

# ALBANIA COUNTRY REPORT ON SUPERVISION

26th of March 2022









## Authors and Researchers:

**Izela Tahsini**

## Partner Institutions:

Terres des hommes, Child Protection Hub  
South East Europe

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# Introduction



This report provides the Albanian findings from a mixed-methods study of supervision for professionals working in multidisciplinary child protection teams across a range of Central, Eastern and South-eastern European countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Moldova, Romania, and Serbia).

Utilising existing services and professional connections within the Child Protection Hub network, this project aims to explore different understandings, standards, and challenges of supervision faced by social workers and other child protection professionals involved in multidisciplinary casework with children and families. The aims of the project were to:

- Provide a snapshot of supervision for child protection professionals working in multidisciplinary team settings across the region.
- Explore the attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions of child protection professionals regarding supervision.
- Identify key factors that hinder and promote supervision practices in multidisciplinary team contexts.
- Provide a comparative analysis in the region.
- Identify good practices in supervision.
- Provide recommendations for strengthening supervision across the region and in specific countries.

This research was conducted by the Children's Social Care Research and Development Centre (CASCADE), part of Cardiff University, and within the framework of the Child Protection Hub project, funded by the Austrian Development Agency, Oak Foundation and Terre des hommes. All views expressed in the report are that of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the above-mentioned donors.



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# Overview of country situation and purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to provide a detailed look at the findings and recommendations from the project in relation to Albania. A regional report has also been produced, which compares between the seven different countries. Here, the focus is on respondents from Albania in particular, and what the findings mean for the Albanian context.

In Albania, the social work profession is relatively young, and public services continue to develop (Dhëmbo et al, 2020). It was not until the dismantling of the country's communist dictatorship in the early 1990s that social work began to develop as a distinct profession. Social services in the country have been heavily dependent on foreign donor funding (USAID, 2014). As a result, they have tended to utilise international models of child protection, with top-down approaches to service development.

Albania has started introducing a systems approach in child protection, although the design of the system, while rich in elements, is still fragmented and issue-based (Lai, 2016). Especially with regard to quality review mechanisms, they are not strong and the scope of quality control is limited in legal terms; the regulatory framework is in need of harmonisation and especially of the development of improved documents of standards of services; the implementation of quality control is weak, focused more on reporting duties, than on improvement of quality of services and also lacks human and financial resources and full independence to do so (Tahsini, 2017). This neglect of the quality component is similarly noticed in the neglect of the supervision component of good practice.

Supervision has been described as “central to good social work practice” (Dhëmbo et al, 2020) although much of what is provided is focused on administration, and those providing supervision are generally not specially qualified or trained to provide it. In a study of 62 students, social workers, and managers, Dhëmbo (2015) found a near-complete absence of professional supervision. That which did take place was said to operate almost entirely as a mechanism for monitoring the activities of frontline staff, rather than to support them in their professional roles. Knowledge about supervision was generally poor, and the provision of supervision not well supported in legislation or policy. This suggests the need for “more local investment in training and [the] implementation of functional practicum supervision models” (ibid: 7). In some cases, a single supervisor can be responsible for the work of many professionals, making it more difficult to



provide high-quality and effective supervision. In some organisations, particular efforts have been made to provide more emotionally supportive supervision, but these have been reliant on short-term funding. Despite these challenges, many child protection professionals in the country do recognise the importance of good supervision and would like for it to become embedded within their organisations and ongoing practice cultures.

Supervision is widely considered to be the cornerstone of good social work and child protection practice (Laming, 2009), and there is a remarkable degree of consensus about how it should function, and its myriad benefits (Beddoe and Wilkins, 2019). Having regular access to supportive and effective supervision is said to result in more positive outcomes for the worker, the wider organisation, and for children and families involved with services. These include emotional support and enhanced wellbeing for the worker (Mor Barak et al., 2009), greater retention of staff within the organisation (Renner et al., 2009; Chiller and Crisp, 2012), and more empathic, collaborative and purposeful practice with families (Bostock et al., 2019; Wilkins et al., 2018).

In practice, in Albania, the provision of supervision is in an early phase of development, which is shown also by the fact that there are only a few documents outlining its meaning, purpose, benefits and organisation. Most of them are forms of legislation, standards and guidance, as part of the general guidance in relation to social services (CM, 2015; CM, 2017; MES, 2020), while only one is a non-official online introductory course, referring specifically to supervision, designed by NGO-s (ChildHub Academy, 2017).

The course is offered by Childhub Academy and it is the result of a long-term process, starting with the child protection supervision training package produced by Terre des hommes Albania and a group of local experts, in association with the University of Stirling, and developing in a full course of several modules, by CELCIS, revised and adapted to the Albanian context, and offering a Certificate by Centre of Excellence for Looked After Children in Scotland (CELCIS) at the University of Strathclyde in Scotland. This last document is the only one which outlines in a thorough way all the above-mentioned aspects of supervision.

Two important documents related crucially to child protection, such as the law on the rights and the protection of the child (CM, 2017) and the order on the organisation and functioning of the psychosocial service in pre-university education (MES, 2020), mention it only partially and mainly in relation to the administrative function of supervision.

The law refers only to 'monitoring', and does not go any further, even in the accompanying bylaws. The only relevant document to the child protection services in municipalities where the term 'supervision' is mentioned explicitly, is that of the standards of services of child protection units (CM, 2015). It describes supervision as including 'technical supervision of case management, discussion on how to manage cases effectively, discussions on best practices, etc.' According to it, the head of the child protection unit is responsible that their employees are supervised and the supervisor should have a university diploma in social work/psychology and at least 5 years of experience in working with children and families in child protection; recordings of supervision are kept by the supervisor

or child protection worker. On the other hand, this document is outdated, being based on the previous laws on child protection and social services, and as such has never been applied on by the inspection services (Tahsini, 2017).

