



HATE AGAINST CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS ONLINE!

2nd National Report on Online Safety of Children and Youth in Albania

Tirana, February 2020

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Publication reference: Pulaha K., Hazizaj A., 2nd National Report on Online Safety of Children and Youth in Albania, CRCA Albania, 2020.

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ABBREVIATIONS

NAEPC	National Authority for Electronic and Postal Communications
ALO 116111	Albanian National Child Help Line
SARCP	State Agency for the Rights and Child Protection
CRCA	Child Rights Centre Albania
ISP	Internet Service Provider

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1. Introduction: The situation over the years on online safety of children in Albania

Albania for many years has been one of the countries with extensive internet use for all ages, including children and young people. The increase in the number of internet users in our country, has made it one of the most important mediums for people to communicate, learn and share information. But on the other hand, internet carries a number of risks for children, especially when it comes to protect them from violence, exploitation and online bullying.

Often the European countries presents a different picture, in which child sex predators are searching online for their victims. Because of this, many sites have been dedicated to child protection online, creating both legal and social child protection mechanisms, encouraging reporting of illegal websites as well as providing constant information for parents, teachers and children themselves about the risks of online navigation unsafe.

Albania, although it is new to this experience, is taking its first steps in this regard, that's why the country still has deficiencies in child protection mechanisms during their online navigation, in training of the law enforcement on the latest methods of denouncing and online child safety and constantly informing of society to make the internet safer for children.

Meanwhile, the National Authority for Electronic and Postal Communications, which is supposed to regulate the field of electronic communications and postal service, has not yet released its Annual Report for the year 2019. While referring to the data of 2018, it shows that are over 330,000 subscribers connected to the fixed broadband network and almost 2 million internet users via 3G/4G mobile network in Albania, or almost 70 percent of the Albanian population.

On the other hand, the European practice brings the experience that states and jurists are focused on building strong mechanisms for the protection and reporting of illegal content and addresses, where there is child pornography or where sexual predators seek their victims, while not neglecting online violence between children themselves (bulism) or adults towards children (abuse/violence).

A year ago, CRCA/ECPAT Albania conducted, for the first time in Albania, a National Report on Child Online Safety, bringing to light the reality and problems that this phenomenon faces. The 1st National Report on Child Online Safety in Albania showed that children and young people are completely insecure and vulnerable by the law and public institutions while they are using the Internet.

According to the 1st National Report on Child Online Safety in Albania, during 2018 the situation was as follows:

- Boys reported about the unsafe internet in a higher percentage (46%) compared to girls who made up about 43% of children who reported and sought for help on the platform.
- The main age group most affected by online violence, abuse, bullying or identity theft etc, was 15-17 years old, followed by 11-14 years old.
- Youtube and Instagram are the two main platforms that children and adolescent have reported more about violence, bullying, abuse or profile theft.
- The main categories of violations reported during 2018: 62% of the cases have reported hate speech / hate messages. 15% of the cases have reported the opening of fake profiles. 13% of the cases have reported nudity or exposing children to erotic or sexual images.

The situation of online safety has also attracted the interest of many other organizations to study this issue in Albania. The Online Child Safety Survey in Albania, conducted by World Vision, shows some disturbing data, as follows:

- According to 44% of respondents, children watch pornographic material daily.
- 47% of surveyed children admit that, within the last year, they have been contacted online by an unknown person, where 40% of them contacted by foreigners.
- Data show that 62% of children with internet access have a computer in their bedroom.
- Bullying, password theft, and unpurpose viewing of pornographic material while using the Internet are serious issues that children currently face, with 45% of respondents pointing out that children face this issues every day.
- 68% of children from both rural and urban areas confirm the existence of locations, computers, or screens that display pornographic material in violation of the law.
- 32% of the children interviewed confirmed that if they were injured online, the least likely to seek help would be teachers. This was followed by the police, where 27% of children do not consider it an aid institution.

Meanwhile, also during 2019, the same problems continued to appear. Concerns and reports by children and young people about the unsafe internet were growing. CRCA/ECPAT Albania in cooperation with the National Platform ISIGURT.al and the Child and Youth Policy Hub drafted the 2nd National Report on Online Safety of Children and Youth in Albania. This report includes all statistics and expertise on areas in which children and adolescents have reported their uncertainty over the use of the Internet throughout the year, including and reflecting on all areas where should work for a safe system in Albania.

2. Shortcomings of the Albanian legislation on online child protection

In the years of wide use of Internet, Albania has been moving along with rapid improvements in child protection legislation, but when it comes in particular for online safety Albania has made slow improvements. On the whole, it can be said that the main protection offered to children today comes through Penal Code norms, although they are partial and do not provide clear and complete protection of children online.

CRCA/ECPAT Albania has been working for years, and thanks to its insistence, a special Article (Article 27) was added to the Child Protection Act of 2017 (Article 27) to protect children from access to harmful or illegal content online, as follows:

Protecting children from accessing materials with harmful or illegal content online

- Parents, the guardian or any other person in contact with the child is responsible for protecting the child from accessing materials with harmful or illegal content on Internet.
- Internet service providers, educational institutions, and any other public or private institution that provides access to the Internet apply technical instruments and other measures to protect children from accessing illegal or harmful content, in accordance with the legislation in force power.
- The State Agency for the Rights and Child Protection, when it determines that computer based or information networks, websites or environments where there are children, disseminate materials that are harmful to the child under this law and the law on cyber security requires to the responsible authority to take measures to block the access to these networks or sites.
- Measures to protect children from the access to illegal and/or harmful content online are determined by decision of the Council of Ministers.

Article 27 constitutes the first legal norm in Albanian legislation that seeks to regulate and give solutions of the harmful content on the Internet, while the illegal content is regulated by the Criminal Code, although with significant deficiencies in terms of protecting children from violence, abuse and bullying online.

If we refer to the criminal legislation regarding to pornography and child exploitation (online and offline) it has been improved only after the pressor of civil society requirements as well as the pressor of the international community (recommendations of the Child Rights Committee of UN). During 2016 and then in 2018, CRCA Albania, in consultation with the State Police, Tirana District Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Social Welfare (now the Ministry of Health and Social Protection), requested the

improvement of the criminal legislation, proposing specific interventions and additions to some articles of the Criminal Code.

Two years ago the Committee of Social Affairs in the Albanian Assembly have organized a Hearing with civil society to get their opinions and support for these changes. However, due to the ongoing political crisis and the opposition's non attendance of the proceedings of the Assembly for a period of six months, these changes were set aside because the quorum needed to approve these necessary additions to the Criminal Code was missing.

The main interventions proposed by CRCA Albania for the Assembly are as following:

- **Article 117: Child Pornography**, because of its high social risk and the harm that brings on the moral development of children, requires not only to be punished, but on the other hand, all pornographic material produced, regardless of form or and the manner of distribution, to be sequestered and destroyed. Article 117 does not clarify this important aspect, what happens to pornographic material at the conclusion of the trial.

