

Justice, law-enforcement, and service-provision professionals get together to discuss management of cases of children in conflict and contact with the law

Puka, 10 November 2021

Shkodra, 17 November 2021

During November 2021, two roundtables on Local Inter-Institutional Cooperation for Juvenile Justice were organized in the municipality of Shkodra and the municipality of Puka. The events marked the launching of a new intervention on “Strengthening the inter-disciplinary approaches in management of cases of juveniles in conflict and contact with the law”, that is being implemented in partnership by UNICEF-Albania, The Albanian Foundation for Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes and The Community Development Center “Today for the Future”. The intervention is part of “Transforming National Response to Human Trafficking” Initiative coordinated by UNICEF Albania, with the support of the UK Government.

The roundtables were organized by the respective municipalities, in partnership with UNICEF and the implementing partners. They brought together representatives of the justice, and law enforcement institutions and other bodies that provide services to children and families at local level. Other participants included: the mayors, staff from respective municipalities, representatives from UNICEF Albania, Prefectures, Courts, Prosecution Offices, Probation Service, Police, Education Offices, Employment and Professional Training, Social Services, Public Health Directorates and representatives of civil society organizations.



The participants were introduced to the programme objectives, beneficiaries and the methodology of the intervention. They discussed in groups the practices and interinstitutional challenges in implementing the legal framework of friendly justice at local level.

The officials of local institutions expressed the need for such interventions, that support children in conflict and contact with the law. They also emphasized the perception of increased criminality among juveniles, as well as the need for wider use of restorative approaches for children, aiming their reintegration rehabilitation and resocialization.

All the attending officials expressed the willingness of respective institutions to have a better coordination and cooperation for the management of cases of children who have committed an offence, and children who are victims or witnesses in an offence. It was agreed that an interinstitutional agreement on Justice for Children, shall be reached, under the coordination of the respective municipalities.

The Head of Shkodra Court, Mr. Z. Arbër Çela, emphasized: *“We must aim to deal with the psyche of the child, we must deal with the essence of the issue. Crime is fought by fighting the phenomenon. If we fight the phenomenon, we have attacked the grounds for criminality. We can achieve these goals by cooperation among all the institutions, all the time.”*

Meanwhile, the Mayor of Puka Municipality, Mr. Gjon Gjonaj, said: *“Considering the issues related to the economic and social situation of Albanian families, and the increase of the juvenile delinquency, this project is a necessity. This agreement serves the community if it is followed by concrete actions. If the competent bodies are ready to collaborate in the project, it will be successful. The project will have a positive impact since it protects the needs of children, so that they do not have a criminal record in their past and the privacy of the parties involved is preserved.”*



The intervention was very well received by the students of “Sabah Sinani” High School in Puka, who were also present in the meeting. The President of the School Senate, Amanda Aliaj, said:

“ ... I tell you from the bottom of my heart that we will take concrete steps to advise our peers. We will be able to give our contribution to solve their problems, to be able to prevent behaviors that might lead our friends to get into conflict with the law or become victims of these circumstances.”

Apart from capacity building and provision of support to institutions and professionals at local level in case management, the intervention will also focus on supporting children in conflict with the law, child victims and crime witnesses, by means of various interdisciplinary and integrated services. This intervention aims to raise community awareness in respecting the rights of these children and supporting their rehabilitation and reintegration. The intervention is a contribution to the implementation of the Code of Criminal Justice for Children and the National Justice Strategy for Children, as well as the National Action Plan for the Fight against Human Trafficking.