

# RAPED ON INTERNET

## "THE INTERNET INDUSTRY AND PROTECTION OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS IN ALBANIA!"

### EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW OF THE 3<sup>rd</sup> REPORT FOR CHILD AND YOUTH INTERNET SAFETY IN ALBANIA

In cooperation with:



## EXECUTIVE OVERVIEW

Albania is a country that has embraced technology since many years. While children and young people in the country seem to be among the main users of the internet, including all its platforms. But our country is very young in terms of experiencing the ways that should be created to protect children and young people as internet users.

The year 2020, which was accompanied by one of the most unexpected events for the whole world, the Covid-19 pandemic, brought a different picture from other years, in terms of internet use in Albania. The beginning of the year forced the whole country to be subjected to a mandatory quarantine, which brought the main focus of all children, young people and everyone else to the only way to connect to each other by using the Internet. Digital technology began to be the headline of all generations, as well as all the whole society in the country.

9 March 2020, marked the entry of the whole country into a mandatory quarantine, while the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth instructed about 571,616 children to compulsorily attend their education through online learning.

In addition to children and young people, the entire Albanian Public Administration and almost a very large number of businesses and private organizations in the country started to work online.

Based on INSTAT data, in Albania about 82.2% of the population have full access to the Internet, which turns the use of the Internet and its protection into one of the most uncontrolled and dangerous situations in the country.

The forced lockdown of children and young people and their exposure to a still unsafe internet, created during 2020 a challenge for all experts of the protection system against online sexual predators, which was related to the large growth of the pornographic sites and the use without criteria of the internet platforms.

Only during May 2020, the number of pornographic sites with child pornography content, which were accessible to every child in Albania, was increased 100 %. This situation continued for a long period of time, turning it into a challenge for the entire child and youth protection system from unsafe internet.

The increase of the number of Internet users in Albania and the uncertainty of its use turned online research and the ways and strategies to be used to protect children and young people, in the main debate in all child protection organizations, institutions that should interact in this area, media, community, etc.

Unsafe internet on the other hand created in addition to the multiplication of pornographic sites, other serious problems for children, such as increased online bullying, threats, harassment, blackmail, online sexual exploitation of children, as well as theft of profiles, photos of children and their misuse.

In most of these issues, other European countries seem to have already established their consolidated experience and strategies to protect children and young people as much as possible from unsafe internet. While Albania is still in its first steps to create a truly strong system and to react in a coordinated manner between all systems with only one goal that is to protect the interests of children and their rights.

Albania still has shortcomings in terms of child protection mechanisms in their online navigation, training of law enforcement officers on the latest methods of online child report and safety, and continuous information to society to make the Internet as safe as possible for children.

During the year 2019 CRCA/ECPAT Albania brought the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Report on Child Internet Safety, which has already become an annual tradition. The report showed that children and young people are completely insecure and unprotected by the law and public institutions, while they are using the Internet.

According to the 2<sup>nd</sup> National Report on Internet Safety of Children and Youth in Albania, during 2019 the situation was as follows:

- **In 2019, there was an increase in 600% of the threats, blackmail and harassment** through Internet against children, adolescents and young people, a finding that had not been previously identified by any report or study in this area.
- **Every three days a child reported unsafe internet in Albania**, referring to 104 cases reported to the ISIGURT.al Platform and the National Child HelpLine ALO 116111.
- The year 2019 marked a significant increase of the girls' reporting. **55% of reports are made from the girls, compared to 44% which are made from boys**. While the age group most affected by the unsafe internet is the age 15-17 years old followed by the age group over 18 years old.
- **Instagram was the main platform, for 2019, for which children and young people reported the largest number of online incidents**, followed by YouTube and Facebook.

## REPORT METHODOLOGY

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The 3rd National Report “Raped on Internet: The Internet Industry and protection of Children and Adolescents in Albania!”, is based on an analysis of the work of all structures that work every day to protect children from online insecurity. Child protection services such as the National Platform for Safe Internet, the free counseling and referral service The National Child Helpline ALO 116111, as well as the

National Safe Internet Centre in Albania, for years continue to work with a unified mission to protect children and adolescents from the internet and its unsafe use.

These mechanisms have cooperated and are supported by CRCA/ECPAT Albania, which for 15 years has been engaged in the protection of children and young people in internet.