The order on the organisation and functioning of the psychosocial service in pre-university education (MES, 2020), 'mentions supervision explicitly, as a service provided by a supervisor who is also working as a part-time social worker/or psychologist in the psychosocial services. It assigns a supervisor for every 30 employees, who should have a master degree and at least 3 years of experience in educational institutions (social work/psychology). By being an up-to-date document, referring explicitly to supervision, and detailing some parameters of providing the service, this order allows for the development of the supervisor role in psychosocial education services, at least formally, but since it has not been followed by a specific protocol/guidance, it does not allow for quality development of it.

Overall, it can be said that since there is very little reference to supervision within the most important legislation in child protection, supervision has not been given much consideration as a separate activity, in public child protection services in Albania, up to now.





# Methodology

This study adopted an observational and exploratory design and used a mixture of different methods to provide a snapshot of supervision in multidisciplinary child protection teams across seven different countries in Central, Eastern and South-eastern Europe. The study was organised into three work packages, running concurrently to complete the research within the required timeframe (between the start of February and the end of March 2022). The study was led by the lead author of the regional report, based in the UK, working with a team of local researchers and Country Associates, who were responsible for recruitment and data collection, as well as making a significant contribution to data analysis, writing the individual country reports and having input into the regional report as well.

Data collection in the Albanian study was organised into three work streams, as follows:

1. 1A brief desktop analysis of supervision policies and procedures
2. Interviews with key stakeholders
3. An online survey of managers and frontline workers in multidisciplinary child protection teams

## Work stream 1 – desktop analysis

1.1

The first work-stream involved a desktop review of existing policy and guidance. The local researchers, working with their country associate, selected relevant documents for analysis in relation to the stated aims and purpose of supervision for child protection professionals and analysed them using a standardised form of data extraction (Appendix 1). The aim of this work stream was to help understand the policy context for supervision in Albania.

## Work stream 2 – key stakeholder interviews

1.2

The second work-stream involved interviews with key stakeholders, such as senior managers in child and family-related services, to explore their understandings and conceptions of supervision for frontline staff in multidisciplinary and child protection teams. An interview schedule was developed, composed of nine qualitative questions, and an additional five questions for key stakeholders who themselves had direct experience of providing supervision (Appendix 2). The interview schedule was developed by the lead author of the regional report and used in a consistent way in all the key interviews. The local researcher was able to add additional questions as needed, to respond to what the interviewee said and / or to explore local nuances in relation to the policy and practice of supervision. At the start of each interview, the local researcher provided a standard definition and description of supervision, as follows:

*"A process which aims to support, assure and develop the knowledge, skills and values of the person being supervised (the supervisee). It provides accountability for both the supervisor and supervisee in exploring practice and performance. It sits alongside an organisation's performance management process with a particular focus on developing people in a way that is centred on achieving better outcomes for people who use services and their carers."*

Interviews were conducted in Albanian and were audio-recorded by the local researcher for later analysis.

## 1.3 Work stream 3 – online survey

The third work-stream involved an online survey, conducted via Qualtrics ([www.qualtrics.com](http://www.qualtrics.com)), distributed via an anonymous, emailed link to supervisors and frontline staff in multidisciplinary and child protection teams. The survey was available in Albanian. The translation of the survey from English into the other languages was completed by the local researcher and Country Associate.

At the start of the survey, respondents were asked to provide basic information about their personal and professional demographics (age range, gender, working pattern and environment, professional background), and provided with the same definition and description of supervision as used in the key stakeholder interviews. Respondents were then asked a screening question, about their own experience of either providing or receiving supervision. Those who provided supervision were asked questions in relation to their experiences of being a supervisor. Those who received supervision were asked questions in relation to their experiences of being a supervisee. If respondents said they both received and provided supervision, they were asked questions in relation to being a supervisor. Those who said they neither provided nor received supervision were asked questions about their attitudes and beliefs in relation to supervision, rather than their own direct experience of it.

As part of the survey, respondents were asked to provide data on the provision and nature of their supervision (and / or what they would prefer), for example the frequency and length of supervision sessions, and to complete three standardised instruments - the Helpful Aspects of Supervision Questionnaire (Wheeler and Barkham, 2014), the Leeds Alliance in Supervision Scale (Wainwright, 2010) and the Supervisory Working Alliance (Efstation et al., 1990; Patton, 1992). Respondents were also asked several open-ended questions in relation to their best experiences of supervision, their views on how supervision makes a difference for them and for families they work with, and in relation to barriers and facilitators of effective supervision.

Sampling was conducted on a pragmatic and purposeful basis (Robertson and Sibley, 2018; Suri, 2011). For the key stakeholder interviews, it was aimed to involve a range of people from different professional backgrounds, to ensure variability in the data collected. For the survey, the local researcher circulated an email invitation to take part as widely as possible within multidisciplinary teams. Much of the recruitment relied on availability and snowball sampling. Local researchers were set minimum targets for recruitment at the outset of the project as follows – five key stakeholder interviews and 15 completed surveys.



# Findings

## Who took part?

3.1

Four main documents related to supervision were analysed (CM, 2015; ChildHub Academy, 2017; CM, 2017; MES, 2020). Five professionals participated in key informant interviews, working in a variety of positions, such as head of child protection unit, coordinator of child protection programs in NGO, psychosocial educational service professional, senior manager in child protection institution, with and without direct practice in supervision. 18 professionals involved in direct practice in child protection services and/or supervision, participated in the surveys, such as child protection workers in municipality child protection units and their supervisors, school social workers and psychologists and their supervisors, child protection workers in NGOs and their supervisors, etc.

### Results of key informant interviews

## A snapshot of supervision

3.2

The key informants presented a current picture of supervision in Albania, which was developed in three themes, following the process of Recursive Abstraction – definition, purpose and organisation of supervision.