- In **Article 117**, the creation of the National Register of Sexual Crimes is recommended. Building a fair criminal policy to punish, but also prevent any form of sexual violence against children by adults, as well as to increase the safety of children and the public, the state takes preventive measures against all pedophiles so that they do not commit other sexual crimes against children. In this regard, it is important to establish a National Sexual Crime Register.

- Substantial changes have been proposed in **Article 124 / b**, which requires the separation of two different criminal offenses in substance, of "child maltreatment" and "child exploitation". The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, in its recommendations for Albania in September 2012, specifically requested that the State party (Albania) to take measures to punish offenses of mistreatment, sale and exploitation of children for work.

- Include in the Code some new offenses such as **Grooming** (preparing and encouraging a child to engage in sexual intercourse), Sexting (sending sexually explicit or erotic messages to children), **Child sexual harassment** by adults, **cheating or threatening minors to have sexual contacts, unauthorized use and identity theft**¹, and expanding the meaning of "**Hate Speech**" to penal code to include children and their online communications, especially bullying that uses hate speech.

¹ The proposed addition to this offense is also related to the proposed addition to the article 284/1 te KPP

3. Institutional mechanisms for protecting children and young people from risks and cyber crime

Five years ago, information on reports or even complaints of children and adolescents about unsafe internet was almost zero. State institutions did not reflect on what happened to complaints of children and young people from unsafe internet. The lack of a Hotline for the report of the unsafe internet made it very difficult for them to report irregular or damaging content, violence, bullying, hate speech, etc.

During these years the only national service receiving reports on this issue was the National Child Helpline (ALO 161111), but due to legal restrictions and lack of policies that must address the risks that children face online, the main focus was to the illegal materials and information on the dangers that children and adolescents may encounter online.

CRCA Albania, with the support of UNICEF Albania and in collaboration with the Ministry of Innovation², in 2015 led a large-scale campaign to reorganize the entire online child and youth protection system. The lack of a systematic and organized approach required the creation of a new institutional architecture to enable proper handling and addressing deficiencies at the level of legislation, policies, institutions, etc.

Just one year later, in February 2016, the four main ministries of the Albanian Government: the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Innovation, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Welfare, in cooperation with civil society, at the 1st National Conference Children on the Internet², agreed to take a number of joint measures to raise, strengthen and protect children online.

All institutions agreed on the following measures:

- a. Preparation of the National Online Safety Action Plan;
- b. Legal Proposals to Improve the Penal Code and Other Laws to Increase Online Safety for Children;
- c. Support for the creation and promotion of the National Online Safety Platform www.ISIGURT.al;
- d. Launch a national campaign to inform children, youth, parents and teachers about Internet risks and dangers. A few months later Albania signed the Abu Dhabi Declaration on the Protection of Children from Violence and Abuse online.

Below is a brief overview of the new Internet governance architecture that is being created in Albania to protect children and young people from Internet risks.

3.1 Legislation for online Child Protection

Referring to one of the main links in the online child protection system, we point out that it presents some serious shortcomings that require quick addressing, in the Criminal Code and the Law on Electronic Communications, to address the issue of harmful and illegal content and the institutional responsibilities arising from these changes.

² With the changes made to the structure of the Government after the 2017 parliamentary elections, this Ministry was closed and its responsibilities regarding children were generally transferred to the new Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

On the other hand, the changes brought by the new Law on Child Rights and Protection in Albania (Law 18/2017) and the new role and responsibilities assigned to the National Agency for Child Protection and Rights by Article 27 of the Law should be appreciated. In this context, the Council of Ministers' Decision on reporting harmful content against children and issuing an order to withdraw or eliminate content from the subjects of law remains to be adopted.

3.2 Institutional mechanisms for the protection of children and youth online



The State Agency for the Protection of Child Rights is the institution responsible for the protection of children under the age of 18, together with the extensive network of Child Protection Units at the local level. The Law on Children entitles the Agency to take measures

against any observed violation, whether physical or legal, state or private, and where appropriate, to prosecute them if a criminal offense is found.



AKEP-National Authority for Electronic and Postal Communications is the regulator of the entire internet industry in Albania, which is at the same time the issuer of licenses for companies that want to offer internet or landline and mobile phony services (ISPs). The Law on Electronic Communications entitles AKEP to require ISPs and phone companies to take action or report on concerns related to the Internet and its security, or when there

have been suspicions or violations of law criminal, to seek measures to block specific subjects online, find the person, etc.



The State Police is the responsible institution that guarantees the protection of law and order in Albania, including children and young people. In cooperation and under the direction of the Prosecution, it conducts investigations into all criminal offenses against children. Next to it is a modest cybercrime investigation unit with trained specialists in child crime.

The Child Safety Advisory Committee on Internet, as part of the implementation of the Plan, its signatories have agreed to set up a Child Safety Advisory Committee on Internet. The Committee will consist of one representative from each Ministry signing the Plan, one member from ASHDMF, State Police, AKEP, etc. A member of the committee can be any civil society organization, public institution, telecommunication company, etc. The purpose of the Committee is to strengthen the dialogue between state institutions, civil society, the internet industry and communication, on internet security, with the aim of establishing an informal network among all actors working and caring for online child protection.

3.3 Public Policies: National Plan for Children's Online Safety

Albania has been for many years a broad internet user and the ages involved affect a significant proportion of the population, until early 2018, there was no public policy adopted on child protection and safety on the internet. In February of this year, the three main ministries of the Albanian Government responsible for children's issues: the Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth and the Ministry of Interior, signed the adoption of the National Action Plan for Online Safety of children in Albania.

This plan, is an achievement for Albania because it lists it among the few countries in the Western Balkans that have adopted public child protection plans or policies during their online navigation, extends its operational time in 2018-2020.

The Action Plan aimed to:

- Increasing child safety while navigating online, creating a broad collaboration, exchange and coordination platform that enables increased security for identifying, reporting and restricting access to sites that are inappropriate or illegal for children and adolescents in Albania;
- Strengthening the legal framework and public policies on child online safety;
- Supporting the National Reporting and Information Platform (www.ISIGURT.AL), which provides access to children, parents, teachers, stakeholders, etc. to report, inform and raise awareness of security, risks and ways of protection from exploitation and abuse online;
- Exchange of information between institutions, organizations and the Internet industry to increase children's online safety;
- Strengthening dialogue between state institutions, civil society, the internet industry and communication to enable children to be protected from violence, bullying, abuse and exploitation on the Internet;
- Intensify efforts at local and national level to increase child protection and online safety;

The Action Plan focuses on achieving four strategic objectives:

1. Increasing the safety of children on Internet by strengthening national and local capacities;
2. Strengthening the legal framework and policies for online child safety;
3. Strengthening Partnership Institutions - NGOs - Internet Child Safety Industry;
4. Raising awareness of online child safety.

