



Funded by
the European Union

unicef 
for every child

ASSESSMENT

OF THE EFFECTIVENESS OF MEASURES FOR THE PROTECTION OF CHILD **VICTIMS** OR WITNESSES OF VIOLENCE

September, 2025



The assessment of the effectiveness of measures for the protection of child victims or witnesses of violence was conducted within the framework of the Action *Protecting Vulnerable Children in Kosovo*, financially supported by the European Union in Kosovo and implemented by UNICEF in Kosovo¹, in cooperation with the Coalition of NGO/s for the Protection of Children - KOMF.

Disclaimer:

The views expressed in this assessment are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the official policies or positions of KOMF, UNICEF, and the EU or any other institution involved. Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the information presented, based on data and materials available at the time of drafting.

Prepared by:

Mr. Ardian Klaiqi, Legal Expert

¹ All references to Kosovo should be understood with reference to United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: GENERAL REVIEWS	6
1.1. Executive summary	7
1.2. Introduction	8
1.3. Methodology	10
1.4. Restrictions and ethical considerations	11
1.5. Number of children in contact with the law	12
CHAPTER II: PROTECTION OF CHILD VICTIMS AND WITNESSES	18
2.1. Legal Basis	19
2.2. Mandated institutions	22
2.3. Child protection system	26
2.4. Legal innovations	27
CHAPTER III: CONCLUSION	30
3.1. Assessment findings	31
3.2. What was the target of these innovations and how much have they been implemented?	31
3.2.1. Innovations in the Juvenile Justice Code	32
3.2.2. Innovations in the Law on Child Protection	50
3.2.3. Summary findings related to the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Code	60
3.2.4. Summary findings related to the implementation of the Law on Child Protection	64
3.3. Conclusion	67
3.4. Recommendations	69
3.4.1. Short-term recommendations	69
3.4.2. Medium and long-term recommendations	72
3.5. Good practices	75
CHAPTER IV. ANNEXES	77
4.1. Reference sources	78
4.2. List of professionals interviewed, meetings held and focus groups	82

ACRONYMS

▪ CC	Criminal Code
▪ CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
▪ CSW	Center for Social Work
▪ EU	European Union
▪ FLAA	Free Legal Aid Agency
▪ IML	Institute of Forensic Medicine
▪ JJC	Juvenile Justice Code
▪ KBA	Kosovo Bar Association
▪ KJC	Kosovo Judicial Council
▪ KOMF	Coalition of NGO/s for Child Protection
▪ KPC	Criminal Procedure Code
▪ KPC	Kosovo Prosecutorial Council
▪ LCP	Law on Child Protection
▪ MoJ	Ministry of Justice
▪ NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
▪ UN	United Nations Organization
▪ UNCRC	United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child
▪ UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
▪ OPAV	Office for the Protection and Assistance of Victims
▪ OI	Ombudsman Institution

The background is a solid dark brown color. A large, light beige circle is positioned in the upper left quadrant. A horizontal dark brown bar is placed over the left side of this circle, containing the text 'CHAPTER I:'. Below this bar, the words 'GENERAL' and 'REVIEWS' are stacked vertically in a bold, dark brown, sans-serif font. In the lower half of the image, there are two diagonal, light beige lines that form elongated, rounded rectangular shapes, pointing towards the bottom left and bottom right corners respectively.

CHAPTER I:

**GENERAL
REVIEWS**

1.1. Executive summary

Violence in all its forms constitutes a serious threat to the physical, psychological, and emotional well-being of children. Considering the long-term consequences that violence may have on their development, the international community and numerous states have established special standards for the protection of children, particularly in instances where they are victims or witnesses of criminal offences.

In this context, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and international and regional standards, have driven the establishment of justice systems that emphasize a child-friendly and humane approach, aiming to ensure their protection in all forms, not only from the perpetrators of criminal offences, but also from institutional negligence or professional failures within the system.

Kosovo has taken significant steps towards aligning its legal framework with these standards through the adoption of the Juvenile Justice Code and the Law on Child Protection. These two legislative instruments include protective measures, procedural safeguards, and institutional mechanisms that aim to provide comprehensive protection for children in contact with the justice system.

This assessment provides an in-depth analysis of the implementation of protective measures and procedural safeguards in child justice practice in Kosovo, through the review of the legal framework, institutional structure, existing practices, and key challenges in the field. Despite the progress achieved with the adoption of the Juvenile Justice Code and the Law on Child Protection, the assessment reveals that the practical implementation of these laws remains inadequate and often fragmented. The lack of sufficient professional knowledge of legal provisions, significant delays in the adoption of secondary legislation, the absence of essential services such as shelters for child victims or a functional reporting line, as well as the partial implementation of protective measures stipulated by law, have negatively affected the effectiveness of child protection and the realization of their rights.

