

## *Gender Analysis for the Pre-university Education Sector in Albania*

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### **Abstract**

Gender equality concept is unquestionably linked to the quality in the education system, as the foundations of the intellectual and social development of children. Achievement of gender equality in education system is an important challenge not only for the children but also for all responsible government institutions and their respective education and social policies. While schools may seem as "the Albanian society in miniature" i.e. undeniably loaded with gender stereotypes imparted through school and hidden curricula, educators have distinguished role to teach their students those intrinsic layers of "biological sex" versus "socially constructed gender" and that being a boy or a girl should not impact their perspectives in life. It is the government's responsibility to ensure for all children access to quality education as it is high time to give gender equality the place it deserves foremost in education system and Albanian schools, from social to exact science subjects, from kindergarten to universities, from general to vocational schools. The analysis was carried out during the period February-May 2022, and it explored the following two questions: What are the main gender gaps in Albania's pre-university education system? How can the national policies and interventions address the identified gender gaps to maximize its intended impact? Analysis is based on a desk study of internal and external gender assessments, reports, and surveys relevant to the purpose. While the analysis is primarily concerned with examining the gender gaps in the pre-university education sector, it also explores linkages and correlations with other sectors.

Keywords: Gender Mainstreaming, Pre-university Education System, Citizenship Education

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## I. Introduction

It is widely recognized the important role and the impact that education has for the socio-cultural development of the society. Education provides the individuals, regardless of their gender, with the opportunity to emancipate them and improve their social and economic status, for a better future. Nowadays it is essential to educate young people beyond any gender, racial, and cultural prejudice in order to build secure foundations for our society.

Gender equality concept is unquestionably linked to the quality in education system, as the foundations of the intellectual and social development of the children. Achievement of gender equality in education system is an important challenge not only for the children but also for all responsible government institutions and their respective education and social policies.

The school and family are the most important institutions contributing to the development of the children's personality by creating the necessary spaces to overcome any social barrier or prejudice and to design their future in accordance with their abilities and goals. It is unquestionable that educating the younger generation about gender equality in school is a way to give them the ability to understand gender equality, gender stereotypes and to avoid any kind of violence against girls and contributing overall to narrow the gender equality gap in any dimension.

While schools may seem as “the Albanian society in miniature” i.e. undeniably loaded with gender stereotypes imparted through school and hidden curricula, educators have distinguished role to teach their students those intrinsic layers of “biological sex” versus “socially constructed gender” and that being a boy or a girl should not impact their perspectives in life.

This study undertakes a gender analysis of multiple aspects of pre-university education sector in Albania, namely policy and legal framework; statistics related to enrollment of boys and girls; and an observance of gender issues in schools.

The recent European Commission (EC) Report for Albania<sup>1</sup>, has noted a persistent funding gap which hindered the implementation of previous strategy and action plan on gender equality (2016-2020) calling for new efforts at central and local level to ensure adequate state funding for the implementation of new strategy on gender equality 2021-2030. In addition, all national strategies at central and local level should be gender mainstreamed and apply gender responsive budgeting.

The first Gender Equality Index for Albania, published in 2020<sup>2</sup>, reached 60.4 points, indicating a gender gap of 7.4 points below EU average. The domain of knowledge is among six core domains where the largest gaps are observed, compared to EU average. The index shows a large gap on enrolment in preschool education between Albania with enrollment rate at 76.3% and EU member states where 95.4% of children enroll in preschool education. While in EU member states the enrolment rate among boys and girls is almost equal, in Albania there is a higher enrolment rate of boys (81.6%) versus girls (78.9%).

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<sup>1</sup>Albania 2021 Report, available at:[https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/albania-report-2021\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/albania-report-2021_en);

<sup>2</sup>[http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6657/gender\\_equality\\_index\\_for\\_the\\_republic\\_of\\_albania\\_2020\\_alb.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6657/gender_equality_index_for_the_republic_of_albania_2020_alb.pdf);

This analysis is based on the most recent available data, mainly provided by INSTAT through Gender Equality Index (2020) and “Women and Men in Albania” (2021) as well as other available data on situation in Albania and other countries.

## II. National framework

Being part of fundamental rights, gender equality is protected at the level of *Constitution*<sup>3</sup>, asserting that such rights are indivisible, inalienable and inviolable and stand at the foundation of the legal order. The public bodies, while rendering their tasks, shall observe such rights and contribute to their realization. Equality before the law and non-discrimination on the ground of gender are among basic principles promoted by the Constitution. On the other hand, everyone has the right to education<sup>4</sup>. The compulsory education and higher secondary education are offered for free at public schools. Education of children and youngsters is amongst core social objectives of the state.