The Action Plan highlights the shared responsibility for protecting children's rights and their online safety for public institutions, civil society organizations, teachers, parents, the media and industry.

This plan seeks to serve as a guide for setting strategic goals and objectives, as well as coordinating the work and activities of institutions, organizations, industry and all social partners interested in child safety on the Internet, over the next 3 years.

Specific steps included in the Program and Plan consist of:

- Improving reporting mechanisms through ALO 116111 Child Helpline and the National Internet Safety Information Platform (www.ISIGURT.al), phone applications, etc;
- Specialization of field staff, through manuals and continuous training, including: police on investigative and preventive capacities, teachers on information and psycho-education issues, child protection unit staff on case handling and case management of online abuse, etc;
- Ensuring ways and means of accessing information to children on online abuse, protection and crime reporting. This will be made possible through awareness campaigns.
- Strengthening cooperation with the private sector, ISPs, telecommunication companies, etc.

The National Action Plan aims to build the necessary infrastructure to identify victims of abuse, online exploitation and to use best practices to treat victims of abuse and online exploitation; to establish strategies that ensure the cooperation of all social actors in the prevention and protection of children in Albania from online abuse and exploitation; to strengthen the legislation that enables the legal treatment of this crime, the capture of abusers and builds genuine mechanisms for the prevention and treatment of victims; to ensure that every social actor has the right and obligation to report cases of abuse and materials with inappropriate content to children.

Along with the National Agenda for the Rights of the Child 2017-2020, the implementation of the Action Plan is underway. One of the most important objectives of this agenda is to strengthen the central and local institutional mechanisms for a safe electronic and digital environment for children. This objective is widely represented in the Action Plan 2018-2020.

Regarding public policies, it is worth noting that 2020 is the end of some of the most important plans, agendas and strategies that focus on a safer internet for children, such as the Action Plan 2018-2020 “On safe internet for children in Albania ”, Digital Agenda 2015-2020, National Agenda for Children's Rights 2017-2020.

3.4 Services for the protection of children and youth online

National Online Safety Platform (Hotline)



The National Online Safety Platform was officially opened in October 2015, by CRCA Albania, on the website www.ISGURT.al and as an application for mobile phones in the same name. The platform, which is classified as a hotline (line to report and seek help) is a dedicated space, which serves as a unique source of

information, manuals and guides about safe internet for children, parents, teachers, professionals working with/for children to protect children from abuse and online exploitation.

The purpose of the Platform is to coordinate efforts to identify and protect child victims, to identify illegal and inappropriate content for children online, to inform parents, teachers, children, etc., and to strengthen cooperation between institutions. The main mission of the platform is to report sites with illegal and harmful content for children and young people in Albania.

The section **RAPORTO** protects children from online abuse by receiving, analyzing and referring complaints from children, parents, teachers, professionals working with/for children or any other person interested in reporting online abuse and referring all complaints to the relevant agencies, law enforcement and other institutions providing services for online abuse issues.

National Child Helpline: ALO 116111



The National Child Helpline - ALO 116111 is a free counseling and referral service for children. This service communicates with children through the numbers: 116111 – National Child Helpline and ALO 116000 - National Line for Missing Children.

The National Child Helpline is an instrument that aims to advise children by phone and refer their needs to the relevant institutions. ALO 116111 as a new and unique service throughout Albania aims to raise the standards and procedures required in order to provide a quality service for children. Assessing and taking into account the voice of children through the awareness of all central and local partners working with/for children, is the motto of the work of ALO 116111.

ALO 116111 is an opportunity for every child to be helped in a delicate moment of his/her life. The Child Counseling Line is a place where every child's right it is heard, every child feels free to express themselves, to be informed and to receive the appropriate service, provided by a qualified staff.

The service focuses on children in need such as: abused, abused or maltreated children, children in street situations, children who are exploited at work, children who are in conflict with the law, etc. This service also includes parents, teachers, educators or people interested in issues related to and for children. The mission of ALO 116111 is to be close to children in their most difficult moments, protecting and advancing the issue of children's rights in Albania. We work to protect the wellbeing of the child, through phone counseling, referral and proactive protection of children's rights.

The National Center for Online Safety in Albania



The National Center for Online Safety in Albania provide safe internet for everyone, especially for children and young people. It works to increase the information, awareness and advice of internet users about the risks they face online. The center will also promote the creation of a culture of care, protection and respect in the virtual world.

The center consists of national organizations, groups and services, such as: CRCA Albania, ISIGURT.AL Platform, National Center for Missing Children, Tirana Youth Parliament, Albanian Coalition for Education and the National Network for Children's Rights. The center coordinates its services with the National Child Helpline, Child Protection Units, the State Police and the Internet industry.

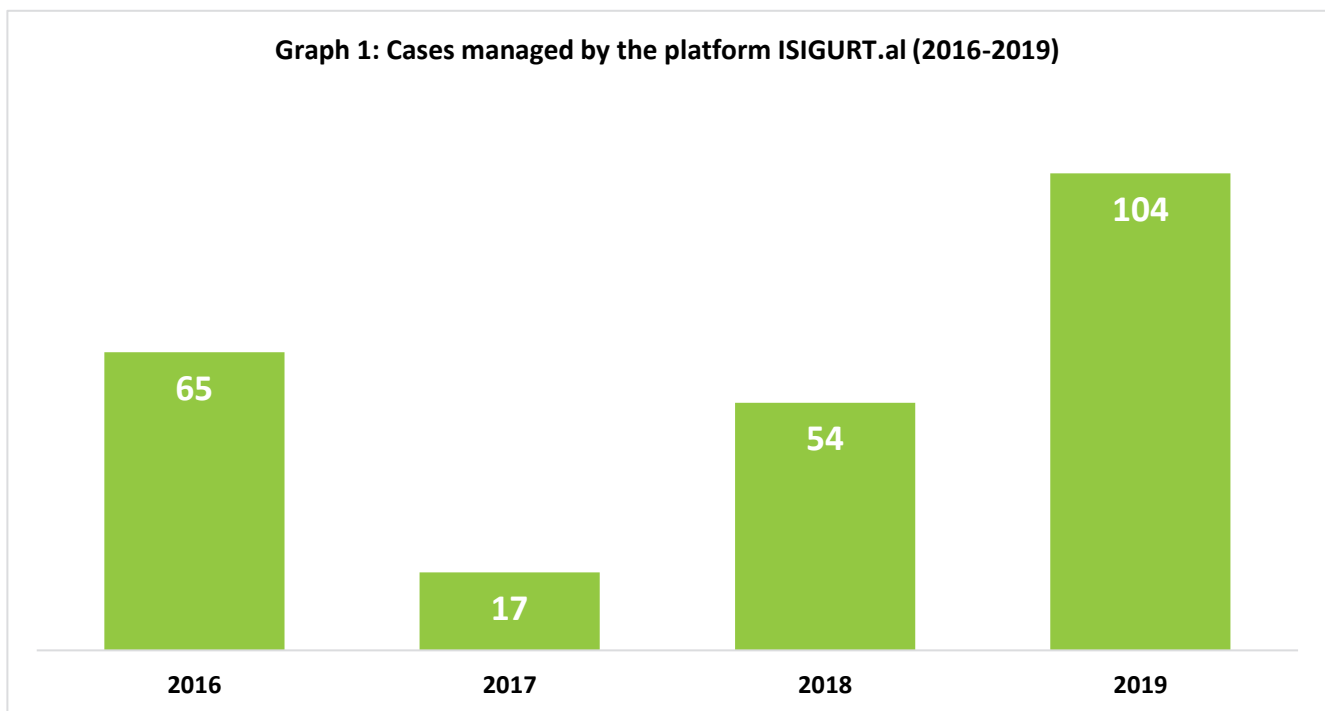
The activities of the National Center for Online Safety, are as following:

- Raising awareness about the potential risks encountered during online navigation;
- Denouncing any case that endangers children and adolescents or exposes them to inappropriate or pornographic material on the platform www.ISIGURT.al ;
- Providing advice to stay safe online;
- Development of legislation, policies, protocols, guidelines and good practices for a safe internet and where each person behaves responsibly and respectfully for himself and others;
- Development of information materials for students, teachers, parents and child protectors in Albania, police officers, administrators and employees of the internet industry, etc;
- Organizing Safe Internet Day, one of the largest annual international events held in February, where Albania has been participating since 2005. CRCA Albania is the organization officially recognized by SID for organizing activities that bear their logo in Albania;
- Organizing information sessions on measures that can be taken to make the Internet as secure as possible, but also to protect children from sexual predators on the Internet;
- Strengthening cooperation with the Internet industry, communication and AKEP as the regulator responsible for the Internet industry.

4. REPORTED INCIDENTS OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH ONLINE

The data presented below have been collected and analyzed, based on data reported on the National Online Safety Platform www.ISIGURT.al. This data has been gathered since October 2015 and onwards. This report systematically and for the second time presents a complete analysis of these data, with a special focus on data for 2019, which is the main year of our analysis.

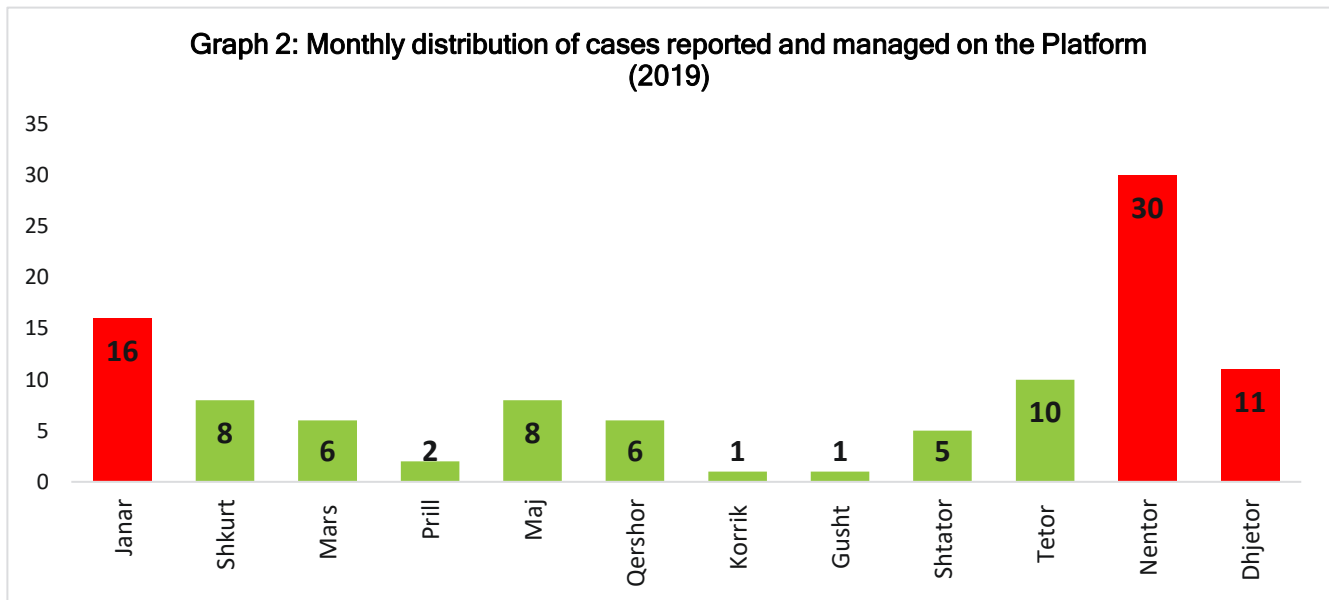
4.1 Cases managed by the ISIGURT.al Platform



Graph 1, presents the number of cases managed by the platform since its opening. The data for 2015 were not presented, because they did not constitute a full year. More than 300 complaints have been filed in the platform ISIGURT.al, of which only 240 of them have been cases that have been proven to constitute illegal or harmful content for children.

During 2019, 67 cases of children and young people referred to the platform ISIGURT.al and 37 other cases reported to the platform from referrals received from the National Child Helpline ALO 116111 were managed. The rest of the complaints consist of those without content or simply system testing, whether it works or not.

4.2 Monthly distribution of cases reported and managed on the Platform



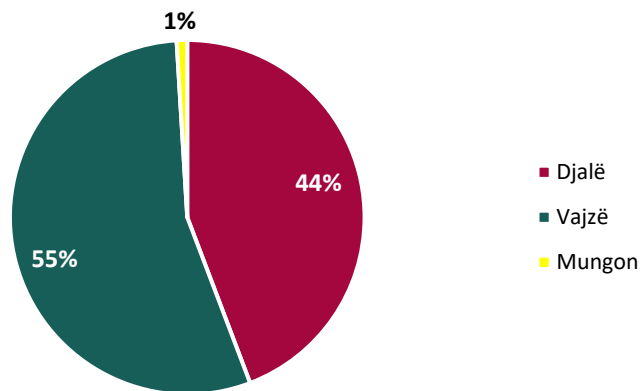
There is an oblique distribution of reporting and managing cases during 2019. According to the data we can say that the winter period (November, December and January) brings more reports and more cases on the Platform than those during the summer, where cases decrease significantly.

In our opinion, this is due to the fact that in these months children stay for a longer time indoors or at home and this encourages the use of the Internet, social networks, etc., compared to the summer period.