These shortcomings not only limit the effectiveness of the child justice system but also risk the further victimization of children and the serious violation of their fundamental rights. Child victims or witnesses often do not receive appropriate psychological treatment, protection from risk, or support to return to a safe and stable life.

In this context, the report highlights the urgent and strategic need to improve the implementation of existing laws, to strengthen institutional and professional capacities, and to establish coordinating mechanisms among the relevant institutions. A comprehensive and child-sensitive approach is essential to ensure real—not merely formal—protection.

The recommendations derived from the assessment aim to accelerate the establishment of a child justice system that is more functional, fair, inclusive, and fully aligned with international standards on child protection.

1.2. Introduction

In Kosovo, approximately 38% of the population is under the age of 24, while around 28% of the population consists of children² under the age of 18.³ This considerable percentage of children and young people directly impacts the sustainable development of Kosovo and places particular importance on ensuring their rights and protecting them from violence, abuse, and neglect. As a result of this demographic dynamic, the treatment and status of children, particularly those in contact with the law, constitute an important priority for the future of Kosovo.



This demographic reality makes it essential to build a functional child protection system, capable of identifying, protecting, and supporting children who are victims or witnesses of violence. Ensuring an approach that is sensitive to the age and needs of children is essential not only to protect their lives and dignity but also to enable their rehabilitation and further development in a safe and supportive environment.

Kosovo has taken important steps to establish a legal and institutional framework that recognizes children as holders of human rights and as active participants in society. In this context, children enjoy not only universal rights but also special rights arising from their vulnerable position and the need for additional protection, particularly in cases where they are exposed to violence, trauma, or other hazardous situations.

The treatment of children who are victims or witnesses of violence requires a careful, cross-sectoral, and coordinated approach among the justice, health,

²The definitions used in this assessment will be interpreted according to the meanings given in the Law on Child Protection, the Juvenile Justice Code, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other relevant legislation in Kosovo.

³Kosovo Agency of Statistics: Latest Population and Household Census 2024.

education, and social service institutions. Every legal or institutional intervention has a direct impact on children's lives and therefore must be guided in the principle of the best interests of the child and by ensuring protection from further victimization.

In this regard, in recent years, Kosovo has undertaken significant initiatives to improve child protection mechanisms, including the adoption of laws and the development of procedures for treating child victims or witnesses of violence in a dignified and effective manner. However, further efforts are required to assess the practical functioning of the system and to ensure the implementation of international standards at all levels of child protection.

Conducting such an assessment becomes particularly important in the context of various local and international reports, which often present a mixed picture on the functionality of the child protection system in Kosovo. This requires an analytical approach to identify existing gaps and recommend concrete improvements.

The European Union's 2024 report on Kosovo highlights *"the adoption of several secondary legislative acts has taken place; however, the primary concern remains the absence of an integrated child protection system. This includes the non-functioning of child protection shelters, the lack of a functional helpline, as well as the insufficient capacities of the Centers for Social Work, leaving child victims and witnesses without the necessary and comprehensive support."*

These concerns are reinforced by the data from the *Multiple Indicators Consumer Survey (MICS, 2020)*, which found that *72% of children aged 1–14 years' experience forms of violent discipline, while 1 in 7 parents or custodians consider physical punishment necessary for the children education.* This reality of normalized violence within family and social environments underscores the urgent need for systematic interventions that protect children from trauma, further victimization, and long-term impacts on their development.

The comparison of reports and findings from these and other sources reveals a significant discrepancy between the legal developments and established structures for the protection of child victims and witnesses, and the actual implementation of these measures in practice. This discrepancy directly affects the provision of adequate protection and rehabilitation for these children, making the conduct of a comprehensive assessment indispensable.

The purpose of this assessment is to analyze and assess the effectiveness of laws and policies that protect child victims and witnesses in Kosovo, with particular focus on the legal measures and their implementation procedures in practice. The assessment will examine the challenges encountered in the application of these measures, which are essential for ensuring the protection, safety, and rehabilitation of children who have experienced violence, as well as for strengthening existing mechanisms that provide effective and comprehensive protection.

Through this assessment, opportunities will be identified to improve inter-institutional cooperation and advocacy for enhancing the capacities for protecting child victims and witnesses, including the increase and allocation of professional and financial resources for responsible institutions. The assessment will also consider the need to strengthen the child protection system and establish safer and more effective structures for these children, in order to guarantee that they can develop and integrate into society safely and on an equal basis with others.

1.3. METHODOLOGY

In carrying out the assessment, a combined qualitative and quantitative approach was utilized for the collection and analysis of data and information, including a review of the literature, semi-structured interviews, and focus group discussions conducted through workshops.

