the general budget has consistently increased, reaching 9.6% for the period 2023-2025”, it nevertheless “remains unclear which indicators are used to determine that a budget line falls within the category of gender budgeting”.⁷⁴ The lack of clarity hinders transparency, accountability, monitoring, and evaluation, which could then inform future budget planning as part of the budget process.

The Social Fund also has provided some funding to assist gender-based violence cases. A 2022 report states that three shelters were established for victims of violence and trafficking with 396

⁶⁷ Explanatory Report to the Istanbul Convention, para. 66, cited in GREVIO 2024, p. 13, para. 21.

⁶⁸ In consultation with internationally renowned gender experts, the Agency for Gender Equality in the Office of the Prime Minister of Kosovo, and the Kosovo Institute for Public Administration, KWN has produced simple step-by-step handbooks on how [ministries](#) and [municipalities](#) can apply GRB, which may provide helpful guidance. These have been adopted officially for training public servants in Kosovo.

⁶⁹ GoA, [Decision No. 465 For Gender Integration in the Medium Term Budget Programme](#), 2012.

⁷⁰ Law no. 9936, with amendments from Laws 114/2012 and 57/2016.

⁷¹ GoA, [Instruction 7/I For the Preparation of the Medium-Term Budget Program 2019-2021](#), February 28, 2018.

⁷² Gender Alliance for Development Centre, “Commentary of the Budget 2023 for Albania”, 2023, p. 3.

⁷³ Ibid., p. 4.

⁷⁴ GREVIO, 2024, p. 13, para 22.

beneficiaries and two national counselling lines supported 3,618 beneficiaries.⁷⁵ Specifically, the Social Protection Strategy 2024-2030 provided information regarding the amount of money victims have received; it states:

In relation to the support of abused women who have a protection order, 408 women were treated with a payment of 3,000 Lek (about 25 euros) per month in 2018, 509 women in 2019, and 603 women in 2020. Whereas victims of trafficking treated with a payment of 3,000 Lek (about 25 euros) per month are 11 cases for the year 2018, 9 cases for 2019 and 10 cases for 2020. This measure has increased in 2022, tripling it to 9,000 ALL.⁷⁶

The total amount paid to all victims across the years 2018-2020 is 465,000 euros. The amounts for 2021-2024 could not be found online.

The Government has financed several shelters: the state-run National Reception Centre for Treatment of Cases of Domestic Violence in Tirana, Different and Equal shelter, Another Vision in Elbasan, The Counselling Centre for Women and Girls Tirana, and WCSO Psycho-Social Center “Vatra” in Vlora.⁷⁷ Specifically, the National Centre for Treatment of Cases of Domestic Violence in Tirana received €191,719, whereas Vatra received €199,020, in 2022.⁷⁸ Additionally, Lilium emergency centre for victims of sexual abuse in Tirana and two new emergency centres in Fier and Shkoder receive financing from the Ministry. However, precise amounts of financing could not be found among publicly available data. A few municipalities also have allocated funds, including support for emergency centres with financing from the Social Fund, as elaborated below. In addition to the state budget, the UN joint program “Ending Violence against Women”, implemented by UNDP, UNFPA, and UN Women, and funded by the Swedish Government, financed initiatives to address gender-based violence and violence against women. The total budget of this program amounted to approximately USD 3,103,903 from January 2019 to June 2022.⁷⁹ Several other donors have financed actions to address gender-based violence in Albania as well.

AWEN members, as the main providers of services related to gender-based violence in accordance with the IC, have primarily been financed through international support. Thus, the Government has relied primarily on international support to provide services in line with the IC. This trend seems likely to continue in the future, in violation of Government commitments to the IC. While the National Strategy for Gender Equality and the National Social Protection Strategy through the Social Fund have earmarked funds towards reducing gender-based and domestic violence, 56.5% of the planned 648 million Albanian lek (ALL) from the gender equality strategy have yet to be secured, and even the secured funds derive from foreign funders.⁸⁰ For the allocation of appropriate and sustainable financial and human resources for the implementation of integrated policies, measures and programmes to prevent and combat all forms of violence covered by the Istanbul Convention, the Government of Albania has allocated 9% of the total planned budget (410 million USD) for the 2023-2025 period. However, the Government has not specified what this 9% of funds will finance. As mentioned above, only a handful of shelters and victims actually benefit from this budget.⁸¹ Whereas, the National Social Protection Strategy states that “the planned budget for the implementation of housing programs is

⁷⁵ UNDP, [Social Fund services in figures](#), 2022.