Also with the start of the new school year, in September and October 2019, the experts of ALO 116111 and CRCA/ECPAT Albania, organized an intensive awareness campaign in all 61 municipalities of the country with students of 9-year and high schools, which significantly increased the number of reports in the coming months.

Gender of children and young people who have complained to the Platform

Graph 3: Gender of the complainants



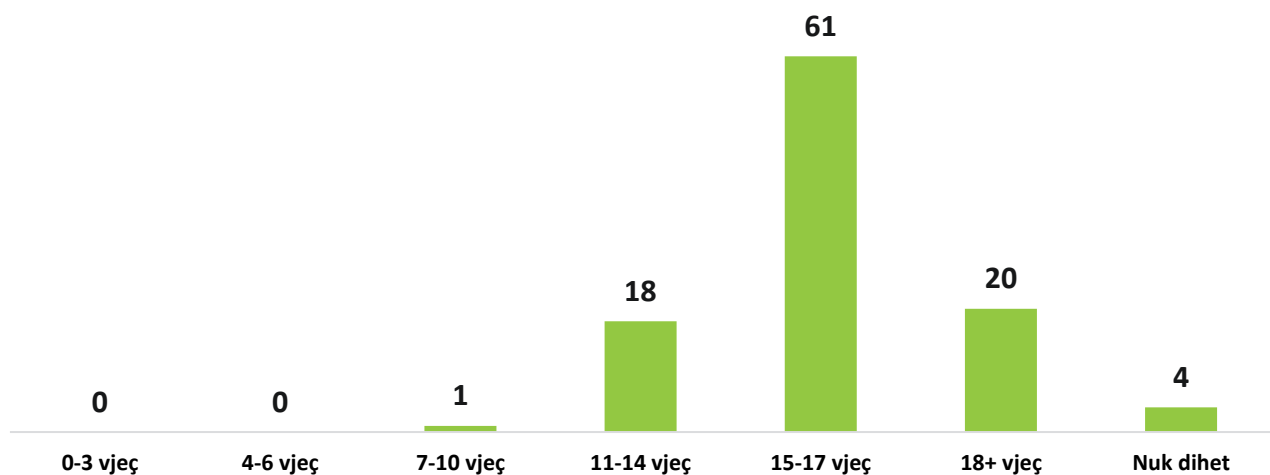
Compared to a year ago, throughout 2019 there is a change in the balance of reporting between boys and girls. During 2018, boys reported a higher percentage of incidents (46%) compared to girls.

In 2019 we see a change in the direction of higher reporting where already girls have reported 55% of online incidents, compared to 44% of boys.

In about 2% of cases, it was not possible to determine the sex, due to non declaration by the complainant. It is worth noting that the risks faced by children and young people on the Internet are the same, although it must be said that from the data we have, the most serious incidents have been reported by girls.

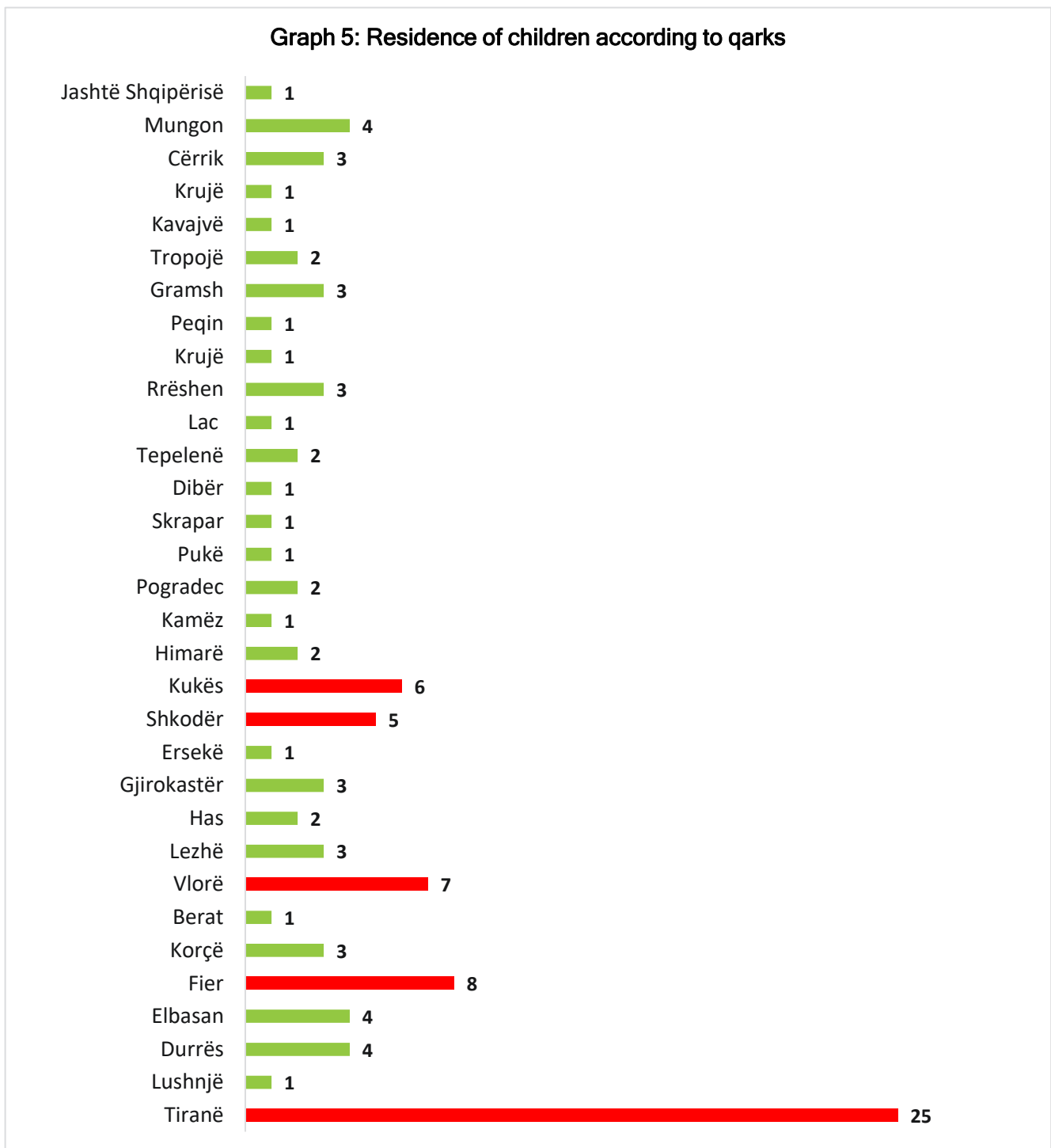
4.3 Age group of children and young people affected by unsafe internet