In relation to the first theme, there is clearly a confusion around what supervision is and who should provide it, which derives by the lack of policies and procedures in this regard. On one hand, managers need to offer guidance and support for their staff, but on the other hand, they lack guidance on how to do that. In the words of a manager, 'This is a very weak point. Besides a small article on the law, there is nothing. Is it monitoring or supervision? We are stuck here. We have tried to design an internal document/methodology of work, based on pieces of documents offered by NGOs working in this field, on which to base our monitoring of child protection workers'. This lack makes therefore for lack of training/information about supervision, especially in state structures, while there is more information about it in some experienced NGOs.

With regard to the purpose of supervision, the limits mentioned above, make that mostly only its administrative function is exercised, especially in state structures, and that also only in those few child protection units that have already built two levels of structure (child protection worker and head of unit – even though the law on child rights and protection (CM, 2017) requires for that, the implementation of the law has been slow in this regard). Tirana, Elbasan and Shkodra are mentioned as having more developed structures and therefore developing their supervisory role. Also, there are no clear lines between where the responsibility of the manager ends and that of the child protection workers starts with regard to decision-making on each case, since according to the law, heads of units are expected to conduct direct case management in difficult cases. A manager expressed their frustration in this regard 'After the new law, the concept of head of unit supporting the child protection worker was introduced and there is confusion in this regard. We have had cases when the worker comes and tells you – take this case, I cannot do anything about it. I do not think it should function like this'. Most of the time it responds to emergency situations, difficult cases, and a lot of time is spent by managers teaching the staff on legislation, procedural aspects, and filling forms correctly. The State Agency for the Rights and the Protection of the Child (SARPC) offers 'technical assistance', according to their mandate, which means that they offer guidance to child protection workers, in complex cases and emergency situations, through phone, e-mail, and sometimes field visits, but considering the fact that it is composed of a staff of only six persons and covers this function for municipalities all over Albania, it is obvious that they are lacking human resources to do so. In external supervision experiences, provided by NGOs, its developmental and supportive function is exercised.

In relation to the third theme, according to the key informants, supervision within state structures happens informally, responding to emergent needs, it is not intentional and planned, with set objectives and periodicity. Meetings with staff vary from once a week to one or twice a month. On the other hand, supervision experiences provided by NGOs are planned, intentional, with set objectives and regularity of meetings, and those that have tried to set standards on supervision. According to an NGO representative 'I see the attempts to do supervision mainly as non-institutional, non-public'. Still, these experiences are offered sporadically, and are more donor- driven, then need-driven, limited by the length and budget of NGO projects.

## 3.3 Views regarding supervision

With regard to how supervision is currently viewed in the child protection field, the feedback from key informants was developed in two themes – importance and aims of supervision.

In relation to the first theme, based on their work experience, key informants reflected that there are mixed attitudes toward the importance of supervision in the child protection field. On one hand, there is neglect of the supervisory component in the field in policy-making levels, as reflected by lack of legislation and policies in this regard, in the three decades of the social services development.



The shift from offering cash assistance to developing a systems approach to social services and child protection has been slow, accompanied by continuous limitations in human and financial resources, and this is mirrored in the lack of development of the supervisory role, which requires for more of such resources. This has been accompanied by a lack of knowledge in general in state structures on supervision and its importance, although on a more individual level, managers who are professionally aware in this regard, have tried to develop informally this component. As one NGO representative expressed 'State structures do not understand its importance, while the need is emergent, screaming'.

Thus, on the other hand, there is awareness of the importance of supervision, raised mostly by NGOs. The key informants consider it very important, in the child protection field where laws and procedures are continually changing, mechanisms of review on the quality of work of child protection workers are not developed, many child protection workers are inexperienced and also 'lacking a culture of self-development'. As one CPU manager summarizes it 'Child protection workers are new and sometimes get stuck. This is amplified by lack of human and financial resources. The empowerment of professionals reduces some of these limitations and increases quality of services'.

With regard to the second theme, the main aim of supervision with staff, according to key informants is to improve the quality of case management, often in a group setting. Individually, also emotional support needs to be offered, or conflicts with colleagues to be discussed. Another aim is to create a culture of trust, where challenges can be discussed not through assigning guilt, but by developing a problem-solving attitude and improving independent work in the future.