Only two years ago, CRCA/ECPAT Albania managed to implement the agreements with the two global platforms **Facebook** and **Google**, making it possible to protect children and young people from violence, bullying and internet exploitation. A collaboration that gave great value and results during 2020, the year that marked the large increase in the number of cases of violence and sexual exploitation, online violence, bullying, threats, harassment and blackmail against children and adolescents on the Internet.

Meanwhile, the mechanisms that CRCA/ECPAT Albania established, have had a close cooperation with other institutional and public sectors of the Albanian state, which are committed to protect children and young people from crimes and risks while using the Internet.

This report comes in a completely different context compared to the reports of two years ago because this year another aggravated situation of multiplication of reports in terms of pornography, threats, blackmail, image theft, nudity, etc, is highlighted.

**The purpose of this study** is to clarify the reality in which children and adolescents live, have fun and learn in Albania facing the dangers and exposure to a daily violent wave of sexual predators, abusers of children in all forms of violence online.

**The mission of this report** is to raise the awareness of the Albanian public opinion on the situation of internet vulnerability and to make recommendations for the improvement of all institutional, state and private mechanisms in a quality coordination and well-functioning with a focus on protecting children from any form of violence in internet. Based on its findings and recommendations, this report will also serve as a "spokesperson" for children, families and the entire Albanian public opinion to the legislative institutions which should react as soon as possible regarding the regulation of the legal framework in this area.

## **METHODOLOGY**

For the preparation of this report, the authors have relied on a database which summarizes all data reported to the Platform ISIGURT.al and ALO 116111, and is built into specific cells that enable the analysis of characteristics and clear identification of risks that children and adolescents face it every day online.

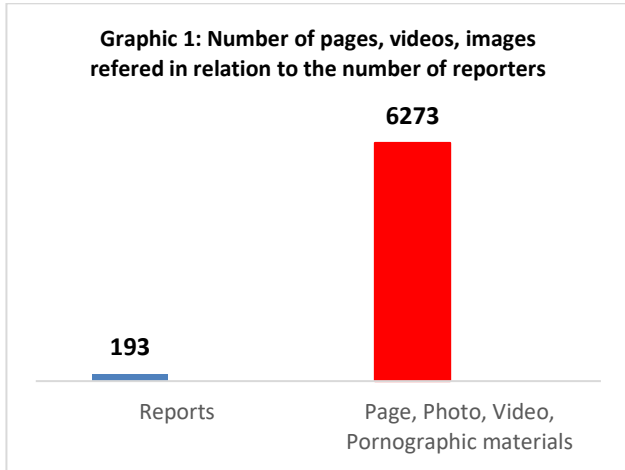
After summarizing all the cases in this database created by the experts of ISIGURT.al and ALO 116111, the data are coded and labeled creating study issues of this report such as age, gender, scope of case reporting by cities, measures undertaken, etc., regarding the protection of children and adolescents on internet.

Also for the preparation of this report, a literature review of other reports prepared by CRCA/ECPAT Albania and beyond was conducted, to compare the situation of internet risk for children and adolescents across the country.

# REPORT FINDINGS

This report in its detailed analysis presented some findings which are highlighted as below:

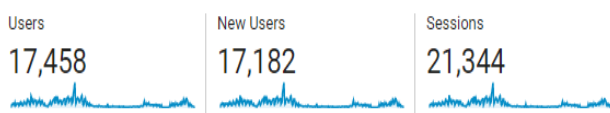
**\* The most critical finding in this report is the large increase of the reports, by 600%, of child pornography.** 6273 pages, photos, videos, materials with inappropriate pornographic content have been displayed and closed within the year 2020.



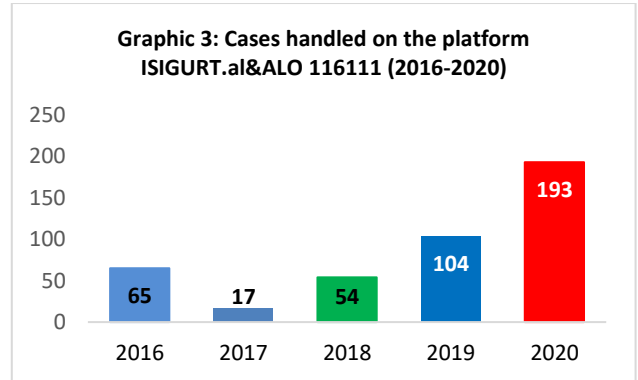
**\* 40% of cases of pornographic sites, videos or even images with the same content during 2020 belong to Albanian children,** while over 60% of cases of child pornography belong to non-Albanian children, but accessible to children and adolescents in the country

**\* The National Platform (Hotline) [www.ISIGURT.al](http://www.ISIGURT.al) during 2020 has received about 17,458 visits to its web,** which reflects not only the breadth in its scope, but also the great opportunity it presents to report internet incidents by children, young people, parents and stakeholders.