Graph 4: The age group of the complainants on the Platform



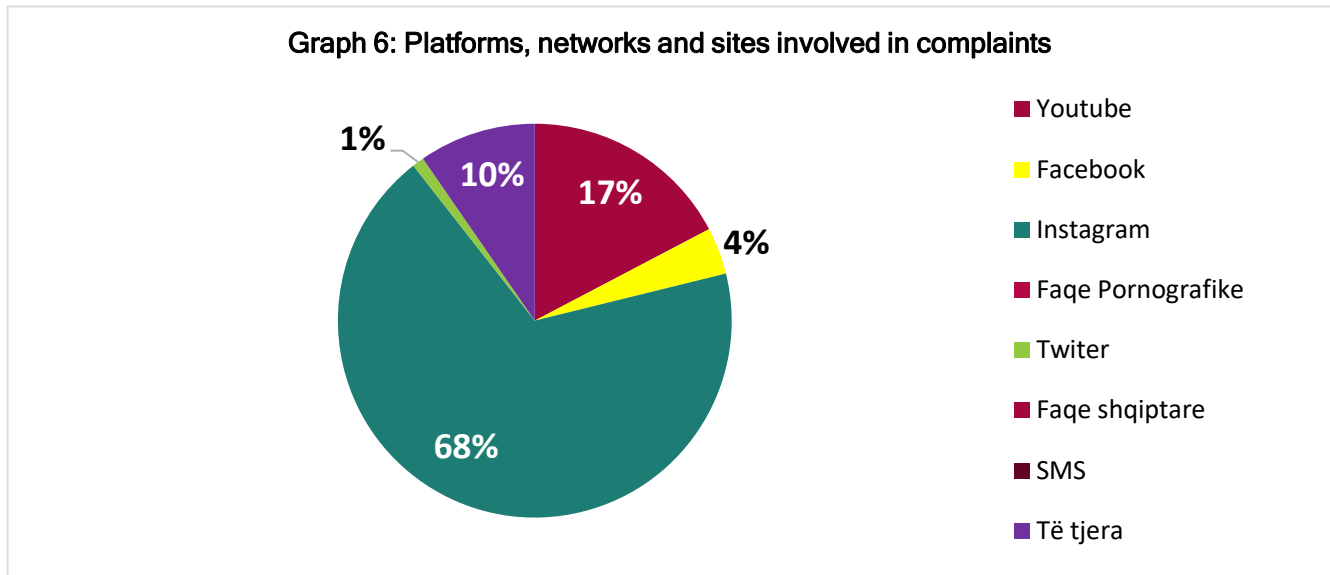
As can be seen from the data, the main age and most affected by abuse, bullying or identity theft, etc., on the Internet is that 15-17 years old (with 61 reports) followed by persons over the age of 18 (with 20 cases), as well as with fewer children in the 11-14 age group (with 18 cases). Meanwhile, there was only one report from children aged 7-10, as well as 4 cases from children or persons who did not state their age. All reports submitted to the platform ISIGURT.al have been managed, informed or referred according to the specifics of the case.

4.4 Residence of children and young people who have reported online incidents



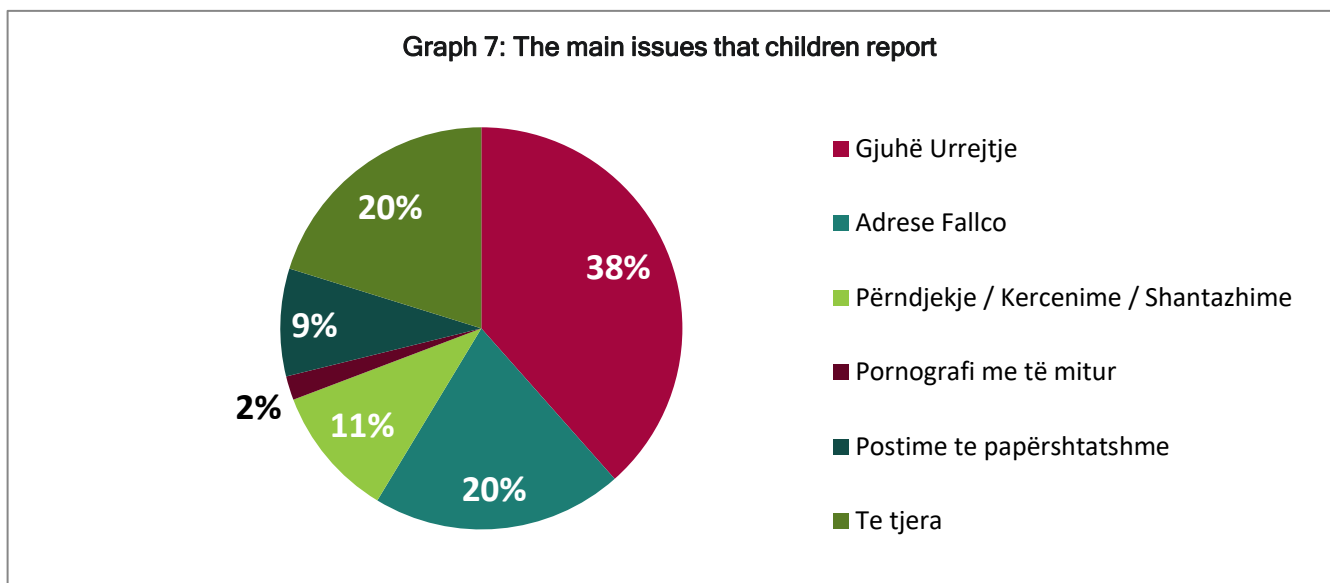
As can be seen from the data, as a whole, the largest cities bear the brunt of the cases reported and addressed in the Platform. In our point of view, when small towns report a high number of incidents, there is a possibility that in these towns there is an organized network of young people or sexual predators who harass teenage girls online for the purpose of sexual gain, a feature that we have not found it in big cities in Albania.

4.5 Platforms, networks and sites for which children and young people have complained



Instagram, Youtube and Facebook constitute the three main platforms of child and youth complaints about violence, bullying, abuse or profile theft. As can be seen from the graph, complaints against platforms or other sites are several times lower, but again some of them are related to child pornography, nudity or hate speech against children and young people.