The principles on the ground of the functioning of the pre-university education system include respect, protection and promotion of human rights in general and student’s rights in particular, all-inclusiveness as well as the right to quality education and equal chances for education. The principle of equality among individuals and students in opportunities, quality, enjoyment, conditions and achievements is embodied throughout the law provisions. The law regulates explicitly that the curriculum, which is a system composed of several elements such as frame curriculum, education programs and assessment, ensures quality and equal education for every member of the society regardless of gender.

Regarding the tasks and responsibilities of involved actors, the education institution has an important role of creating a friendly environment for students as well as providing opportunities that each student can display and develop the individuality and fulfill his/her potential according to the law<sup>5</sup>, in addition to the notable role of the ministry of education regarding drafting of policies, programs and projects aiming at the development of pre-university education system.

Education is an important ingredient of child protection and participation, especially for children in risk, children in vulnerable conditions and during emergency situations such as that caused by COVID-19. The right and access to quality and free education on the basis of equal and non-discriminatory opportunities is also regulated by the *law on child rights and protection*<sup>6</sup>. Highest interest of the child as the primary consideration as well as equality and non-discrimination are among main principles of the law. Children with disabilities and children belonging to an ethnic, religious and language minority are addressed in particular by this law.

In addition to obligation to ensure quality education through adequate curriculum, teaching programs, infrastructure, financing and continuous evaluation of teaching personnel, the law charges the ministry responsible for education and its subordinated institutions with responsibilities to enable the child access to preschool education as well as free compulsory education even in cases when they have passed the age but have been unable to attend education.

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<sup>3</sup>Law No. 8417, date 21.10.1998, as amended “Constitution of the Republic of Albania”;

<sup>4</sup>Article 57 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania;

<sup>5</sup>Article 32 of the Law No. 69/2012 “On pre-university education system”, as amended;

<sup>6</sup>Article 18 of the Law No. 18/2017 “On the rights and protection of the child”;

The available education statistics from the Institute of Statistics in the Republic of Albania (INSTAT), present data on girls' and boys' participation in the education system in the country, as shown in the tables and figure below.

**Table 1: Students enrolled by programmes and gender<sup>7</sup>**

Programme	2016-2017		2017-2018		2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Pre-primary	42.295	38.899	42.314	38.712	41.221	37.721	40.466	37.392	37.016	34.316
Primary	92.380	82.456	89.835	81.026	87.762	79.342	84.734	77.436	82.707	75.821
Lower secondary	80.842	72.422	78.348	70.462	73.705	65.721	70.210	62.499	67.560	60.398
Upper secondary	67.528	59.586	63.901	56.161	62.177	54.469	58.290	51.243	57.270	50.719

### III. Gender statistics in pre-primary education

Early childhood education, or otherwise referred as pre-primary education, in Albania is optional and offered for children of age 3–6 years. The education offered in pre-primary is organized in three groups based on age: 3-4; 4-5 and 5-6-years old children. Children on the age of 5, who have not attended kindergarten for various reasons or due to the lack of kindergartens near their place of residence, can attend preparatory classes, in order to facilitate their integration into compulsory education.<sup>8</sup> These preparatory classes take place in primary schools. The unification of pre-primary classes in all education institutions has been long discussed, but not yet achieved.

**Table 2: Participation in education, by education level /gross enrollment ratio (GER)<sup>9</sup>**

Programme	2016-2017		2017-2018		2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Pre-primary	81,8	81,3	81,6	78,9	80,3	76,3	81,9	77,9	78,5	75,2
Primary + Lower secondary	101,6	99,2	102,1	99,2	102,6	97,2	100,7	95,5	99,9	94,2
Upper secondary	98,9	91,3	97,4	90,1	100,8	92,0	95,0	88,6	96,8	90,1

The net enrolment rate at the pre-primary level in Albania has greatly increased since 2000, reaching about 81% in 2016 (UIS, 2020). The rate in 2017 was about 80%, lower than the average in the OECD countries (84%) and the EU member states (87%). However, such rate is higher than in Serbia (61%) and Montenegro (60%).