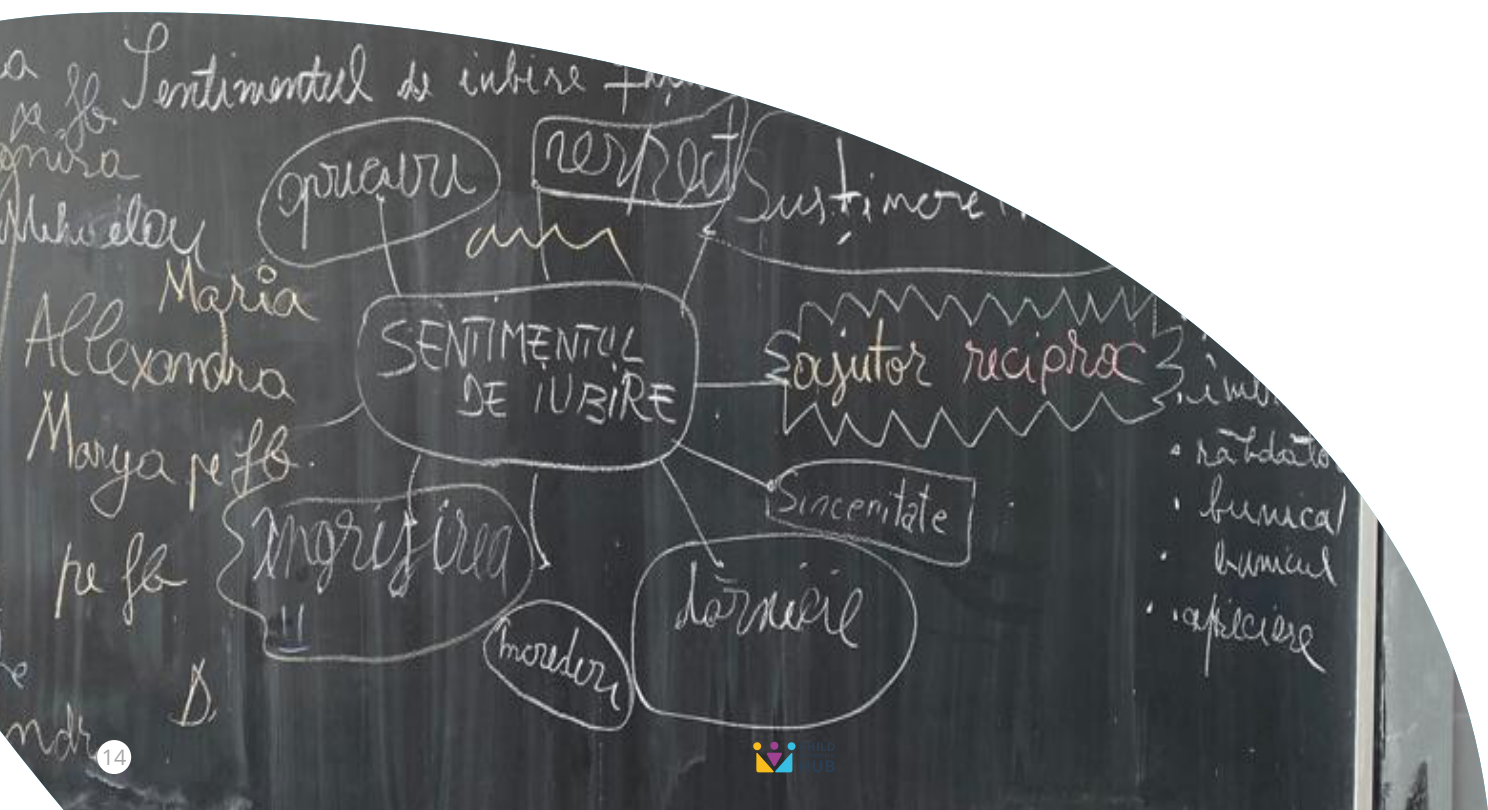
## Challenges with regard to supervision

## 3.4

Based on what was presented so far, it is clear that the development of the supervisory component of child protection services in Albania is faced with several challenges. The key informants identified two main ones, such as lack of specific policies and protocols on the role and its documentation, which does not allow for the development and improvement of supervision. As a consequence of this situation, there are also no specific trainings for supervisors, or supervision for them. Another main challenge is related to the lack of solid child protection structures in each municipality, where in many of them the two levels of structure are not developed, and therefore workers function alone. In these cases, the direct hierarchical level above them is the head of social services in municipality, who often does not have a social work diploma and therefore cannot offer a supervisory role. Also, often child protection workers have more than one job description/role (such as that of the worker against gender-based violence. Similarly, supervisors in psychosocial educational services work also as part-time social workers/psychologists. As a supervisor says 'I am a supervisor and at the same time a social worker in two schools and one kindergarten. Supervision needs time, it is challenging to do both roles'.

## 3.5 Good practices in supervision

Despite some of the challenges outlined so far, the key informants interviewed also identified some clear examples of good practice in supervision. These examples were developed into two themes – the qualities of a ‘good supervisor’ and the impact of supervision for the worker. In relation to the first theme, good practice examples were identified by describing the actions of the supervisor. These included – being available for staff, being responsive to the needs of the wider team and demonstrating empathy. For example, as a NGO manager expressed ‘I want my workers to feel listened, appreciated, to help them ventilate’. In relation to the second theme, the key informants identified how good supervision had made a difference for workers, in relation to their emotional well-being and their ability to provide a good service for children and families. A CPU manager reported ‘After they get used to our discussions they feel comfortable, so they learn to do their work better, and it is reflected in a better quality of case management; also, the interviewing skills of all staff have quite improved’. In some cases, this included being able to exercise good professional judgement, and the way in which supervision allows workers to think through their decisions in a more reflective way.





# Findings

## Survey results

### 4.1

In total, 18 respondents completed the survey sufficiently for their data to be included in the analysis (80% of the questions answered). The findings from the survey are presented in the following order – (1) personal and professional demographics, (2) role in relation to supervision, (3) frequency, format, and length of supervision meetings, (4) topics of discussion within supervision, (5) the helpfulness of supervision, (6) the Leeds Alliance in Supervision Scale and the Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory and (7) a brief summary of some of the qualitative responses.

### 1. Personal and professional demographics

Respondents to the survey from Albania mostly female (n=15) and aged between 25 and 34 years (n=7), 35 and 44 years (n=9) or 45 and 54 years of age (n=2). The majority were working full-time (n=17), and had a master's degree (n=13). Respondents were split between organisations of different sizes, working for organisations employing 1 – 4 people (n=3), 10 – 19 people (n=2), 20 – 49 people (n=3), 50 – 99 people (n=5), or 100+ people (n=2). These figures are broadly comparable with those for the regional survey.

Most respondents worked in the field of social work and social care (n=13), and others in education (n=5). Most worked directly with children and families (n=12) and in the field of child protection (n=17). Most also said they worked specifically in multi-disciplinary teams (n=13).

### 2. Role in relation to supervision

Most respondents said they received supervision (n=14), and more than half said they provided it (n=11). Just under half of the respondents said they received and provided supervision (n=8), while one respondent said they did not receive or provide it.

More than half of the respondents (n=10) said they answered the survey questions from the perspective of a supervisee, while most of the rest (n=7) said they answered from the perspective of a supervisor.