⁷⁶ GoA, [National Strategy for Social Protection](#), 2024-2030, p. 28.

⁷⁷ The Psycho-Social Center “Vatra” is one of the shelters financed by the Albanian Government. State support consists of the salaries of 12 employees who provide direct services in the shelter and food expenses for the beneficiaries accommodated in the shelter. Meanwhile, the National Reception Centre for Victims of Trafficking is another residential institution that is 100% supported by state funds.

⁷⁸ Council of Europe, [Report submitted by Albania pursuant to Article 68, paragraph 4 of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence \(1st thematic evaluation round\)](#), 2023, p. 17.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 15.

⁸⁰ GREVIO, 2024, p. 13, para 23.

⁸¹ Ibid., p. 16.

divided according to the program items and there is no fund dedicated only to women beneficiaries”, meaning that no fund is dedicated specifically to women victims of gender-based violence.⁸²

The Government’s Social Fund, created in 2018, is another resource that allows municipalities to finance social services for vulnerable groups. It provides municipalities (and not CSOs) with grants for establishing social care services, though municipalities may pass such funding on to CSOs. The Social Fund has financed specialised services in the Tirana region, including the Counselling Line for Women and Girls, Free Online Counselling and Child Abuse Reporting Services, and the “SHELTER” Centre for LGBTI youth and victims of violence. From 2020 to 2022, the Social Fund reportedly benefited over 14,000 people and employed 130 individuals to address gender-based violence.⁸³ The Council of Europe has observed that the allocation of funds by municipalities for social services supporting domestic violence victims is a positive development, providing access to social housing, a counselling hotline, legal and psychological assistance, and other vital services for those affected.⁸⁴ However, the Social Fund does not provide direct, sustained funding to CSOs. The IC requires the Government to provide consistent services, which also requires funding them. GREVIO recommended that the “positive impact of the Social Fund on the national response to violence against women should be further improved by creating the possibility for the municipalities to apply for and obtain longer-term sustainable financing”.⁸⁵ Moreover, it should be assured that funding remains consistent over time and involves minimal bureaucracy for service providers, so that they can focus their energies on service provision. Thus, a more sustained and institutionalised approach would arguably be to finance services required for IC implementation directly by the MHSP, as with the Counselling Line and two state-run shelters.

The Ministry of Justice also has earmarked funds for CSOs providing free legal aid since 2021, but no CSO met the criteria in 2021 or 2022. In 2023, two CSOs received some, limited funding. The Agency for the Support of Civil Society has allocated 17.9 million ALL (46.7% of funds allocated) to CSOs assisting victims of domestic violence, but not in 2018 or 2020. GREVIO observed:

a lack of transparent procedures and numerous bureaucratic hurdles hampering the ability of NGOs to secure financing from the state. Information received from civil society indicates that many of the NGOs providing services for women victims nevertheless still depend for a large part or fully, on foreign donors to be able to operate. The application process for the scant funding from the state or the municipalities requires extensive documentation to be submitted by hand, is project-based and lacks sustainability.⁸⁶

Additionally, stringent criteria have precluded some more marginalised groups from accessing support, such as CSOs providing services to Roma women or women with disabilities. GREVIO “cautions against continued dependence on outside donors for the delivery of core services for victims of violence against women, as echoed by the Istanbul Convention”.⁸⁷ It further “considers it of great importance to continue to assume ownership of the reform process, including financially”. GREVIO thus:

strongly encourages the Albanian authorities to: (a) allocate appropriate, sufficient, and sustainable funding for policies, programmes and measures to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women, at both central and municipal levels; (b) ensure, through adequate funding, a sustainable role for women’s rights NGOs providing support services to victims of any and all forms of violence against women and all categories of victims, including legal aid, for example through long-term grants based on transparent procurement procedures, and to remove unnecessary bureaucratic hurdles in the process of applying for funding.⁸⁸

⁸² GoA, [National Strategy for Social Protection](#), 2024-2030, p. 18.