<sup>7</sup>INSTAT, 2021. Women and Men in Albania 2021, Tirana, Albania, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8713/burra-dhe-gra.pdf>

<sup>8</sup>DCM No. 621, dated 22.10.2021 “For the approval of National Strategy for Education 2021-2026 and the Action Plan on its implementation”;

<sup>9</sup> INSTAT, 2021. Women and Men in Albania 2021, Tirana, Albania, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8713/burra-dhe-gra.pdf>

As it can be seen on Table 2 above, during the academic year 2020-2021, 78.5% of boys and 75.2% of girls attended pre-primary education. There has been a reduction in the number of children attending pre-primary education programme compared to preceding academic years.

**Table 3:** *Number of children enrolled in preschool education, by gender, 2021*

Gender	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Total	81.194	81.026	78.942	77.858	71.332
Boys	42.295	42.314	41.221	40.466	37.016
Girls	38.899	38.712	37.721	37.392	34.316
% of girls	47.9	47.8	47.8	48	51.9

A new preschool education curriculum has been developed, which includes the curriculum framework document, development and learning standards, programs for each age group as well as monitoring the framework for assessing preschool education. Also, for the first time, are drafted development and learning standards for ages 0–3. MoES has approved the Professional Training Standards for General Education of Preschool Teachers as well as Preschool Education Programs for the age of 3-4 years.

#### **IV. Gender statistics in primary and lower secondary education**

In the law on pre-university education system, under Chapter III, have been defined the levels of pre-university education. According to the law, primary and lower secondary education are included under the name of “Basic Education”.<sup>10</sup> Basic education starts at the age of 6 and ends at the age of 16 years old and is compulsory. This education is composed by two levels: primary education level, which consists in 5 classes, starting from first till fifth grade; and lower secondary education level, consisting in 4 classes, sixth till ninth grade. The basic education aims the social, intellectual and physical development of every student, teaching the rules of conduct as well as the education of values, health care and sufficient preparation for the continuation of the upper secondary education or the labour market.

In the academic year 2020-2021, 286,486 children were enrolled in basic education, 55.3 % in primary education and 44.7 % in lower secondary education. Compared to the school year 2019-2020, it was noted a decrease of 2.8 % children participating in basic education this year.<sup>11</sup>

According to the INSTAT data, the number of children attending primary education is decreasing during last year’s. This decrease can probably be attributed to the demographic trend regarding decline of natality which has been reflected in the reduction of primary education generations. The difference in number of boys and girls attending primary education reflects the gender differences among children in the general population.

<sup>10</sup>Article 22 of the Law No. 69/2012 “On pre-university education system”, as amended;

<sup>11</sup>INSTAT, Enrollment statistics, 2020-2021, Tirana, Albania, available at: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8187/press-release-enrollments-statistics-2020-21eng.pdf>

**Table 4: Students enrolled in primary education<sup>12</sup>**

Gender	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Total	174.836	170.861	167.104	162.170	158.528
Boys	92.380	89.835	87.762	84.734	82.707
Girls	82.456	81.026	79.342	77.436	75.821
% of girls	47.2	47.4	47.5	47.700	47.8

As the data on UIS indicate, the total net enrolment rate<sup>13</sup> for primary education in 2020 was high (96.16%), with a 3.61% difference between girls and boys. The total percentage of out of school children for 2020, in the legal age to be enrolled in primary education, is 3.7% (6221 children), 0.9% of which are girls and 2.8% are boys. There is no specific available data providing information on the attendance and drop-out rate for children belonging to Roma community, not only for primary education, but also for every level of education. This lack of data prohibits us from realizing the percentage of Roma children enrolled in each level of education and those belonging in the “out of school” category.

According to UIS, the number of repeaters in primary education in Albania is 1143 students, consisting mostly on boys (660 boys and 483 girls).

The number of primary education students enrolled in private education institutions is 14.653 students, out of which there are 6.793 (46.4%) girls and 7.860 (53.6%) boys.

According to the data available on INSTAT, 127.958 students enrolled in lower secondary education for the academic year 2020-2021- 60.398 girls (47.2%) and 67.560 boys (52.8%).

**Table 5: Students enrolled in lower secondary education<sup>14</sup>**

Gender	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Total	153.264	148.810	139.426	132.709	127.958
Boys	80.842	78.348	73.705	70.210	67.560
Girls	72.422	70.462	65.721	62.499	60.398
% of girls	47.3	47.4	47.1	47.1	47.2

As the data on UIS indicate, the total net enrolment rate on lower secondary education in 2020 is 96.45%, which is considerably a high level. There is a 4.18% difference between girls and boys (respectively 98.7% for girls and 94.52% for boys). The total percentage of out of school adolescents for 2020, in the legal age to be enrolled in lower secondary education, is 3.5% (4823 students), 0.6% of which are girls and 2.9% are boys. The number of repeaters in lower secondary education in Albania is 1045 students, consisting mostly of boys (735 boys and 310 girls).