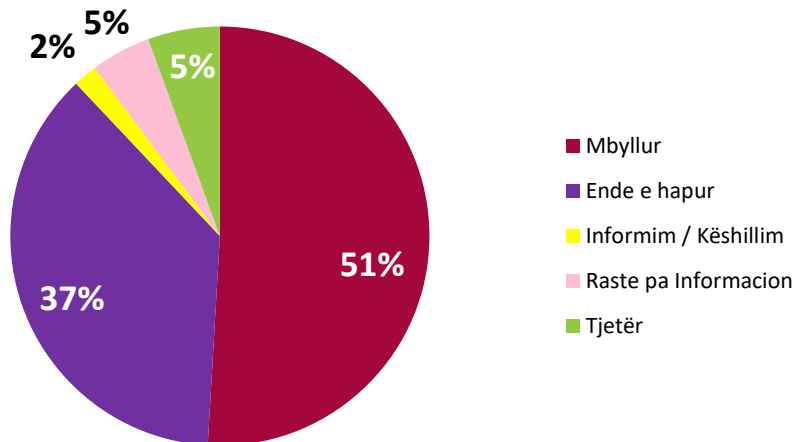
4.6 The main forms of violence, abuse or exploitation of children on the Internet



During 2019, among the main categories of reported incidents are related to hate speech, with about 38% of cases. In second place (20%) are reports categorized as "other" that are generally related to password loss. In third place is the opening of fake profiles by another person (20%) followed by reports where the focus is on persecution, threats and blackmail with about 11%, inappropriate/nude posts (10%) or children's exposure to erotic or sexual images. Only in two cases referred to the Platform was reported child pornography, cases which were referred to the State Police.

4.7 Measures taken and the success rate of treatment of cases

Graph 8: Measures taken to address complaints against sites/platforms (2019)



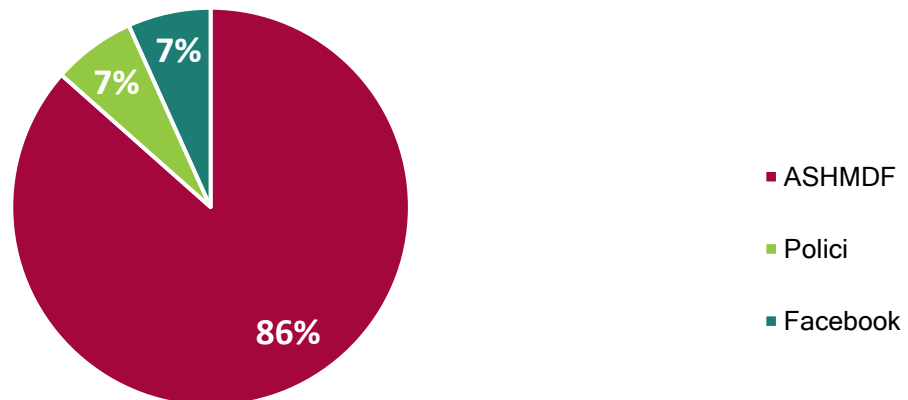
One of the main goals of the platform ISIGURT.al is to follow up on cases reported by children and young people as appropriate, if they do not constitute criminal prosecution, to eliminate posts, threats or bullying online.

The data show that in 51% of cases the reported pages, profiles or videos have been closed, while about 37% of them are still open or accessible online. Also a small percentage are (2%)

the advices given to children and young people on how to act to close their fake profiles, for example or other similar cases.

4.8 Cases reported according to institutions

Graph 9: Cases reported according to institutions



The main agencies responsible for the protection of children in Albania have been notified of almost all cases. Data from the Platform show that almost 86% of cases have been referred to the State Agency for Child Protection (ASHMDF), by ISIGURT.al or ALO 116-111, while seven cases have been referred to the State Police (pornography cases, threats and persecution) and seven others have been referred to Facebook for further prosecution.

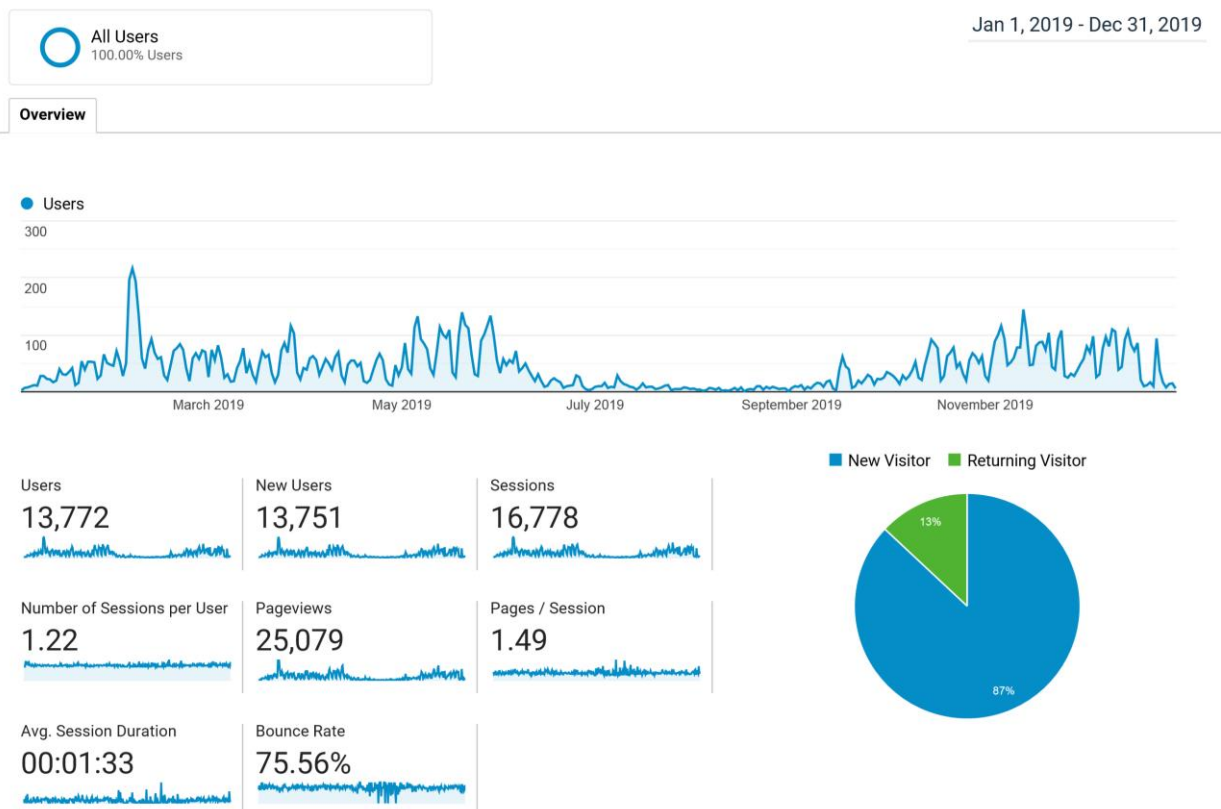
4.9 Annual visibility of the National Platform ISIGURT.AL

During 2019, the National Platform (Hotline) www.ISIGURT.al has received about 14 thousand visits to its web, which reflects not only the breadth of its scope, but also the great opportunity it presents to denounce online incidents by children, young people, parents and those interested.