⁸³ Council of Europe, 2023, p. 19.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 68.

⁸⁵ GREVIO, 2024, p. 14, para 24.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 14, para. 26.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14, para. 27.

To inform GRB, data collection is also important for conducting gender analysis as a first step to informing evidence-based budgeting. Indeed, IC Article 11 calls for adequate data collection to inform evidence-based policymaking. The MHSP's new REVALB system tracks services provided to victims, contributing substantially to harmonising data collection throughout the country. Despite progress, some challenges remain with accurate, timely reporting by all institutions. While the National Shelter for Victims of Domestic Violence provides data for REVALB via the Coordinated Referral Mechanisms (CRM) local coordinator, cooperation with other CSOs providing services "remains ad hoc and varies from case to case and from one municipality to another" despite CSOs taking part in CRMs, GREVIO observed.⁸⁹ GREVIO recommendations for improving and harmonising REVALB across sectors and with the statistical agency INSTAT would support a "fully fledged unified system of data collection in the field of violence against women".⁹⁰ Interoperability with different data collection systems used in was also noted by GREVIO. Indeed, this could support GRB by producing more accurate data to inform evidence-based policymaking related to the state budget.

4.1. Conclusion

The Government has committed to implementing GRB, which can support improved accuracy in evidence-based planning for financing services in line with IC obligations. However, most funding for services related to addressing gender-based violence has derived from international sources, posing challenges to the sustainability of these services. The Government has the obligation to increase its support for these services in accordance with the IC, while ensuring that shelters remain independent from political influence.

5. Findings: Costs of Services for Addressing Gender-based Violence

This section presents findings from costing existing services for addressing gender-based violence in Albania in accordance with the IC and international best practices. It first presents the methodology used. It then provides a summary of the findings: initially estimated costs for the medium-term period of 2025-2028.

5.1. Methodology

The methodology for analysing the costs of services is based on the IC, its requirements, and international best practices in GRB, specifically costing. The budget lines used for costing services encompass costs associated with both staffing and operational needs, as well as specific activities aimed at supporting persons who have suffered violence (see Annex 1). In summary, costing examined:

- Human resource expenses, including salaries for key personnel, support staff, and contracted experts, such as lawyers, psychologists, social workers, medical assistants, nurses, and drivers. These positions are essential for the effective management and delivery of services, ensuring comprehensive care and support for beneficiaries. These positions must be consistently funded regardless of the number of clients treated because they must be available when needed, including on short notice. To ensure quality services, salary levels for those working in shelters should not be lower than for persons employed in similar positions with similar qualifications. Affiliated cost such as psychotherapy and/or supervision for staff also must be included to reduce burnout and enhance wellbeing, improving the overall quality of services provided

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 16, para. 37.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 17, para. 40.

- Direct service costs, such as providing food and clothing for persons who have suffered violence and their children, shelter supplies, accommodation both at the shelter and afterwards (e.g., rent payments), medical supplies and services, continuing education opportunities, educational materials, legal services, recreation, legal consultancy, financial services, training and monitoring experts, support for initiatives towards economic empowerment, and security
- Communication costs, such as for outreach, awareness-raising, and encouraging persons to report violence in line with the IC
- Equipment like laptops, projectors, security cameras, and vehicles required for operations
- Operational costs for essential daily expenses like rent, utilities (i.e., electricity, water, internet, and telephone), transportation and fuel costs, stationery, cleaning materials, bank fees, taxes including for vehicles, and annual audit costs

These costs are essential for ensuring that service providers are consistently able and ready to provide comprehensive, secure, and empowering services for women and children who have suffered violence. Thus, this costing exercise sought to consider all these costs.