### 3. Frequency, format, and length of supervision meetings

Respondents who received and / or provided supervision were asked about the frequency, format, and length of their meetings. There were various responses about the number of supervision meetings in the previous six months, 1 participant

had no supervision, 3 of them had one or two meetings (equivalent to one every 3 or 6 months), 5 had three or four meetings (equivalent to one every 6 weeks), 5 had four or six meetings (equivalent to one every month), 1 had seven or eight meetings, 1 had nine or ten, and 1 had thirteen or more supervision meetings in the last six months. When asked about their desired frequency, most expressed the need for a higher frequency of supervision, as shown in the table below.

#### *Frequency of supervision (desired)*

	Frequency	%
Every week	2	11.1
Every fortnight	6	33.3
Every month	8	44.4
Less often than every month	1	5.6
Never	1	5.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The most common format of supervision was group meetings involving several different professionals, not all of whom were necessarily working with the same family or families.

More than half of the respondents said their supervision meetings lasted between one and two hours (n=10), and the rest said that their sessions lasted up to one hour (n=4), or between two and three hours (n=10).

## **4. Topics of discussion within supervision meetings**

### *Topics discussed in supervision*

Overall (n=18)			Supervisors (n=7)		Supervisees (n=11)	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
Tasks the worker needs to complete	11	61.1	5	71.4	5	45.5
Timescales	9	50.0	4	57.1	5	45.5
Decision-making	12	66.6	3	42.9	9	81.8
Risks and needs	14	77.7	5	71.4	8	72.7
Children being worked with	13	72.2	5	71.4	7	63.6
Adults being worked with	12	66.6	5	71.4	6	54.5
Quality of the worker's practice	12	66.6	6	85.7	5	45.5
Analysis and reflection	12	66.6	6	85.7	5	45.5
Emotional support	13	72.2	7	100.0	5	45.5
Intervention plans	11	61.1	4	57.1	6	54.5
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

When asked what topics they discussed in supervision, respondents identified risks and needs, the children they were working with, and emotional support as being the most common. When the responses of supervisors and supervisees are considered separately, supervisors were much more likely to say they discussed emotional support in supervision (100%) compared with supervisees (45.5%). Similarly, supervisors were also more likely to say they discussed tasks the worker needs to complete, adults being worked with, the quality of the worker's practice, and analysis and reflection. In fact, supervisors were more likely to say they discussed all these topics, apart from decision-making (supervisees were more likely to say they discussed this in supervision) and intervention plans (supervisees and supervisors agreed about the discussion of this topic).

## 5. The helpfulness of supervision

When asked what their supervision helped with, most respondents were confident that it helped in a range of ways, and especially for quality of worker's practice, and analysis and reflection. When considered separately, supervisees were more likely to say that supervision was helpful in a range of ways, compared with supervisors – which is the reverse of what the regional survey found (in which supervisors were more likely to say supervision was helpful).

*Helpfulness of supervision for supervisors and supervisees (and comparison of answers)*

<b>Supervision helps (and to what extent) with the following (overall)</b>				
	<b>Supervision does not help at all / only helps a little</b>		<b>Helps a lot / always helps</b>	
	N	%	N	%
Decision-making	2	11.1	16	88.8
Risks and needs	1	5.5	16	88.8
Children being worked with	2	11.1	15	83.3
Adults being worked with	2	11.1	14	77.7
Quality of the worker's practice	0	0	17	94.4
Analysis and reflection	0	0	17	94.4
Emotional support	1	5.5	16	88.8
Intervention plans	2	11.1	15	83.3

\* Percentages don't add up to 100 as not every respondent gave an answer to each item.



		Supervision helps with - making good decisions	Supervision helps with - Thinking clearly about risks and needs
	Mean	3.00	3.50
Supervisors	N	7	6
	Std. Deviation	.577	.548
Supervisees	Mean	3.50	3.30
	N	10	10
	Std. Deviation	.707	.949
Neither	Mean	4.00	3.00
	N	1	1
	Std. Deviation	.	.
Total	Mean	3.33	3.35
	N	18	17
	Std. Deviation	.686	.786

		Supervision helps with - How to help the children they are working with	Supervision helps with - How to help adults / parents they are working with
	Mean	3.17	2.83
Supervisors	N	6	6
	Std. Deviation	.753	.983
Supervisees	Mean	3.50	3.67
	N	10	9
	Std. Deviation	.707	.500
Neither	Mean	3.00	2.00
	N	1	1
	Std. Deviation	.	.
Total	Mean	3.35	3.25
	N	17	16
	Std. Deviation	.702	.856

		Supervision helps with - How to ensure they are working effectively (quality of practice)	Supervision helps with - Making a good analysis, and reflecting on things
	Mean	3.50	3.67
Supervisors	N	6	6
	Std. Deviation	.5477	.516
Supervisees	Mean	3.70	3.50
	N	10	10
	Std. Deviation	.4830	.527
Neither	Mean	4.000	4.00
	N	1	1
	Std. Deviation	.	.
Total	Mean	3.647	3.59
	N	17	17
	Std. Deviation	.4926	.507

		Supervision helps with - Emotional support for the worker	Supervision helps with - Developing the intervention plan for the child (e.g. a child protection plan)
	Mean	3.33	3.00
Supervisors	N	6	6
	Std. Deviation	.516	.632
Supervisees	Mean	3.50	3.40
	N	10	10
	Std. Deviation	.972	.699
Neither	Mean	4.00	4.00
	N	1	1
	Std. Deviation	.	.
Total	Mean	3.47	3.29
	N	17	17
	Std. Deviation	.800	.686

\* Higher means indicate greater agreement that supervision helps with the topic.