■ *Statistical data and trends*

An important part of this assessment was the collection and analysis of statistical data provided by the Kosovo Police, the Ministry of Justice Database, and an EULEX report concerning children in contact with the law. Particular attention was given to statistics related to child victims of sexual abuse, criminal offences against sexual integrity, and the protective measures and procedures applied for child victims and witnesses. Through the analysis of comparative trends over the years, with particular emphasis on 2023 and 2024, the assessment aims to evaluate not only the institutional and legal developments in this field but also their practical impact on the lives and well-being of children in contact with the justice system. The data serve as a basis for identifying gaps and guiding recommendations for further improvements in line with international standards on the children's rights.

■ *Literature review*

The analysis and review of documents constituted an important component in the development of this assessment. Relevant and available documents and literature were consulted and analyzed throughout the drafting process. The assessment was developed based on the initial report and the structure approved by the stakeholders, as well as existing legislation, reports, and evaluations conducted to date. A list of the reviewed literature is provided in the annexes at the end of this report.

■ *Stakeholder engagement through active consultations*

During the drafting process, regular communication was ensured with the responsible officials in the Ministry of Justice, KOMF and UNICEF Kosovo. All actions and draft versions were shared and coordinated with these counterparts to obtain their feedback and approval before proceeding with further steps.

The process was guided by the principle of trust and ownership, with the aim of fostering coherence among relevant child protection stakeholders in Kosovo.

The first preliminary draft was presented to the Ministry of Justice and other relevant institutional actors, and their comments, suggestions, and observations have been integrated into the study. It is worth emphasizing that throughout the development process, the opinions and needs of the beneficiaries have been at the center of the work. Measures were taken to ensure that their voices and viewpoints were heard and considered.

1.4. Restrictions and ethical considerations

During the implementation of this assessment, basic ethical principles were respected, including the voluntary participation of participants, confidentiality, the protection of personal data, and the right to refuse participation at any stage of the process. Particular care was taken in handling information related to practical cases shared during discussions with field professionals, avoiding any form of risk or stigmatization of participants in the assessment.

However, the assessment faced several constraints that affected the scope and depth of the analysis. These included limited access to official and updated statistical data, the lack of detailed reports on the practical implementation of protective measures for child victims and witnesses at the local level, as well as limited time for more in-depth engagement with all relevant actors.

Although there was an intention to include the voices of children who had come in contact with the justice system, this was not possible due to time limitations. Consequently, it was not feasible to fully comply with the formal requirements for the direct involvement of children in the assessment process. Instead, the assessment focused on gathering data through existing documentation, interviews with professionals and representatives of relevant institutions, as well as literature analysis, ensuring that the needs and interests of children remained central throughout the entire.

1.5. Number of children in contact with the law

Number of cases reported to the Kosovo Police

During 2023, a total of 135 cases of criminal offences against sexual integrity were reported to the Kosovo Police, with children as victims of these offences.

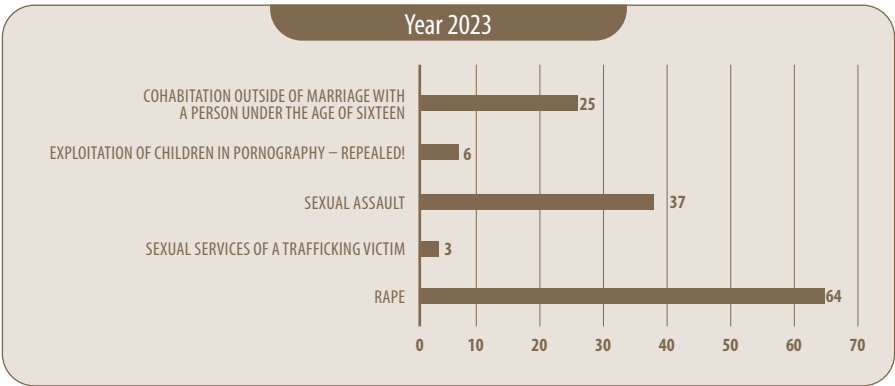


TABLE 1: *Number of criminal offences against sexual integrity where the victims are children*

During 2024, a total of 101 cases of criminal offences against sexual integrity were reported to the Kosovo Police, with children as victims of these offenses.

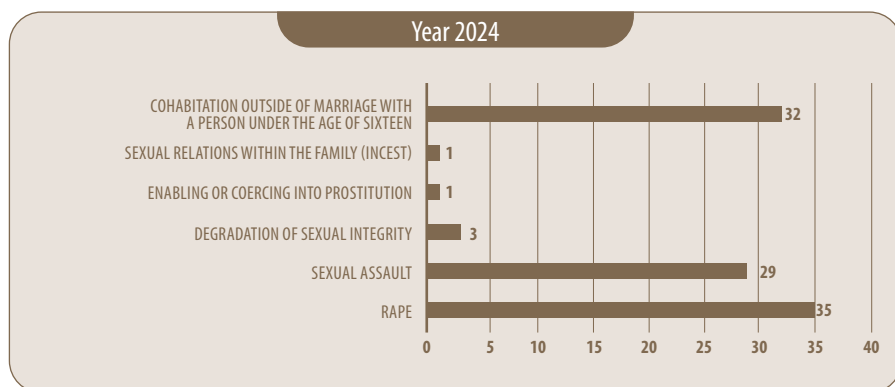


TABLE 2: *Number of criminal offences against sexual integrity where the victims are children*

Data from the Kosovo Police for the years 2023 and 2024 indicate concerning numbers regarding criminal offenses against sexual integrity where the victims are children. In 2023, a total of 135 such cases were recorded, while in 2024 this number decreased to 101 cases.