5.2. Initially Estimated Costs for 2025-2028

Costs have been estimated based on existing services provided. Providing improved quality services could involve additional costs as outlined in the Methodology, such as for providing human resource salaries based on existing market rates,⁹¹ upgrading existing services to meet best practice standards outlined in the IC, such as access for persons with disabilities, extending services to new geographic areas, and comprehensive rehabilitation services.⁹² Such costs should be considered in the future.

In estimating the cost of services, the demand must be estimated, as indicated by the IC. Initially, this can be estimated by looking at prior trends. Table 2 detailed the number of beneficiaries that each service provider assisted in 2020-2024. It enables a rough estimate that, on average in total, AWEN members assisted 2,000 persons per year between 2020 and 2024. This can be used to forecast the anticipated number of beneficiaries in future years: 2,000. Meanwhile, the need for such services could be greater given the extent of violence, particularly if awareness-raising and outreach efforts encourage more persons who have suffered violence to seek services.

Sometimes costing exercises utilise data on beneficiaries to calculate the estimated average cost for treating each beneficiary by dividing the CSO provider's total annual budget by the total number of beneficiaries. This produces the average cost per person assisted by the given service. Trends can then be observed over time. However, several issues exist with using this approach to estimate future costs. First and most importantly, given the nature of the services provided, service providers must always be open, fully staffed according to needs, and ready to offer immediate, emergency services. This is why it is dangerous for state parties to reimburse service providers based on the number of persons assisted because it does not consider the costs of maintaining continuous operations and retaining expert staff so that quality services can be provided immediately. Moreover, service providers tend to provide several different services, including awareness raising and encouraging reporting, as per the IC. A comparison could be made with social workers, police, or prosecutors; none are paid per case treated, but rather their services are budgeted for holistically. The same needs to be true for shelters, psychological counselling, and legal aid. Second, a single unit price per person assisted cannot be established because the types of services provided (e.g., healthcare, shelter, legal advice, education) may differ substantially based on individuals' needs; each beneficiary could have quite different costs. For example, some may need shelter for a short period, while others may require services for several months. Given the nature

⁹¹ AWEN members reported paying staff below market rates due to insufficient financing and refusals of funders to increase salaries based on actual rates. This can contribute to loss of qualified human resources, dissatisfaction, and potential staff burnout, all potentially influencing the quality of services provided.

⁹² UN Women, Duvvury, N. and Ashe, S, [A costing tool for action: Estimating the resource requirements for a minimum package of essential services for women experiencing violence](#), 2016.

of violence, timeframes can be difficult to predict while significantly affecting costs per person. Third, costs differ throughout Albania; assisting someone in Tirana likely costs substantially more than in Pogradec, for example. For these reasons, it is not advisable to base budget estimates solely on beneficiaries assisted using unit costing.

Instead, trends in the overall operating costs of service providers over time can be used to predict the price of holistic, uninterrupted services, as foreseen by the IC. Table 3 illustrates the annual budgets of nine AWEN service providers from 2021 to 2027 in million LEK (rounded). The years 2021 through 2024 present actual budgets, whereas 2025 to 2028 involve predictions of future years' budgets based on prior expenditures. Again, these are estimates based on current costs for basic services and do not necessarily include additional needs for improving services or paying staff based on market rates. Illustrating prior points, Vatra's service provision costs are higher than those of other service providers, considering that Vatra provides high security anti-trafficking services and longer-term shelter than others. It also receives more state support with which it has been able to extend its services. All AWEN service providers' budgets have increased annually, reflecting increased costs, including related to inflation.