The number of lower secondary education students enrolled in private education institutions is 10.053 students, 4.819 (47.9%) of which are girls and 5.234 boys (52.1%).

<sup>12</sup>INSTAT, 2021. Women and Men in Albania 2021, Tirana, Albania, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8713/burra-dhe-gra.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup>Total number of students of the official age group for a given level of education who are enrolled in any level of education, expressed as a percentage of the corresponding population

<sup>14</sup>INSTAT, 2021. Women and Men in Albania 2021, Tirana, Albania, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8713/burra-dhe-gra.pdf>

**Table 6: Participation in Basic Education /gross enrollment ratio (GER)<sup>15</sup>**

Programme	2016-2017		2017-2018		2018-2019		2019-2020		2020-2021	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
Primary + Lower secondary (in %)	101,6	99,2	102,1	99,2	102,6	97,2	100,7	95,5	99,9	94,2

In the academic year 2020-2021, 91.4 % of basic education students were enrolled in public education institutions and 8.6 % in private ones. Among the students enrolled in basic education, girls constitute 47.5 % of the total.<sup>16</sup>

Data on gender parity in basic education<sup>17</sup> are available for the academic year 2020-2021 and Gender parity index<sup>18</sup> is 0.94 indicating that there is no difference in the attendance of girls and boys in this level of education.

**Table 7: Gender Parity Index (on GER)<sup>19</sup>**

Programme	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Primary + Lower secondary (in %)	0,98	0,97	0,95	0,95	0,94

In 2019, 34.982 students graduated from basic education, corresponding to 96.4% of ninth graders for the academic year 2018-2019, marking an increase of graduation rate by 1%, compared to the previous academic year. In this level of education, 52.6% of the graduated students were boys and 47.4% were girls.<sup>20</sup> During the academic year 2019-2020, 33.618 students graduated from basic education, out of which 52.3% were boys and 47.7% were girls.

**Table 8: Graduations in Basic Education<sup>21</sup>**

Gender	Academic year		
	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Girls	48.9%	47.4%	47.7%
Boys	51.1%	52.6%	52.3%

<sup>15</sup>INSTAT, 2021. Women and Men in Albania 2021, Tirana, Albania, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8713/burra-dhe-gra.pdf>

<sup>16</sup>INSTAT, Enrollment statistics, 2020-2021, Tirana, Albania, available at: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8187/press-release-enrollments-statistics-2020-21eng.pdf>

<sup>17</sup>INSTAT, 2021. Women and Men in Albania 2021, Tirana, Albania, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8713/burra-dhe-gra.pdf>

<sup>18</sup> Ratio of adjusted net attendance ratios of girls to boys

<sup>19</sup>INSTAT, 2021. Women and Men in Albania 2021, Tirana, Albania, available at <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8713/burra-dhe-gra.pdf>

<sup>20</sup>INSTAT, Statistics of graduations, 2018-2019, Tirana, Albania, available at: <http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6957/diplomimet.pdf>

<sup>21</sup>INSTAT, Statistics of graduations, 2019-2020, Tirana, Albania, available at: [http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8334/statistika-te-diplomimeve\\_2019-20\\_juna-formatim.pdf](http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8334/statistika-te-diplomimeve_2019-20_juna-formatim.pdf)

## V. Gender statistics in upper secondary education

In the academic year 2020-2021, 103,001 students were enrolled in upper secondary education, marking a decrease of 6.0 %, compared to the previous year. Out of these students, 48,801 (47.4%), are girls and 54,200 (52.6%), are boys. The majority of students in upper secondary education are enrolled in gymnasiums and socio-cultural schools (81.5 %). This proportion has remained almost at the same level during the last three years. Most of the students enrolled in upper secondary education attend public education institutions (86.5 %).

**Table 9: Students enrolled in upper secondary education<sup>22</sup>**

School/academic year	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Upper secondary	116,646	109,533	103,001
Gymnasium & Socio-Culture	95,359	89,869	83,977
Vocational	21,289	19,664	19,024

The number of teachers in upper secondary education is 8,584, of which 68.4 % are women. The student-teacher ratio in upper secondary public education is 12.7 and 8.9 in private education institutions.

Data on gender parity in upper secondary education is available for the academic year 2020-2021 and Gender parity index<sup>23</sup> is 0.93 indicating that there is no difference in the attendance of girls and boys in this level of education.