Nevertheless, the number remains significant and requires ongoing attention from the responsible institutions.

In 2023, the most frequent offences were rape with 64 cases, sexual assault with 37 cases, and extramarital relations with persons under the age of 16 with 25 cases. Additionally, cases of sexual services involving trafficking victims, child exploitation in pornography, and other offences were also identified.

In 2024, despite the overall decrease in cases, attention remains high for rape (35 cases) and sexual assault (29 cases), which continue to be the most common offences in this category. There was a slight increase in extramarital relations with persons under 16, with 32 cases reported. Furthermore, cases of sexual integrity degradation, facilitation or coercion into prostitution, and sexual relations within the family were also identified, although in smaller numbers.

Concerning cases involving children as victims of sexual integrity offences have also been noted in previous years, as highlighted in a EULEX report published in

2022. According to statistical data provided by EULEX⁴, during the period from 2019 to 2021, a total of 228 cases classified as rape were reported to the Kosovo Police, with a significant proportion involving children. The annual distribution of these cases is as follows:

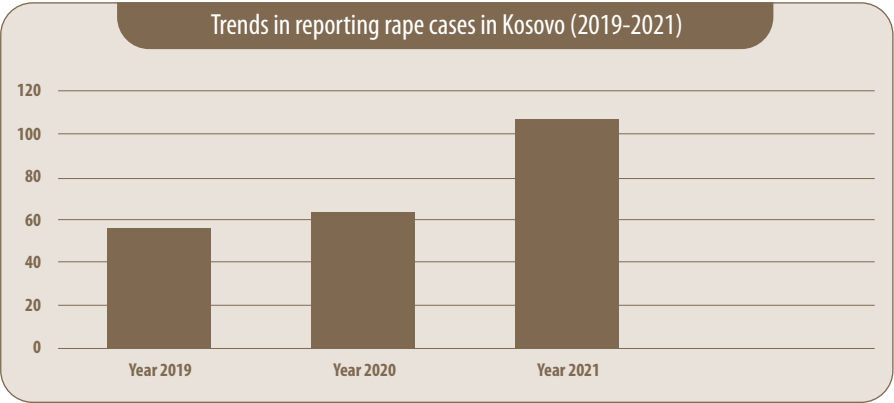


TABLE 3: *Number of reported rape cases*

According to this report, another concerning trend observed is that the overwhelming majority of victims are underage girls (in 85% of cases), as also evidenced by the data received from the Institute of Forensic Medicine (IML), where all the suspected perpetrators turned out to be male. According to these data, during the period from 2019 to 2021, a total of 245 clinical examinations of possible victims of sexual violence were conducted, of which 217 were female and 28 males. The annual distribution of the examinations is as follows: 47 examinations in 2019, 92 in 2020, and 106 in 2021.

Number of cases extracted from the database⁵ for recording the domestic violence cases

According to the data for 2023, a total of 2,715 cases of victims of domestic violence were recorded in this database. Of these, 178 cases involve victims aged 0 to 18 years. The percentage of domestic violence cases concerning victims in the 0–18 age group is around 6.56% of the total cases registered during 2023.

⁴European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. Assessment of the Handling of Rape Cases by the Justice System in Kosovo. Monitoring Report July 2022.

⁵<https://md.rks-gov.net/publikimet/statistikat/>

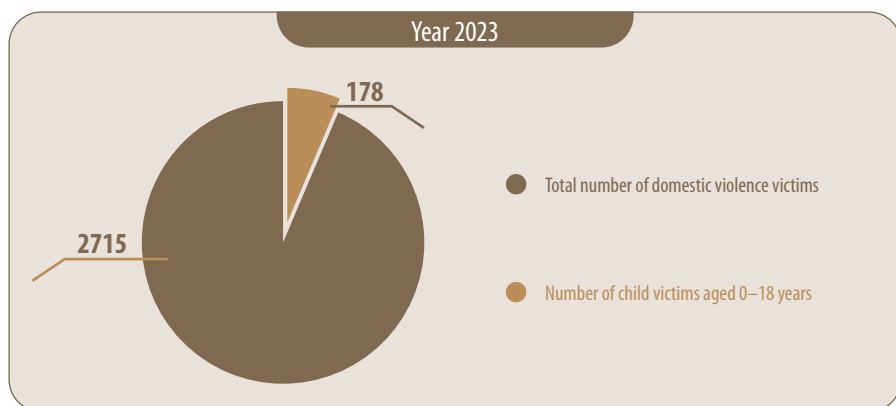


TABLE 4: *Number of total victims and child victims in cases of domestic violence (2024)*

Whereas, according to the data for 2024, a total of 2,988 cases of victims of domestic violence were recorded in this database. Of these, 220 cases involve victims aged 0 to 18 years. The percentage of domestic violence cases concerning victims in the 0–18 age group is around 7.36% of the total cases registered during 2024.