## 6. The Leeds Alliance in Supervision Scale and the Supervisory Working Alliance Inventory

The Leeds Alliance is a standardised measure, focused on the respondent's most recent supervision session. On a ten-point scale, respondents are asked to consider the extent to which the session focused on things the worker wanted to focus on, whether the supervisor and worker understood one another, how helpful it was, and how different it was from normal. Higher scores (for the first three) indicate a more positive experience. A lower score (for the fourth) indicates that the session was quite typical. In Albania, these figures suggest that supervisors were more positive about their most recent session of supervision than supervisees, but only modestly. The SWAI (Supervision Working Alliance Inventory) is a standardised measure, focused on the respondent's overall experience of their supervisor relationship and the extent of client-focus in their discussions. It is rated on a 7-point scale from 1 to 7, with higher scores indicating a more positive and more client-focused experience. These scores show that supervisees rated their Rapport more positively than supervisors, but only slightly, whereas supervisors rated Client-focus higher (by ~0.6, which on a 7-point scale is a relatively large difference).

*Relationship supervisor-supervisee (and comparison of answers) Leeds and SWAI*

Supervisor, supervisee or neither		Leeds - focused on things the worker wanted to focus on	Leeds - The worker and I understood each other	Leeds - This supervision meeting was helpful for the worker
Supervisors	Mean	8.00	7.83	8.00
	N	7	6	6
	Std. Deviation	2.082	2.137	2.280
Supervisees	Mean	6.80	7.20	7.90
	N	10	10	10
	Std. Deviation	2.860	2.821	2.885
Total	Mean	7.29	7.44	7.94
	N	17	16	16
	Std. Deviation	2.568	2.529	2.594



Supervisor, supervisee or neither		Leeds - This supervision meeting was different from my usual supervision meetings	SWAI - Rapport	SWAI - Client Focus
	Mean	2.83	5.7639	6.1667
Supervisors	N	6	6	6
	Std. Deviation	1.835	1.06903	.87792
Supervisees	Mean	5.10	5.8333	5.4500
	N	10	10	10
	Std. Deviation	2.998	.92713	1.21874
Total	Mean	4.25	5.8073	5.7188
	N	16	16	16
	Std. Deviation	2.793	.94757	1.12983

\* Higher means indicate greater agreement with the proposition (for Leeds), and a better relationship (SWAI Rapport) and more client-focused discussions (SWAI Client-focus).

Respondents identified a range of ways in which their most recent supervision session had been helpful, via the open-text questions. For example:

- Expressing feelings and emotions helps relieve the burden that you have been carrying along (social worker).
- Giving helpful information on the child's developmental issues and mental health (supervisor).
- (It is helpful) especially to discuss the case multi-dimensionally, taking in consideration all the elements that influence the effectiveness of interventions (social worker).

Overall, all respondents considered their session helpful and they did not mention any ways in which it had been unhelpful. They expressed several ways of helpfulness, related to the three functions of supervision, such as encouragement of reflective thinking and new perspectives of working with the cases, group feedback, developing counselling skills, receiving new information on specific vulnerable groups, getting emotional support, and getting help with realistic expectations and planning of the case.

## 7. Qualitative responses

At the end of the survey, respondents were asked four open questions –two about how supervision helps and two about how it might be improved. Respondents gave a variety of responses, identifying various helpful aspects of supervision and also several suggestions for improvement of supervision in the country.

### **How is your supervision helpful, or how has it made a positive difference?**

- Because of supervision, I feel more secure and clear about all the cases I have discussed in my sessions (psychologist).
- Sharing your experiences with others makes you understand you are not the only one with dilemmas in your work (social worker).
- Supervision protects me from burn-out (psychologist).

Similarly to responses on the helpfulness of the last supervision session, the respondents consider their supervisory experiences helpful, in many ways. The variety of examples they provide, creates a picture of supervision fulfilling its three functions.

With regard to its administrative function, examples of help in working according to standards, clarification of role responsibilities and offering an ethical practice are provided, although there are more examples related to the two other functions of supervision, which may be linked to the fact that they refer to supervisory experiences offered by external supervisors. With regard to its developmental function, they emphasize that supervision helps in getting clarity on the case, encourages reflective thinking, taking time for assessment before jumping to interventions, especially in emergency or difficult cases/risk assessment, therefore it helps in building good intervention plans. In this context, they refer that supervision sessions before an Inter-sectorial Group Meeting, are particularly helpful. Their examples show that supervision encourages professional independence. As a psycho-social unit worker says 'It made me understand that talking is listening to yourself and the answers are in me'. With regard to its supportive function, they express strongly how helpful the emotional relief they get from sessions is, sharing the burden with their supervisor and/or group, learning to separate the personal from professional (transference reactions) and preventing burn-out. Also, building work relationships of trust is considered crucial, by the participants and supervision has helped with that. In the words of a social worker *'(it means) not to be afraid to discuss anything that disturbs you in your work'*.

Group supervision is appreciated in several ways, according to respondents, such as getting feedback, using all the multi-sectoral work expertise in mixed groups, but also with regard to emotional support, by reducing feelings of isolation, and increasing those of belonging, group identity.

*What would you change about supervision, or what would help improve the provision of supervision in your country?*

- The frequency of sessions should be greater, care should be taken in the composition of the group, to use and request from organizations concrete development plans which will be agreed with the employee (supervisor).
- It would help to set standards on necessary supervision for all child protection professionals (child protection unit manager).
- Members of the group should have a diploma in psychology or social work, because some of them do not even have the basic skills needed (supervisor).

The respondents gave several recommendations on how supervision in child protection services can be improved in the future, related to policy, training and organisation with regard to supervision.