Table 3. Annual Budgets of AWEN Members 2021-2028 (in million ALL)											
AWEN Member	Services	City	Staff	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028
Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives	Legal aid	Tirana	5.5	7.8	5.7	7.3	7.5	9.2	9.2	9.2	9.2
Agritra-Vizioni	Emergency shelter	Peshkopi	5	16.1	15.3	15.1	13.6	28.4	31.2	32.3	34.3
Association for Women, Peace, Security	Psychological and legal counselling	Durres	6	9.1	8.5	11.0	15.0	31.0	41.2	41.1	41.1
Women's Forum Elbasan	Emergency shelter with counselling and legal aid	Elbasan	7	13.5	14.2	12.9	13.0	16.3	15.0	15.0	15.0
Woman to Woman	Emergency shelter with counselling and legal aid	Shkoder	18	13.4	13.4	13.4	12.2	12.5	14.7	14.4	14.4
Jona Association	Psychological and legal counselling	Saranda	4	3.1	5.0	3.7	4.7	10.0	9.9	10.0	10.0
Me, The Woman	Psychological and legal counselling	Pogradec	6	3.7	3.6	3.4	2.9	4.7	4.8	4.9	4.9
Vatra	Psychological counselling, shelter for gender-based violence, including trafficking and Legal Clinic	Vlora	6	40.0	40.8	44.2	62.1	77.7	70.1	70.1	70.1
Total				106.7	106.5	110.9	136.1	189.6	196.0	197.0	199.1

Table 3 illustrates the total cost of services provided by AWEN service providers from 2021 to 2024 and the predicted cost of services for 2025 through 2028, considering factors such as inflation. Notably, this is for bare minimum, current costs; these figures do not fully consider needs to pay human resources based on market rates or expand services in line with the IC, among other costs. Again, there is a clear trend in the costs of service provision increasing over time, which must inform the planning of future costs. While it is too late to include budget forecasts in the 2025 budget, predictions suggest that the Government of Albania should budget approximately 196 million ALL for 2026, 197 million ALL for 2027, and 199 million ALL for 2028 to uphold its responsibility of providing holistic services through these providers.⁹³ As a comparative example, 128.5 billion ALL was allocated in 2024 to finance infrastructure projects, such as roads, tunnels, and highways.⁹⁴ This puts in perspective the relatively minimal cost of addressing gender-based violence.

Expanding services to meet the level of need explained in [Section 3](#) would require further costs related to construction or reconstruction of buildings, purchasing additional equipment, and additional costs related to each point above. These should be considered in planning medium term budget priorities towards scaling up existing services to meet the level of need in line with the IC and commitments made in the National Strategy for Gender Equality, which are the responsibility of the state and not of international actors. Additionally, costs can vary annually due to factors such as changes in demand for services and inflation (e.g., predicted at 2.4% in 2025, 2.6% in 2026, and 3% in 2027).⁹⁵ Therefore, costing exercises should be performed annually and these midterm predictions should be updated annually.

As costing exercises require time, human resources with clear roles and responsibilities for collecting data should be included in job descriptions for service providers and the time required should be adequately budgeted for and included in planning organisational human resources.⁹⁶ A participatory approach to costing that involves consultations with diverse women and girls who have suffered gender-based violence, as well as with as comprehensive a range of stakeholders, has been recommended given the multidisciplinary and multi-sectoral nature of the work itself.⁹⁷ This can help better understand needs and thus better inform costing exercises.

6. Recommendations

6.1. For the Legal Framework

- Ensure budget laws and policies better incorporate obligations for GRB, institutionalising GRB within public financial management systems during ongoing reforms related Albania's EU Accession process. As part of reforms, review laws and policies to ensure that they fully incorporate and institutionalise GRB based on the PEFA Gender Framework and SDG 5.c.i. guidance.
- Ensure that sufficient budget allocations are made by the Government in future MTBFs, annual budgets, strategies, and action plans related to social services, gender equality, and addressing gender-based violence, ending Albania's reliance on foreign funding per GREVIO recommendations.
- Ensure attention to all forms of gender-based violence when budgeting, in line with the IC. Ensure that support programs allocate sufficient funding not only for immediate interventions, but also for sustained and long-term assistance and recovery programs.
- Further improve guidance, including budget circulars, related to budget planning, encouraging MHSP as well as municipalities (e.g., budget and social policy departments) to utilise REVALB, other

⁹³ As of December 2024, this was equivalent to approximately €1.6 million annually.

⁹⁴ GoA, [Public investments for 2024](#), accessed February 11, 2025.

⁹⁵ Statista, "Change in consumer price index in the Western Balkans from 2021 to 2026, by territory", at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1331464/western-balkans-inflation-by-country/>.