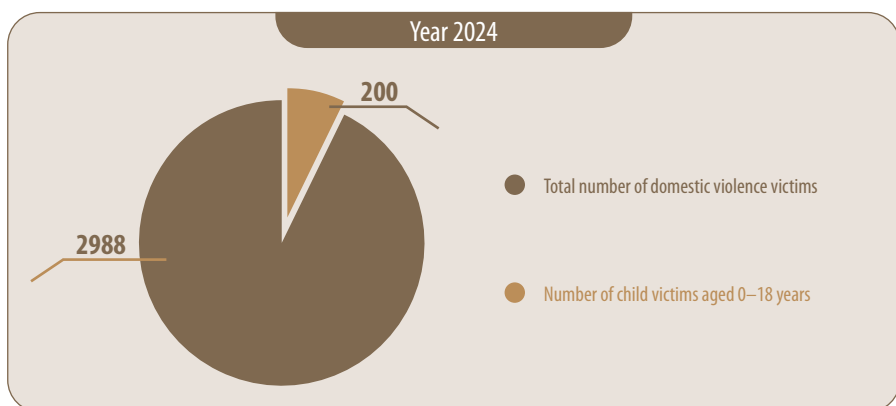


TABLE 5: *Number of total victims and child victims in cases of domestic violence (2024)*

According to a comparison of the data for the years 2019–2024, it appears that the total number of victims of domestic violence has been increasing every year, with a concerning upward trend.

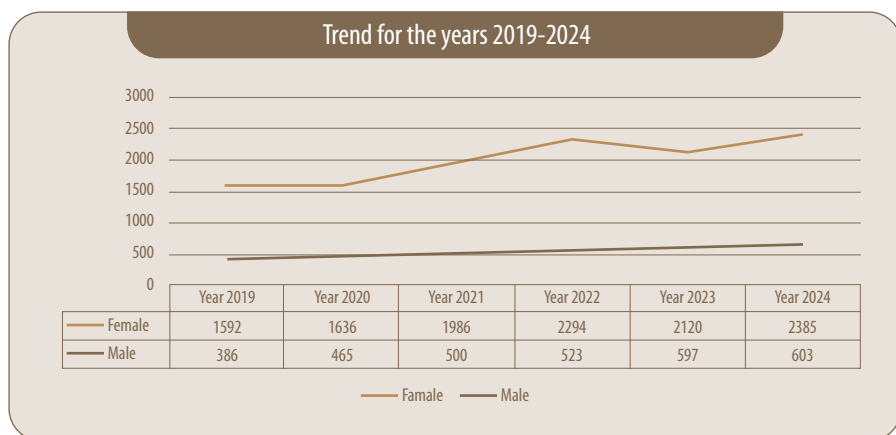


TABLE 6: *Trend of domestic violence criminal cases between 2019-2024*

Data extracted from this database for the period 2019–2024 indicates a continuous and concerning increase in the number of domestic violence victims in Kosovo. The total number of cases rose from 1,987 in 2019 to 2,988 in 2024, reflecting an increase of over 50% within six years.

A consistent and concerning element across all years is the gender distribution of the victims:

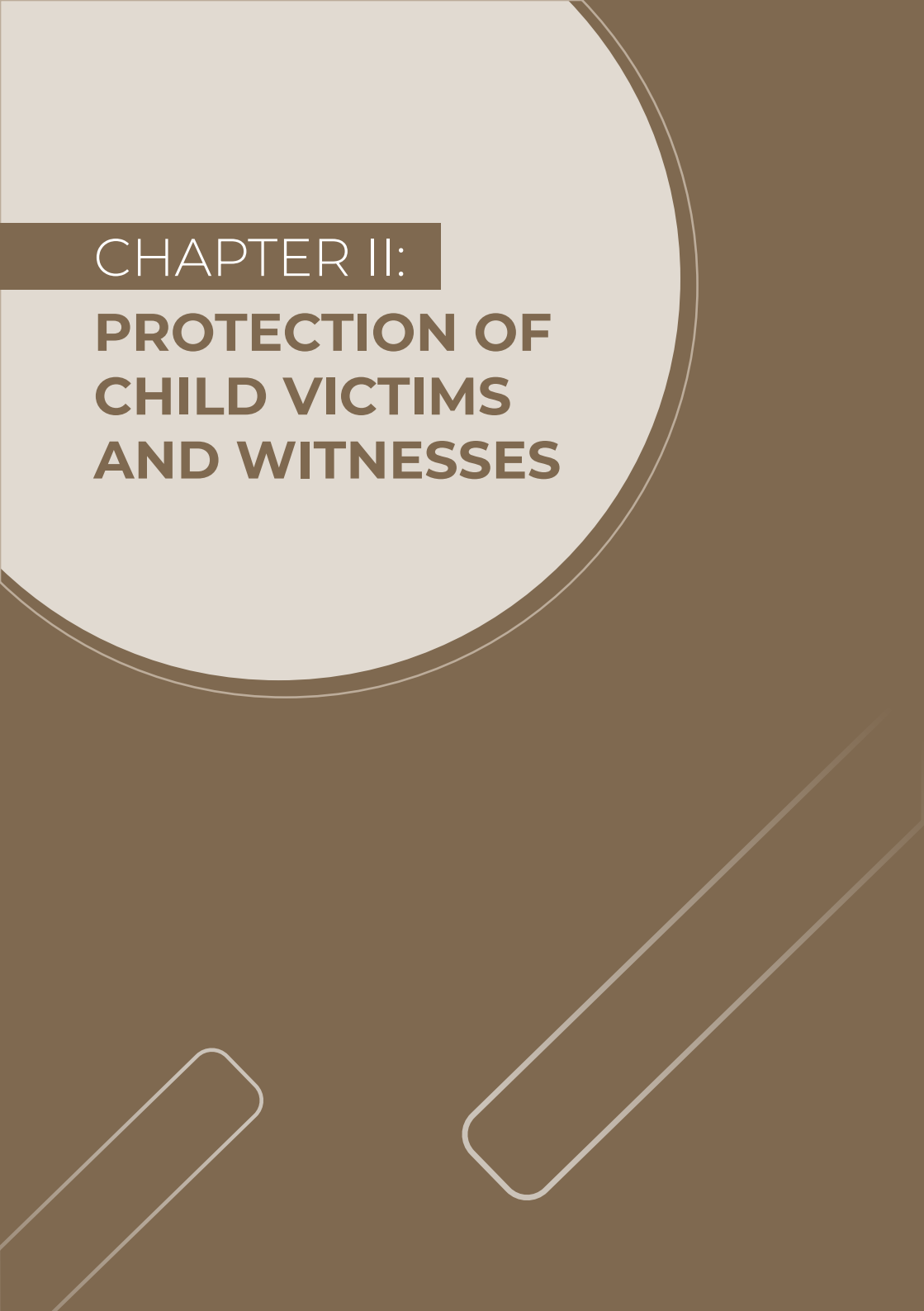
- Women and girls constitute the absolute majority of victims, representing on average over 75% of cases each year.
- In 2019, out of 1,987 cases, 1,592 were female, while 386 were male.
- By 2024, this figure had increased to 2,385 female victims and 603 male victims, indicating that although the number of male victims is gradually increasing, domestic violence continues to remain a phenomenon that mostly affects women.

The graph above clearly illustrates this trend, where a progressive increase is observed in all three categories: total, women and men, but with a clear dominance of female victims.

Lack of categorized data and data inconsistency:

Similar to the observations regarding data on the number of juvenile perpetrators, in the case of victims of violence, there is also a noticeable lack of sub-categorized data according to key criteria, such as age (specific age groups), the specific form of domestic violence, or the type of offense (criminal act), as well as other status and contextual aspects. This lack of detailed categorization makes comprehensive analysis impossible and negatively impacts the development of evidence-based policies.

Furthermore, in some cases, discrepancies have been observed between data provided by different institutional sources, creating uncertainty regarding the accuracy and consistency of the information. These shortcomings complicate the process of monitoring the situation on the ground, reduce the reliability of reporting, and hinder informed decision-making for targeted and effective interventions.

The background is a solid dark brown color. A large, light brown circle is positioned in the upper left quadrant. A horizontal dark brown bar is placed across the middle of this circle, containing the text 'CHAPTER II:'. Below the circle, two diagonal white lines with rounded ends extend from the bottom left towards the center. Another similar diagonal white line with rounded ends extends from the bottom right towards the center.

CHAPTER II:

PROTECTION OF CHILD VICTIMS AND WITNESSES

2.1. Legal Basis

Domestic legislation

In Kosovo, there exists a broad corpus of legal acts regulating and protecting the rights of children, including children in contact with the law, ranging from the Constitution as the highest legal act to secondary legislation that defines the standards for practical implementation.