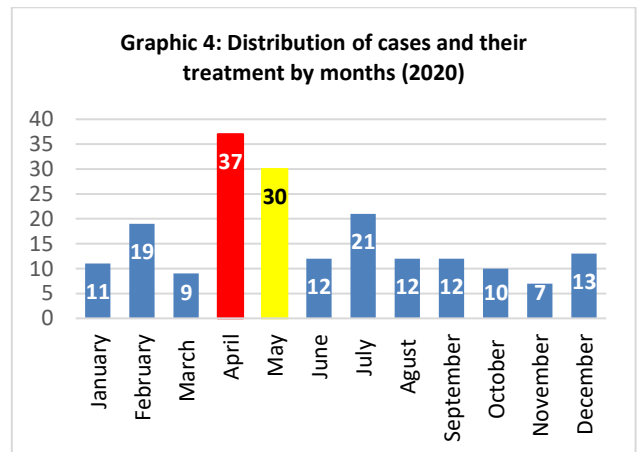
**Graphic 2: Visits to the National Platform ISIGURT.AL (2020)**



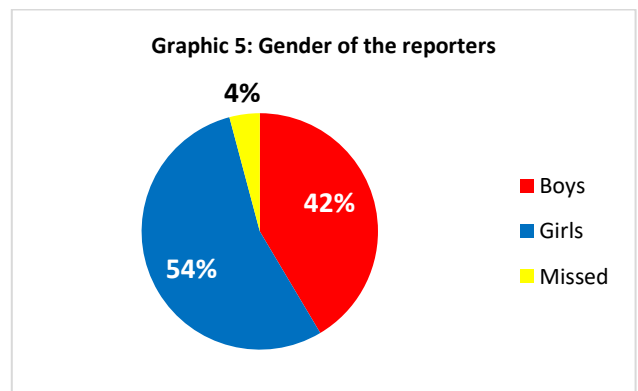
**\* The year 2020 marked a doubling of the reports of unsafe internet cases against children and adolescents in our country.** If a year ago there were about 100 cases, this year marked another 193 cases.



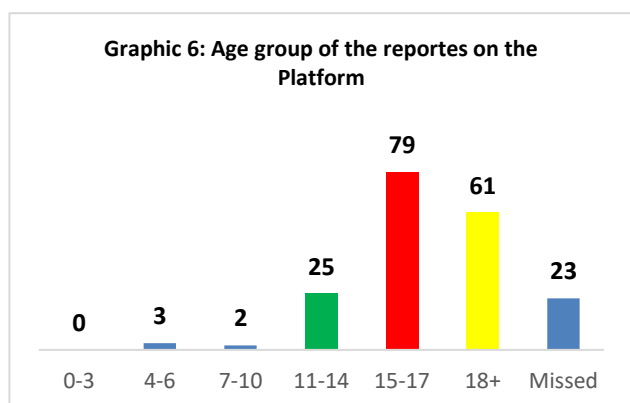
**\* Pandemic multiplied unsafe internet reporting!** The months that have involved the most children in unsafe internet navigation are the months of April and May, which coincide with the lockdown of Albania, followed by July, which is associated with summer vacations for children and adolescents.