**Table 10: Gender Parity Index (on GER)<sup>24</sup>**

Programme	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Upper secondary	0,93	0,93	0,91	0,93	0,93

In 2019, 34,021 students graduated from upper secondary education, marking a decrease of 3.6%, compared to 2018. Out of the students that graduate, 47.9% were boys and 52.1% were girls. Vocational education graduates made 11.2% of total graduates in secondary education.

In 2020, 31,662 students graduated upper secondary education, marking an additional decrease of 6.9%, compared to the previous school year. Out of the graduated students, 51.1% were boys and 48.9% were girls. 4,862 students graduated in upper secondary vocational education. This number is 27.7% higher, then the number of students that graduated at the end of 2018-2019 academic year. Vocational education graduates make up 15.4% of the total upper secondary education graduates. The gross graduation ratio in upper secondary education was 81.5%.<sup>25</sup>

Upper secondary vocational education in Albania is provided in about 53 schools, of which 9 are private, mainly located in urban areas. According to official figures, enrollment in public

<sup>22</sup>INSTAT, Enrollment statistics, 2020-2021, Tirana, Albania, available at:

<http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8187/press-release-enrollments-statistics-2020-21eng.pdf>

<sup>23</sup>Ratio of adjusted net attendance ratios of girls to boys

<sup>24</sup>INSTAT, 2021. Women and Men in Albania 2021, Tirana, Albania, available at

<http://www.instat.gov.al/media/8713/burra-dhe-gra.pdf>

<sup>25</sup>INSTAT, Statistics of graduations, 2018-2019, Tirana, Albania, available at:<http://www.instat.gov.al/media/6957/diplomimet.pdf>



vocational high schools in the 2020-2021 academic year has dropped to 17,000 students from 18,164 who were enrolled in the 2019-2020 academic year. The 2022-2024 economic reform document adopted by the government states that demographic trends are mainly the cause of this decline.

Boys make up the majority of upper secondary vocational education students. According to official data, most girls use upper secondary vocational education as a path leading towards higher education (over 79% of girls graduating from vocational education enroll in universities, compared to 39.2% of boys), while boys mainly use the upper secondary vocational education as a bridge to enter the labor market after graduation.<sup>26</sup>

## **VI. Gender equality issues in educational programs, curricula and teaching methods**

The law on pre-university education system defines the curricula as a system made of various elements such as: the curricular framework, the core curricula, education programmers, assessment programmers, which, being interconnected, allow the orientation and functioning of the educational system, through education and administrative plans. The curricula provide quality and equal education for every member of the society, despite their ethnicity, gender and social status.

This law also identified the curricular framework as the main document of the curricula, which describes its general goals, main competences, expected results for students, in terms of knowledge, skills and attitudes in the end of primary and secondary education, their goals in learning and the general principles of the teaching-learning process, and student assessment. The core curriculum is a joint curriculum for all students in the same level of studies in the educational system.

Primary education level in Albania consists of five classes, starting from the first grade till fifth grade. Gender education is included in the content of a social subject named “Citizenship” (Qytetaria). This subject aims to educate students on the basic concepts regarding individuals and groups, gender equality and non-discrimination, society and culture etc. One of the goals of this subject is to empower students and encourage them into participating in activities that promote cultural, ethic, religious and gender tolerance and diversity, at school or in community at large.

The education program is implemented through school textbooks, teaching materials and the influence of school environment. The latter is also known as *hidden curricula*.<sup>27</sup> Every society influenced by their gender beliefs and stereotypes has prevailing images of portrayal of man and women on the education programme. When children enter school environments, the images of boys and girls portrayed on books influence their concept of gender affiliation and gender roles expectations.

Students get influenced by both the official and the hidden curricula. It is very important to analyse textbooks and the hidden curricula, because they play a crucial role in the process of gender identity formation in children. Studies show that even school text books images can

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<sup>26</sup>Top Channel, “Unemployed / 35% with vocational education, 10% with gymnasium”, 2021, available at: <https://top-channel.tv/2021/12/29/te-papunet-35-me-arsim-profesional-10-me-gjimmnaz/>

<sup>27</sup>Dode E., Doctoral Dissertation “Analysis of the integration process for gender education in the education system. Special educational needs assessment for boys and girls”, p.32

convey powerful messages, just like the written text<sup>28</sup>. The way male and female characters are shown in the content and designs of textbooks influences the way children develop their gender affiliation in society, which can bring negative or positive effects, reflected in their attitude towards themselves and/or others. For this reason, textbooks should depict genders as equal as possible because the images that boys and girls see in school textbooks instil their self-perception and views about themselves.