⁹⁶ UN Women, [A synthesis of evidence on the collection and use of administrative data on violence against women](#), 2020, p. 7.

⁹⁷ UN Women, [Manual for Costing a Multi-Disciplinary Package of Response Services for Women and Girls Subjected to Violence](#), 2013.

institutional data, and data on persons sheltered and affiliated costs to inform evidence-based budget planning in line with the IC.

6.2. For the Government, particularly Ministry of Health and Social Protection

- Improve the accuracy of collecting, maintaining, and analysing data in the REVALB data management system to support gender analysis that can inform predicting the level of demand for services and thus future expenditures. Improve the digital interoperability of REVALB with other institutional data management systems (e.g., police, prosecution, etc.), towards more efficient use of human resource time in data entry. Ensure integration and avoid overlapping with other data management systems, such as the National Electronic Register on Social Care Services, where cases of gender-based violence are also recorded.
- Ensure continued obligatory training of officials engaged in data entry to enhance quality, engage others in data entry, and budget human resources in MHSP for monitoring data entry for quality assurance, as recommended by GREVIO.
- Allocate additional resources for shelter and Rape Crisis Centres to implement obligations according to the IC. In drafting the MTBP for 2026-2028, include staged plans to invest in expanding shelter and crisis centre availability, particularly geographically, collaborating closely with WCSOs and gender equality experts to ensure areas most in need are prioritised and the quality of services is ensured. Invest in supporting knowledgeable and experienced WCSOs to expand the availability of the services they provide to other areas, ensuring quality.
- Ensure full financial support for the official Counselling Line for Women and Girls by including it planned budgets for the MTBP for 2026-2028, costing approximately 5,043,663 LEK annually.
- Increase the state budget to include 196 million ALL for 2026, 197 million ALL for 2027, and 199 million ALL for 2028 in the forthcoming MTBP, towards financing AWEN members' existing services in line with the IC and GREVIO recommendations, thereby upholding the Government of Albania's responsibility of providing holistic services. The MHSP can use the existing modality of transferring funds through District Councils directly to service providers, as presently implemented with Vatra, for example.
- Continue collaborating with service providers annually to receive cost estimates that can inform the MTBP for future years in line with best practices in GRB.

6.3. For civil society service providers

- Utilise findings from this paper to inform evidence-based advocacy to MHSP to allocate sufficient, sustained funds for covering all costs of AWEN members that are offering services as per IC requirements.
- Continue similar costing exercises annually using a similar methodology to update spreadsheets each fall, towards making accurate estimates of costs to inform future MTBPs in January-February. Undertake further costing exercises that estimate the costs of needed services not yet provided, human resource costs based on market rates, and other costs not yet considered in budget forecasts, but needed to improve the quality of services in accordance with the IC.
- Ensure adequate human resources for engaging in participatory costing exercises annually, including organising participatory discussions with diverse women, girls, and stakeholders to better understand needs, as well as for time to predict future costs required to enhance the quality of services and to expand them, where necessary in line with the IC.
- Continue monitoring government budget allocations and expenditures for services related to supporting persons who have suffered gender-based violence. Conduct specific budget analyses to inform continued advocacy towards securing sufficient government funding to address needs in line with the IC.

Annexes

Annex I. Template for Unit Costing of Services

The following template was used by AWEN members to estimate costs.

Budget	Unit Type	# of Units	Sum per Unit	Total value including benefits and taxes	Donor 1	Donor 2	Donor 3	Total Sum Secured (estimated)	Amount Not Secured (excluding funds applied for)
Staff									
Director									
Project Coordinator(s)									
Finance Manager									
Lawyer									
Psychologist(s)									
Social Workers									
Medial Assistants									
Nurse									
Carers/educational staff for children									
Driver									
Others									
Operational Costs									
Office rent									
Building maintenance									
Vehicle									
Vehicle maintenance									
Electricity									
Water									
Internet									
Telephone									
Transport and fuel cost									
Annual taxes/registration of vehicle									
Stationaries									
Cleaning materials (including de-infestation)									
Bank Fees									
Annual taxes									
Annual audit									
Direct Support Services for Victims									
Construction/reconstruction									
Shelter rent (accommodation for victims)									
Maintenance of shelter facility									
Shelter equipment									
Food for victims									
Clothes for victims									
Shelter supplies									
Communication costs for the shelter (telephone)									
Medicines and medical supplies, tests, dental services, etc.									
Recreation and education materials for children									
Support for economic empowerment of women (e.g., small business startup)									