**\* Even this year, girls continue to hold the first place in terms of reporting on unsafe internet at 54%, compared to boys 42%.**

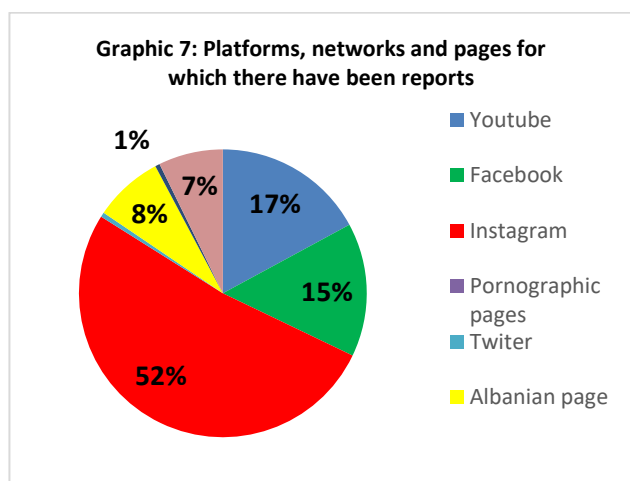


\* The most affected age of children and adolescents from unsafe internet use remains the age of 15-17 years, which is included in the extent of 40% of it.

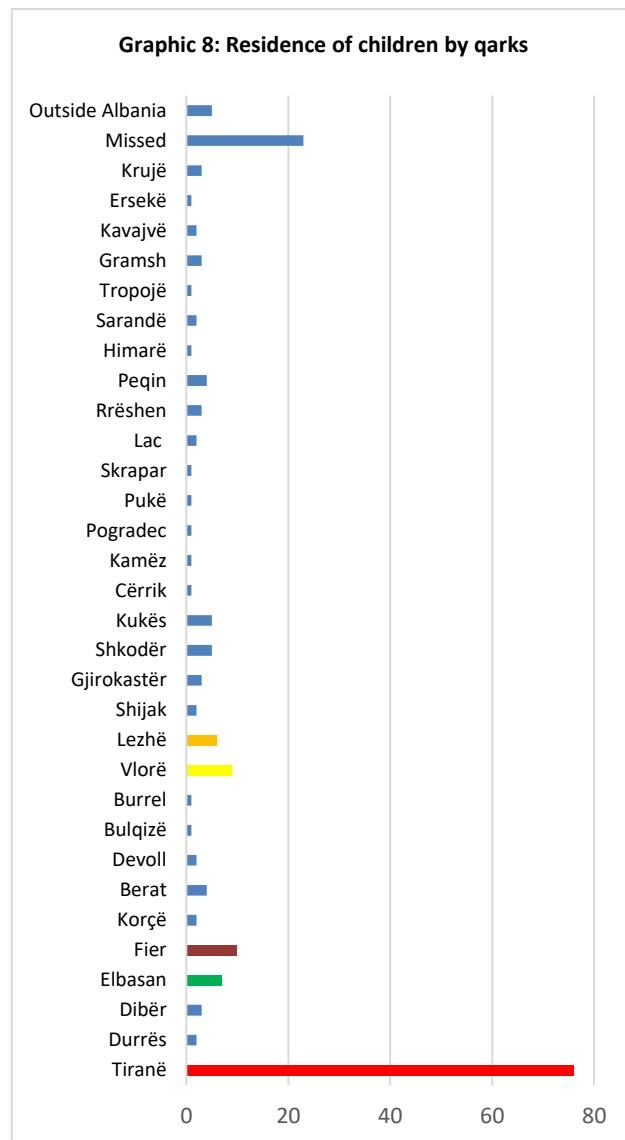


\* Young people over the age of 18, this year have reported more compared to a year ago. 31% of cases were over 18 years old. This finding also raises the concern that young people over the age of 18 who are "victims" of threats, online sexual violence, blackmail, etc., do not have a platform on which they can report.

\* Instagram continues to be the most unsafe platform for Albanian children, while another finding of this report is that Albanian sites have marked a drastic increase in the use of inappropriate materials, which threaten and endanger children and young people in using the Internet. Compared to a year ago, where from reporting these sites were almost zero, this year they have increased by 8%.