Although Kosovo is not formally a signatory to international conventions due to its international status, Article 22 of the Constitution of Kosovo ensures the direct application of a number of international human rights agreements and instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child (paragraph 7). The Constitution not only incorporates this Convention into the domestic legal framework but also gives it precedence over the provisions of other laws and acts in case of conflict, emphasizing that:



“Human rights and fundamental freedoms guaranteed by the following international agreements and instruments are guaranteed by this Constitution, are directly applicable in Kosovo and, in the case of conflict, have priority over provisions of laws and other acts of public institutions.”

Considering this constitutional basis, as well as the need for special protection of children due to their physical and mental immaturity, Article 50 of the Constitution regulates the fundamental rights of children, stipulating in paragraph 1 that: *“Children enjoy the right to protection and care necessary for their wellbeing.”* Whereas in paragraph 4 of the same Article, the principle of the best interest of the child is clearly defined, emphasizing that: *“All actions undertaken by public or private authorities concerning children shall be in the best interest of the children.”*

Also, in Article 31, paragraph 7, which deals with the right to a fair and impartial trial, the Constitution stipulates that: *“Judicial proceedings involving minors shall be regulated by law respecting special rules and procedures for juveniles.”*

Based on the relevant provisions of the Constitution, a broad legal framework has been developed aimed at the protection and treatment of children, particularly those in contact with the law. In this regard, the foundational basis of the legal infrastructure for juvenile justice consists of the following main acts:

- Juvenile Justice Code (Code No. 06/L-006)
- Law on Child Protection (Law No. 06/L-084)
- Law on Family (Law No. 2004/32)
- Law on Social and Family Services (Law No. 08/L-255)

An impartial, effective, and humane penal system must guarantee the respect of the fundamental rights of both suspects and perpetrators, as well as victims, based on the principle that victims should be treated with dignity, respect, and sensitivity. Children, as a particularly vulnerable category due to their personal characteristics or the circumstances of the offense, require protection and treatment tailored to their specific needs.

In line with global trends and recent developments in the field of child victim and witness protection, the 2018 Juvenile Justice Code has reflected these advances through the inclusion of a range of enhanced measures. This development represents an important step toward building a more comprehensive, flexible, and internationally harmonized juvenile justice system, aimed at the treatment, protection, rehabilitation, and reintegration of children into their families and society.

In this context, the 2018 Juvenile Justice Code (Code No. 06/L-006) introduced a series of amendments and innovations aimed at advancing the protection and treatment of children as victims or witnesses of criminal offenses. This Code represents a modern approach aligned with international and European standards, reinforcing a justice system based on principles such as the best interests of the child, child-friendly approaches, rehabilitation, and reintegration into society.

The amendments included in this Code mark a clear shift in the orientation of Kosovo's juvenile justice system, prioritizing protective measures for child victims and witnesses. In this regard, part five of the Code, through two chapters and 26 articles, regulates aspects of child protection as victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings. This represents the most significant intervention made during the 2018 revision of the Code.

Through these two chapters, the procedure for protecting children within the penal system has been substantially regulated, including the establishment of

fundamental principles, forms of protection, involved institutions, and necessary mechanisms for inter-institutional coordination.

As a necessity of time and to further advance the protection of children, particularly victims and witnesses, the Law on the Protection of the Child was adopted in 2019. This law represents an important step towards building an integrated child protection system in Kosovo, in line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Law on Child Protection lays the foundation for an integrated and functional child protection system, including measures for prevention, response, and support against all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation, and neglect. It guarantees the development of the child in a safe environment and promotes inter-institutional cooperation at both local and central levels. The law contains detailed provisions on the fundamental rights of the child, institutional mechanisms for their protection, and defines the responsibilities of institution actors, the community, and individuals. It also foresees the establishment of support services such as child protection houses, helplines, legal aid, and rehabilitative services. For non-compliance with the law, sanctions measures are foreseen for individuals and legal entities.

Regional and international instruments

Measures for the protection of child victims and witnesses stem from a range of international and regional instruments, which provide the normative basis for the development and implementation of a criminal and civil justice system that is in line with children's rights and international standards for the protection and treatment of children in contact with the law. These instruments are recognized and enforceable in Kosovo as well.

The main international instruments that serve as a legal and regulatory basis include, but are not limited to:

- *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989)
- *Optional Protocol to the CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*, 2000
- *European Convention on Human Rights* (ECHR), 1950
- *Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse* (Lanzarote Convention), 2007
- *Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings*, 2005

- *Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (Palermo)*, 2000, and related Protocols
- *Directive 2011/93/EU* on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography
- *Directive 2012/29/EU* on minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime
- *Directive 2011/36/EU* on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims
- *UN Resolution 2005/20* - Guidelines on justice issues involving child victims and witnesses of crime
- *Basic Principles of the Use of Restorative Justice Programs in Criminal Matters 2002/12*
- *United Nations Guidelines on the Treatment of Children in the Criminal Justice System* (1997)
- *General Comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child*, respectively:
 - *Comment No. 10 (2007)* on children's rights in juvenile justice
 - *Comment No. 12 (2009)* on the right of the child to be heard
 - *Comment No. 24 (2019)* on the rights of the child in the criminal justice system
 - *Council of Europe Guidelines on Child-Friendly Justice* (2010).