First, they emphasized that policies and procedures need to be built, in order to regulate the supervisory component in child protection services, that clarify roles and responsibilities for supervisors and all professionals working in child protection. Secondly, they said that supervisors need specific training in order to offer supervision according to professional standards. Also, child protection professionals working in the field need to have a proper professional training (a diploma in social work or psychology), in order to offer quality services and benefit from supervision. Last, with regard to organisation, they suggested that supervision needs to become obligatory, intentional and planned, based on mutual agreements, in a collaboration between supervisors and supervisees, and to be offered regularly and continuously, according to professional needs. As a psychosocial education service worker says 'In education, supervision is realised only with the heads of the services, and this happens in groups formed based on the number of workers in one local education office, not in small groups or individual meetings'. Peer support groups, where colleagues learn from each others expertise (older and younger professionals together) are suggested as an effective way of using resources.





# Overall summary of findings

In Albania, **the supervisory component** in social services is frail, starting with its absence in the relevant legal documents, as identified by the document analysis. The term 'supervision' is mentioned explicitly only in the standards of services of child protection units, an outdated document, referring to the previous law on child rights and protection, and therefore, not being used. Current documents mention only 'monitoring', which focuses mostly on the administrative component of supervision and emergency support in case management. In one educational psycho-social services guideline, supervision is being mentioned explicitly, but its functions are not fully developed because of lack of relevant protocols.

This situation makes for confusion around the **definition and purpose of supervision** in public sector, as reported by the participants. Child protection unit managers try to offer professional support within their monitoring role, without clear information and guidelines on how to do that, mainly in the few most structurally developed municipalities, where managers have been assigned. SARPC offers technical assistance in the rest of municipalities. Also, child protection unit managers, heads of psycho-social educational units and child protection workers are involved in other time-consuming roles, and have high numbers of professionals under their guidance, leaving not enough time for monitoring or supervision. Overall, in public services supervision is offered informally, and not in an intentional and planned way. On the other hand, there have been positive steps in the development of this component in the NGO sector, where several organisations over the years have offered planned and intentional supervisory experiences to their staff and the child protection workers in general, exercising the developmental and supportive functions of supervision. Still, being dependent on donor funding, this practice is not driven by the professionals needs and lacks sustainability.

The difference in the public and non-public sector attitude toward supervision has produced **two different views** on this component, as reported by key informants. Supervision is unknown and its importance diminished in the public sector, apart from those professionals and groups that have been exposed to it, through experiences provided by the NGO sector, such as awareness-raising, training activities/modules and direct supervision. For them, supervision is a crucial component, with the main aim of ensuring quality case management, within a culture of trust, and also offering emotional support for staff.

The respondents report their **experiences of supervision** as very helpful. They mention various ways in which the last session has been helpful related to three functions of supervision and there are no mentions of it being unhelpful in any

way. Similarly, they report their supervisory experiences being helpful in general, in all three functions, but especially the developmental and supportive one, because of supervision being given by external supervisors and they emphasize the extra benefits provided by group supervision.

Even though the development of the supervision component in the child protection field results quite challenging, several **good practices** have developed, as reported by key informants and respondents. A few child protection unit managers, in more structurally developed municipalities have developed their guiding role towards their staff, and also there are attempts to develop methodologies in relation to monitoring. An internationally recognized online module for supervisors is available, and several NGOs have been offering supervision for child protection workers over the years, with some of these experiences being long-term. The respondents report very helpful experiences of supervision, also by identifying the qualities of a good supervisor and the impact of supervision on them.



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In this study, the first of its kind in Albania, supervision in child protection services emerges as the weakest component of practice, hidden in relevant documents and partially unknown in public structures. An earlier study underlined the fact that supervision was unknown to many professionals working in child protection (Dhëmbo, 2015). Some good practices with regard to training and provision of supervision appear dispersed within this picture.

Clear examples of these good practices are: the existence of a full introductory online course of several modules, on practicing supervision in child protection and care settings, prepared by international and local experts and adapted to the local context (ChildHub Academy, 2017); and good supervisory experiences. These experiences are related on one hand to some emerging practices of supervision in the most developed public structures (child protection units) also several external supervision experiences, offered especially in the last decade, by various NGOs engaged in the development of the supervision component. Despite the challenges, the creation of child protection teams in municipalities, allows for their managers to start exercising the administrative function of supervision and start developing methodologies on this regard, resulting in more support for their staff and improvement of their case management skills. External supervision, offered by NGOs, has relieved some of the need of professionals for guidance, especially in longer term experiences, that have provided some continuity and periodicity of supervision. These experiences of supervision, have resulted as very helpful to the participants, and though partially this could be interpreted as being satisfied with what you can get, the differences in ratings between supervisors and supervisees show for the existence of a critical stance on those experiences, too.

The main challenge with regard to the development of supervision in Albania seems related to the lack of its recognition as an intrinsic component of social services practice by policy-makers, reflected in its absence in relevant legislation and policy documents. Other studies show a lack of focus on quality mechanisms in social services (task, 2020) with monitoring framework and related standards at a nascent state and still to be developed (Jorgoni & Ymeri, 2017). Another important challenge is the lack of sufficient human resources in social services in order to provide supervision, making for absence of managers, or staff without a social work diploma in these positions. Even in psychosocial education services, where the component is legally recognized, supervisors are spread thin in their role, which overlaps with their direct practice as school social workers or psychologists. The lack of functional child protection structures in municipalities



and the work overload of current professionals in these structures, resulting in a struggle to perform the mandated duties, is underlined in several other studies (Cabran, Finelli and Bradford, 2016). MASSEY PONI 2020. Last, but not least, these limitations result in the lack of current recognized and comprehensive training programs for supervisors, which is emphasized as a need by the participants, and also underlined as a priority in a recent study about social workforce needs (Dhëmbo, 2015).

Based on the above reflections, the main issues for the development of the supervision component in child protection services in Albania are related to four aspects, interlinked with each-other, and therefore requiring simultaneous actions in each area: the development of the necessary legislative and policy framework on supervision, which recognizes the supervisor role, and details roles and responsibilities for supervisors and supervisees, including evaluation and documentation of supervision; the building of the social services structures in municipalities, by recruiting the appropriate number of trained and experienced staff, as required by law; the development of the collaboration between public and non-public relevant actors, in and organised effort to use all existent expertise and other resources in this field; the building of a properly trained supervision workforce, through adequate training.