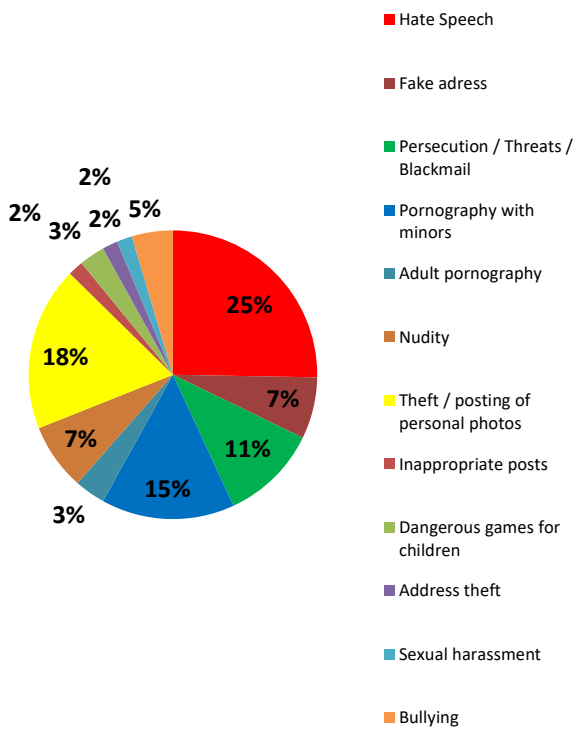
\* In terms of the geographical extent of reports of harassment, sexual violence, pornography and child exploitation on the Internet, cities such as Durrës, Korça, Pogradec, or even Gjirokastra are among those cities that do not seem to report cases and problems encountered by children and adolescents online.



\* Hate speech, again holds the first place with 25% followed by address theft or posting of photos, etc., while the reporting of cases of pornography with minors is worrying, this category compared to 2019 is 8 times more. Throughout 2020, child pornography appears to have become widespread, with about 15% of cases reported.

\* Meanwhile, the deadly dangerous game that threatened children and adolescents during 2020 "Jonathan Galindo", accounted for 3% of reports.

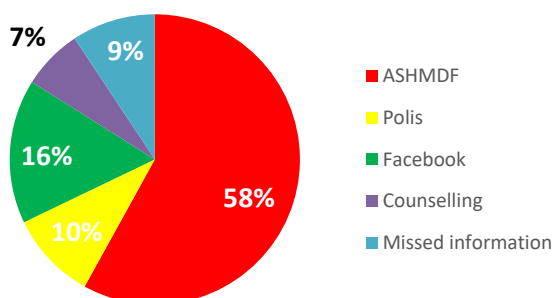
**Graphic 9: The main issues that children reported the most**



\* The State Agency for the Rights and Protection of Children, holds the first place with 58% of cases referred for assistance, immediately after reporting to ISIGURT.al and ALO 116111.

\* Meanwhile, the Cybercrime Sector at the State Police is one of the institutions which in their work have still had shortcomings in terms of following up the cases referred by ISIGURT.al and ALO 116111.

**Graphic 10: Case referrals by institutions**

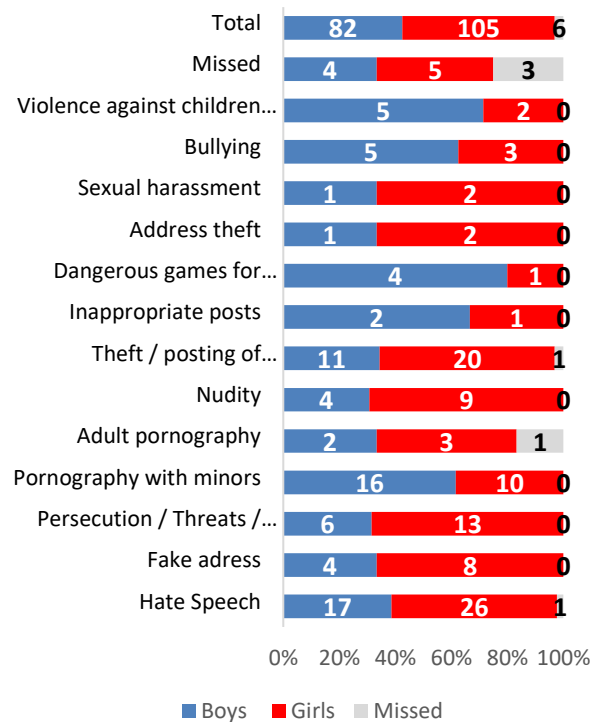


\* 70% of cases that have reported violence or image denigration are boys.

\* 69% of nudity cases belong to girls and 66% of sexual harassment cases still belong to girls.

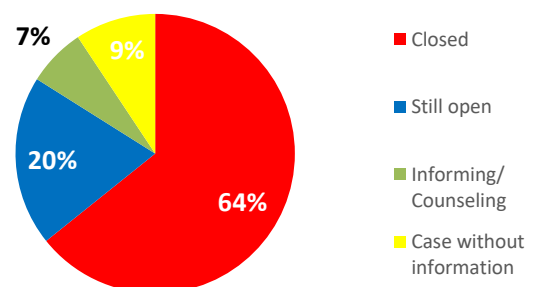
\* Another finding to be noted is that the girls have been more persecuted, threatened and blackmailed via the internet. 68% of girls have reported this phenomenon.