According to the law on pre-university education, textbooks are part of the written and implemented curricula. The textbook is the tool of the learning and teaching process, developed in the frame of implementation of the subject syllabus. In Albania, the textbook is the main source for the learning process, at school and other learning environments. In order to maintain gender balance, textbooks should represent both genders in a fair and logical ratio. It is also relevant to analyse the gender ratio of the authors whose textbooks are selected by school academic boards to be taught in schools.

In order for teachers to be able to contribute to gender equality in the society, they need first to be aware of their gender biases and subsequently to be equipped with gender education competences. Although some progress is made, gender equality issues are still not part of the subjects for pre-service teacher training.

Another area for consideration would be the socialisation process in the schools and during the extracurricular activities. Such process can greatly benefit from a gender-sensitive approach, where teachers ensure a spirit of equality in the interactions between boys and girls not just in class, but also in the decision-making bodies of the schools such as the students' government and board of the school.

## **VII. Conclusions**

The available data disaggregated by gender is not complete. Therefore, it is necessary to further develop the available data for various aspects and levels of education. Regarding participation in education, disaggregated by gender, it is necessary to not only have data on the total number of children enrolled at each level of education, and the ratio of boys and girls enrolled, as we currently have, but this data should be enriched and should involve information on participation in education compared to the total number of children in the age to attend that level of education. To elaborate, the data should include the comparison of all children enrolled in one education level, compared with the total number of children in the age to attend that education level, and also disaggregate this data by gender. That would make it possible to realize how many children that should be in that level of education are not enrolled in schools, and what is the share of boys and girls in this group of children.

Also, data on children from vulnerable groups are extremely restricted, so it would be very useful if some of the data would be collected through regular administrative data in order to screen the situation among children from national minorities, Roma, children from rural areas etc.

Related to data collection, it is important to state that there is poor data available on employment in education disaggregated by gender and the % of leadership positions in each education level disaggregated by gender (particularly principals and vice principals).

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<sup>28</sup>GDAC, "Gender Perspective of School Textbooks in Albania", Tirana, 2008.

Since the available data show that there is a gender gap in the attendance of each level of education, it is of key importance to investigate the reasons of this gender gap, and coming with ways to reduce this gender gap, by tackling the reasons leading to this gap.

Regarding the content of the curricula, it would be very beneficial to conduct new analysis on content of education curricula and materials, including gender education since many new textbooks were adopted after previous studies were published, and a new curriculum based on competences has been adopted for the pre-university education.

The subject of Citizenship, used in primary, lower secondary and upper secondary education, could be used as an opportunity to introduce systematic education and awareness rising in gender equality and gender-based violence, but with the support of appropriate learning materials and textbooks. It is important to introduce regular monitoring and evaluation of knowledge and attitudes of students on gender equality.

Since textbooks in Albania are the main source of the learning process, the textbooks should represent both genders in a fair ratio, not only in text, but also in illustrations. Therefore, it is important to conduct an analysis of school textbooks, as part of the hidden curricula, to screen the fair representation of girls and boys, and also to eliminate any gender stereotyped concept of the roles and attitudes of men and women at all levels of education.

It would also be very beneficial to conduct the analysis of the new pre-primary education curricula including the learning materials used towards advancing the knowledge and attitudes of children regarding gender equality. The methods used should be in accordance with their age. In this manner some prospective occupations should be introduced to children with the message that different opportunities are equally suitable and available for both, girls and boys. Here, education classes can serve as a suitable entry point for gender education topics in the class.

Therefore, to offset the aforementioned, pre-service and in-service gender equality training programs should take place for teaching and management staff in pre-university education institutions. Gender equality competences should also be part of the staff performance criteria.

The socialisation process in schools can greatly benefit from a gender-sensitive approach, where teachers ensure a spirit of equality in the interactions between boys and girls not just in class, but also in the decision-making bodies of the schools such as the students' government, and the extracurricular activities.

Gender segregation in education should be a priority, part of education, gender equality, youth and employment related policies. Promotion of non-traditional occupations for boys and girls should be one of the regular activities in schools, as part of career orientation and guidance.

It is of great importance to realize that gender segregation on the labour market should be addressed with carefully tailored measures in order to increase employment of men in all education levels, especially in pre-primary and primary education, and to empower women employed in education to undertake leadership positions. Therefore, efforts here should include gender-sensitive career orientation and guidance elements.

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