The following graphically analyzes the traffic on the platform. Referring to the graph, the National Platform www.ISIGURT.al receives approximately 2000 visits per month, which shows that it is widely visited by children, young people, teachers, parents and those interested. It is also positive that the complaints of children and young people come from all cities of Albania, showing that the Platform due to its online presence and on social networks is easy to visit.

Graph 10: Visits in the National Platform ISIGURT.AL (year 2019)

Audience Overview



5. The main findings and recommendations of the report

5.1 The main findings

At the conclusion of the data, the main findings of the report are as following:

- **In 2019 there is a sixfold increase of online threats, blackmail and persecution** of children, adolescents and young people. This is a finding that has not been previously identified by any reports or studies in this area.
- **Every three days a child reports unsafe internet in Albania**, referring to 104 cases reported to the Platform ISIGURT.al and ALO 116111, National Child Help Line.
- The year 2019, marked a significant increase in the reporting of girls. **55% of the reports are made from girls, compared to 44% that are made from boys**. While the age group most affected by unsafe internet is **15-17 years old followed by the age group over 18 years old**.
- **Instagram is the main platform for 2019, for which children and young people report the most of online incidents**, followed by YouTube and Facebook.
- Various researches show that **there is no specific monitoring report and activity carried out by the institutions responsible** for implementing the agendas and strategies such as the Action Plan 2018-2020 “On Safe Internet for Children in Albania”, Digital Agenda 2015-2020, National Agenda for Children's Rights 2017-2020, which all ends in 2020.
- In our point of view, the Ministry of Education, Sport and Youth, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Ministry of the Internal Affairs **have not yet understood the extent of the problem of online safety for children and young people, with no concrete development or solutions offered during 2019**.
- **Two weeks before the publication of this Report, CRCA Albania, in the framework of the National Centre for Online Safety, signed a cooperation agreement with Google**, which further expands the spaces and opportunities for online protection of children and adolescents, especially on the platform Youtube. Part of the agreement with Google is the training of www.ISIGURT.al staff on how to operate Google platforms and use its online reporting and security mechanisms to protect children and young people.
- **Shortcomings in the criminal legislation cause confusion among law enforcement agencies** that face violations of children's rights, including cybercrime and online harassment. The lack of legal provisions and regulations in the Criminal Code makes it

very difficult to protect children online, especially from some unregulated actions such as: sexting/grooming/child images online/right to be forgotten/online sexual harassment/bullying, etc.

- **Educational institutions conduct a very limited number of activities to raise awareness of children and adolescents about the dangers they face while surfing on the Internet** and the opportunities for assistance and protection provided by the National Child Help Line ALO 116111 and the National Platform ISIGURT.al not properly fulfilling their purpose of information and education.
- **Online media platforms and portals are significantly violating and do not enforce children's rights by often posting inappropriate and easily accessible material by children, adolescents and young people themselves.** Various companies, platforms and online portals, which have little or no promotion and spaces for children, adolescents and young people to have a safer internet.
- **The gender of the person, while not seeming to be a specific cause of violence, bullying or pornography on the internet, actually presents some features to consider.** Hate speech and calls for sexual violence are in most cases directed at girls and far less often against boys.

5.2 Main recommendations

Based on all main findings of this report as well as given the great importance that internet safety receives year after year, the authors of this Report recommend several solutions, as follows:

For the Albanian Parliament

- Given the latest models of legislation in different European countries, it is necessary to regulate not only the criminal law, but also to draft a law specifically dedicated to the protection of children online!
- In current legislation, articles covering hate speech need to address it with a focus on gender in particular and on many other categories that are not covered.
- The Albanian Parliament, despite the political situations it has faced, should find the opportunity to include in the parliamentary scrutiny and approval procedure, amendments and additions to the Albanian Criminal Code proposed by CRCA Albania and the National Network for Children Rights.

For the Government, Line Ministries and Subordinate Institutions

- Responsible institutions (MASR, MSHMS, UK) should undertake online safety awareness campaigns with children as soon as possible, including parents, teachers and the wider community. In this regard it is also urgent to find entirely new approaches by public institutions to protect children against dangerous online content and behavior.
- The Ministry of Education, along to campaigns, manuals, should periodically organize activities focusing on children and teachers to discuss measures that can be taken together to make the online navigation safer for children and youth. In this context, MARS, according to its duties and responsibilities, undertaken in the National Plan for Safer Internet for Children in Albania, should support already organized networks of teachers and civil society to strengthen information and awareness raising of children and young people about risks as well as responsible behaviors during navigation and online life.
- Responsible institutions should start as soon as possible the consultation process for drafting new agendas and strategies such as the Action Plan "On Safe Internet for Children in Albania" 2018-2020, Digital Agenda 2015-2020, National Agenda for Children's Rights 2017-2020, which ends this year.
- Empowering children and young people with responsible, respectful and safer use of Internet should be one of the top priorities of the Ministry of Education, Child Protection Agency and civil society in Albania. In this context, the involvement of child and youth organizations, such as Youth Parliament, Young Voice 16+, etc., in peer education would help to create a whole generation of children and youth capable to navigate online safety;
- Promoting the National Platform www.iSIGURT.al is a shared responsibility of all state institutions in all environments where there are children. In this context, we would like to urge the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health and Social Protection to promote the Platform and Module "REPORT" on their official websites, as well as in the areas where there are children and young people, schools, health centers, youth social centers, etc.

For the EU, UN and Development Agencies

- The Delegation of the European Union, UN Agencies, Development Agencies and Donors as a whole should unanimously support the online child protection system by supporting and funding the only National Platform (ISIGURT.al) that protects children and young people of all online risks, in order to receive services specified for a safer internet

For the Internet Industry

- AKEP, together with children's rights organizations, should initiate a broad and positive dialogue between portals, media organizations and educational institutions to establish a strong regulatory system so that no portal violates children's rights.
- Online platforms and portals should consider encouraging the collaboration with Facebook and Google on a safer Internet for children, as well as providing a point of contact for all children and young visitors to their online portals through the platform ISIGURT.al.
- Freedom of speech, expression and the right to information not only belong to adults but also to children and young people. In this context, all news, information or entertainment platforms in Albanian language and address ending with .AL must show that they act in accordance and comply with the Law on the Rights and Protection of Children in Albania. We recommend that any online electronic media organization sign the Internet Code of Ethics or childcare standards, which should be respected by all employees and their reporters;

For civil society

- Civil society plays an irreplaceable role in informing children and young people how to protect themselves from violence, bullying and abuse. In this regard, we urge all partner organizations to inform children about cyber safety and the Platform www.ISIGURT.al to report any suspected or proven cases of online risks.

Contact us

For more information you can follow us or write to us, as following:

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In social networks:

ISIGURT: <https://www.facebook.com/I-Sigurt-Online-1678118579105924/>

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