**Graphic 11: The main issues that girls and boys report more**



\* 2020 marked a year of success. 64% of cases are totally closed, a data that based on the number of cases that have occurred during this year and the attendance and intensity they have been very high compared to other years.

**Graphic 12: Effectiveness of case intervention (2020)**



## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REPORT

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*Based on the positive or even negative innovations brought by the analysis of all the details of the child and adolescent protection system in Albania, following to this documents are some of the main recommendations addressed to the law enforcement institutions in Albania, organizations working for children as well as public opinion.*

### FOR THE ASSEMBLY OF ALBANIA

- **The Albanian Parliament should start the necessary drafting of a specific law on child protection online and not only. This is a request made by CRCA/ECPAT Albania for many years.**
- **All articles, which address hate speech in the current legislation,** need to be addressed for many categories that are not included in them, focusing on their gender and beyond.
- Involvement in the parliamentary review and approval of the procedure of amendments and additions to the Criminal Code. Also these proposals are made from CRCA/ECPAT Albania.

### FOR THE GOVERNMENT, LINE MINISTRIES AND DEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS

- **Strengthening and reviewing the work of the Cybercrime sector at the State Police** in terms of following up and finalizing cases referred by civil society organizations and institutions working for children and youth in Albania.
- **Establishment of a national structure/platform,** which will enable the reporting of cases for all young people over the age of 18 years old in Albania, who feel endangered and threatened by the use of the Internet.
- **Urgently undertake online child safety awareness campaigns** and find entirely new approaches by public institutions to protect children from content and dangerous online behaviors.
- The Ministry of Education, in addition to campaigns, manuals, **should periodically organize activities with a focus on children and teachers** to discuss measures that can be taken together for the safety of children and young people on the Internet.
- After the completion of the Action Plan 2018-2020 "On safe internet for children in Albania", the Digital Agenda 2015-2020 and the National Agenda for Children's Rights 2017-2020, their continuity **should be reviewed to draft new documents** that would help children and adolescents to navigate the internet as safely as possible.
- **Involvement of organizations, children, young people, etc., in peer education in order to empower them and to make aware and responsible when they use the Internet.**
- Responsible Institutions for children such as Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth and Ministry of Health and Social Protection **should enable the promotion of national platforms such as the National Platform [www.ISIGURT.al](http://www.ISIGURT.al)** and its module "REPORT", by creating an institutional awareness for children and youth.

### FOR THE EU DELEGATION, UN AND DEVELOPMENT AGENCIES IN ALBANIA

- The European Union Delegation, UN Agencies, development agencies and donors as a whole, should unanimously support the online child protection system, supporting and funding the only National Platform (ISIGURT.al) that protects children and young people from all online risks, in

order to provide the services specified for a safer internet for all the children and adolescents in Albania.

- The Delegation of the European Union, UN Agencies, development agencies and donors as a whole, should unanimously support the online child protection system, supporting and funding the only National Platform (ISIGURT.al) that protects children and young people from all online risks, in order for them to get the services specified for a safer internet.
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#### FOR THE INTERNET INDUSTRY

- Based on the finding of this report in which Albanian sites note in their percentage a great insecurity for children and adolescents, **it is recommended that AKEP together with children's rights organizations should launch a broad and positive dialogue between the portals, media organizations and educational institutions**, to establish a stronger regulatory system in order to avoid any violates of children rights by online portals.
- All platforms for informing the Albanian public and those for entertainment in the Albanian language, whose address ends with .AL, must act in accordance and to respect the Law on the Rights and Protection of the Child in Albania. Based on the freedom of speech, expression and the right to information that also belongs to children, **every electronic media organization on the Internet must sign the Code of Ethics and adhere to the standards of child care.**

#### FOR CIVIL SOCIETY

- All civil society organizations that work daily with children and young people should devote a special space not only to informing children about cyber insecurity, but also to their fight to change the Criminal Code that protects children and adolescents from violence and online exploitation.

**REPORT!**

**Illegal content to:**

**iSIGURT.al**

As well as for more information contact **the National Safe Internet Centre in Albania i:**

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