# Recommendations

The recommendations below were based on the overall findings of this report and also on the recommendations provided by key informants and respondents participating in this research:

1. Recognition of the need for the development of the supervisory component in child protection services (both in municipalities and educational institutions) by policy-makers, through developing the necessary by-laws and procedures/ protocols, with clear roles and responsibilities for supervisors and supervisees (including setting time limits on the direct support a child protection worker can receive in case management) and how supervision is evaluated and documented. If supervision would become obligatory and part of the evaluation of performance, we could expect to see it happening on a more regular basis and to gradually help increase the professional independence of child protection workers.
2. Implementation of the law on social services and the law on child rights and protection with regard to the development of social services structures at municipalities, child protection units and needs assessment and referral units, through recruiting the necessary staff, with appropriate academic training and experience. If the two levels of social services structure at municipalities would be developed, then could expect internal supervision to be offered by the head of the child protection unit.
3. Organisation of supervision, through structuring the cooperation between public structures (MHSP, MES, SAPCR, etc.) and NGOs in offering supervision, thus maximising all available resources. Based on the current needs of structures for supervision, a roll-out plan can be developed, where some of the current gaps in provision of supervision can be filled by the development of the peer support component (being also cost-effective), and also by NGOs, based on the needs assessed, through external supervision. Based on the current situation of structure development and limitation in human and financial resources, a combination of developing the administrative function of internal supervision (through monitoring), and combining it with offering the developmental and supportive function through external supervision, seems more feasible. If the current resources are used in an organised way, we could expect supervision to happen in a more regular basis, and responding to the needs of child protection workers.
4. Ensuring proper training of supervisors, through developing criteria about academic and professional training and work experience of supervisors, and designing formal training on supervision, based on current good practices of NGOs in this regard. If supervision is offered by properly trained professionals, we could expect it to be helpful to professionals in quality case management, emotional support and prevention of burn-out.



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# Appendix 1

Is there a separate policy document and / or practice guidance in relation to supervision for child protection professionals?

(Yes / no)

If no, is there a section on supervision contained within a wider policy document and / or practice guidance for child protection professionals?

(Yes / no)

If you have been able to locate a relevant policy document / practice guidance, who wrote it, and who was it published by?

Link to the document (if available) -

When was it published?

(Year)

When was it last updated?

(Month / year)

Who is it aimed at?

(Which services / professionals?)

How does it define supervision?

What does it say is the purpose of supervision? (Why do it?)

How does it say supervision makes a difference? For who or what and how?

Who does it say should get supervision?

Who does it say should provide supervision?

How often does it say supervision should take place?

What topics does it say should be discussed in supervision?

How does it say supervision should be recorded?

# Appendix 2

Interview schedule for key informants and supervisors

## **Read out (or share) the following description of supervision with the interviewee at the start of the interview**

*In this interview, I want to ask about your knowledge and experiences of professional supervision. Supervision is commonly used in social work and other child protection settings, and usually involves a manager meeting regularly with a worker (or with a group of workers).*

*During these meetings, the supervisor and worker will talk about what the worker has been doing and whether they are working to agreed standards (accountability), about whether the worker has the skills they need to do their job effectively (development) and will attempt to maintain a positive relationship between the worker and the supervisor (support).*

*Supervision has been described as:*

*"A process which aims to support, assure and develop the knowledge, skills and values of the person being supervised (the supervisee). It provides accountability for both the supervisor and supervisee in exploring practice and performance. It sits alongside an organisation's performance management process with a particular focus on developing people in a way that is centred on achieving better outcomes for people who use services and their carers."*

Q1. What do you make of this description? Do you recognise it as something that is happening in (your country) or field of work?

## **Generic questions (for all respondents)**

Q2. What is your professional role, how would you describe what you do day-to-day and what your responsibilities are in relation to child protection work?

Q1a (If not clear) Do you directly provide supervision for child protection professionals as part of your role? (Yes / No).

(If yes, encourage them to complete the survey as well).



- Q3. How would you describe the current state of supervision in the context of child protection work in (your country) or field of work? How is it provided, what is it for and what does it achieve?
- Q4. Can you say something about the history of supervision in child protection work, how has it developed in (your country) or field of work and why?
- Q5. Why is supervision important (or not important) in the context of child protection work in (your country) or field of work?
- Q6. What policies and procedures guide the provision of supervision for child protection workers in (your country) or field of work?
- Q6a (prompt if not otherwise mentioned) – What sort of policies and procedures specifically guide the provision of supervision for child protection workers from different agencies or disciplines, especially where they are working in multidisciplinary teams for child protection cases?
- Q7. How effective do you think supervision is for workers and for families in (your country) or field of work, and how do you know?
- Q8. What do you think are the main challenges facing the provision of supervision in (your country) or field of work?
- Q9. Thinking ahead to five- or ten-years' time, what would you like supervision to 'look like' in (your country) or field of work and what would need to happen to get there?

#### Additional questions for supervisors

- Q10. Thinking now about the supervision that you provide; how often would you meet with the same worker and what sorts of things would you talk about with them?
- Q11. What are the main aims of having supervision discussions with these workers, would you say?
- Q12. Thinking specifically about your most recent supervision meeting, how would you describe it? What happened, what did you talk about, and how did you feel at the end?
- Q13. How do you think your supervision helps the worker? And how does it help children and families?
- Q14. And the final question, if you could change one thing about the provision of supervision in (your country) or field of work, what would it be?

@Tdh Cristian Nistor made in Romania



# ALBANIA COUNTRY REPORT ON SUPERVISION

26th of March 2022