Budget	Unit Type	# of Units	Sum per Unit	Total value including benefits and taxes	Donor 1	Donor 2	Donor 3	Total Sum Secured (estimated)	Amount Not Secured (excluding funds applied for)
Supervision, psychotherapy for shelter staff									
Security and security systems									
Other costs									
Experts with contracts (not staff)									
Lawyer for Advice and Representation Services									
Financial Services									
Monitoring Expert									
Payment for legal documents for beneficiaries (birth certificates, ID cards, tax in court etc.)									
Other costs									
Trainings/seminars/workshops									
Teachers/trainer(s)									
Refreshments for participants									
Training materials									
Training venue									
Accommodation									
Specialists (vocational training and employment of beneficiaries) including tax, social, and health insurance									
Prevention and Visibility									
Banners									
Leaflets									
Brochures									
Outreach meetings									
Social media boosting									
Advocacy (e.g. monitoring, for laws, etc.)									
Other costs									
Technical Equipment									
Laptops									
Projector									
Other costs									
TOTAL SUM									

Annex 2. Services Provided by WCSOs

AWEN members provide a substantial proportion of shelter, counselling, and legal aid services related to addressing gender-based violence in Albania. This Annex briefly and alphabetically describes each AWEN member and the services that they provide.⁹⁸

Agritra-Vizion

Founded in 2001 in the city of Dibra as a Netherlands Development Organisation project, it later became independent. Related to addressing gender-based violence, its services include assisting and advising rural women towards their economic empowerment and improving the position of rural women through training and consultations.

Centre for Legal Civic Initiatives

Founded in 1997 in Tirana, the centre offers free psycho-social and legal services for victims of domestic violence, other violent acts, and people in need; legal education to further human rights and freedoms; advocacy; supporting improvements to legislation and state policies related to human rights, gender equality, and addressing gender-based violence. Web: www.qag-al.org

Jona

Founded in 2001 in Saranda, Jona works to prevent domestic violence and human trafficking. It collects data, works to improve inter-ethnic relations, and qualifies women and girls in skills that meet labour market demands.

Me, the Woman

Founded in 2003 in Pogradec/Korçë region, one of the organisation's main aims is to minimise violence and abuse toward women. Activities include: counselling services, training, awareness-raising, encouraging women to participate in decision-making, monitoring local government decisions from a gender perspective, and advocacy at local and national levels. Web: <https://unegruajea.org.al/>

Woman to Woman

Founded in 2002 in Shkodra, services include empowering women and girls who have suffered violence; sensitising the public about violence towards women and girls, including human trafficking; and collaborating with other governmental and non-governmental organisations. Web: <https://www.grujatekgruajea.org/>

Women Forum Elbasan

Founded in 1991 in Elbasan, for approximately 25 years, WFE has provided three concrete services for survivors of domestic violence and their children through its Counselling Centre, counselling and psychological support, counselling therapy, information and orientation, Law Offices, legal counselling, drafting of legal acts, legal protection with lawyers, and the Emergency Shelter that offers shelter from a few hours up to 15 days, pending receipt of an Immediate Protection Order or Protection Order, for girls and women survivors of violence and their children under 16 years of age. Web: <https://forumgruaselbasan.org/>

⁹⁸ Information about AWEN members is taken from their website: AWEN.network, accessed 20 December 2024.

“Vatra” Psycho-Social Centre

Founded in 1999 in Vlore, Vatra cooperates closely with responsible institutions and organisations active in providing protection for victims of trafficking, other forms of gender-based violence, and abuse. It has a shelter and provides counselling services and legal support. Web:

<http://www.qendravatra.org.al/>

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