2.2. Mandated institutions

Based on the Juvenile Justice Code, the Law on the Protection of the Child, as well as relevant sub-legal acts, the key institutions for the effective implementation of protection for child victims and witnesses include: the Prosecutor's Office, the Police, the Court, the Office for the Protection and Assistance of Victims, the Center for Social Work, Free Legal Aid, the Institute of Forensic Medicine, Child Protection Homes, the Phone line, the Ombudsman, as well as other actors from the public and non-governmental sectors.

- **Court:** plays a central and important role in ensuring a fair and lawful process for child victims and witnesses. During judicial proceedings, the court is obliged to take measures to protect the child's rights, including avoiding direct contact with the suspect or defendant, conducting interviews in appropriate settings, and enabling participation through video link or use of a designated room. The court must also ensure that hearings where the child testifies are held without public presence, thereby safeguarding the child's confidentiality and privacy.

In cooperation with all professionals involved, the court ensures that the child has access to psychological support and representation of his or her interests throughout the judicial process. These measures are essential to prevent re-victimization and to safeguard the child's emotional and physical well-being during legal proceedings.

- **Prosecution:** ensures that child victim or witness of a crime is protected and represented throughout the entire criminal procedure. The juvenile prosecutor is responsible for initiating and pursuing criminal proceedings in cases where children are involved as victims or witnesses, while taking measures to guarantee the realization of their rights during the judicial process. In cases where there are indications of violence, abuse, or trafficking, the prosecutor requests urgent protective measures and establishes contact with the Police, the Center for Social Work, the Office for the Protection and Assistance of Victims, the Child's lawyer, Children's Shelter/Protection Houses, etc. The Prosecution also ensures that children are interviewed in a child-friendly manner, in appropriate conditions, avoiding any contact with the suspect, and by engaging trained professionals for child interviewing. To prevent revictimization, the prosecutor may also request that the child's testimony be recorded and used during the trial proceedings without requiring the child's direct appearance in court.
- **Kosovo Police:** It is one of the main mechanisms for identifying, addressing, and referring cases where children are victims or witnesses of a crime. In cases of reported violence, sexual abuse, trafficking, or any other form of mistreatment, the Police intervene immediately to ensure the child's safety and prevent further harm. In cooperation with the Center for Social Work and the Office for the Protection and Assistance of Victims, the Police refer cases for emergency protection and psychological support. During criminal proceedings, the Police also ensure that the child is interviewed in the presence of trained professionals and in child-friendly environments, in compliance with international standards for protecting minors from re-victimization. Specialized units within the Kosovo Police play a key role in handling such cases.
- **Office for the Protection and Assistance of Victims (OPAV):** functions as an independent unit within the Office of the Chief State Prosecutor and is responsible for the protection and representation of crime victims at all stages of criminal proceedings. It operates offices at both the central and regional levels within the Basic Prosecution Offices and provides continuous services,

24/7, throughout Kosovo. Victim advocates provide counseling, representation, and support to victims of domestic violence, trafficking in human beings, sexual abuse of children, rape, homicide, and other forms of crime. The OPAV has the mandate to institutionalize the rights of victims by ensuring their access to justice, informing them of their rights, representing them before the police, prosecution office, and court, and referring them for additional support when necessary. In cases involving child victims or witnesses, the victim advocate plays a key role in ensuring protection, preventing re-victimization, and guaranteeing child-sensitive treatment throughout all stages of the criminal procedure.

- **Center for Social Work (CSW):** Is a key institution in ensuring the protection and well-being of children, especially when they are victims or witnesses. The Center for Social Work (CSW) is responsible for assessing the child's situation, identifying their needs, and taking measures for immediate and long-term protection. Upon receiving a case from the police or other institutions, the CSW conducts the initial interview, gathers basic information, prepares a social report (anamnesis), and makes decisions regarding placing the child in a safe environment, including temporary placement in Children's Protection Homes if necessary. The CSW coordinates actions with the Office for the Protection and Assistance of Victims, the Police, the Prosecution Office, the Courts, and non-governmental organizations to ensure that the child receives psychosocial support, legal assistance, and protection from any further violence or abuse. They also play a role in periodically reassessing the child's circumstances and supporting their return to a safe family environment or other alternative care arrangements.
- **Free Legal Aid Agency (FLAA):** Is a public institution that provides free legal aid throughout Kosovo, in accordance with the Law on Free Legal Aid⁶. This assistance includes information and legal advice, drafting of documents and representation in civil, criminal, administrative and minor offense procedures. The FLAA provides primary legal aid (advice, technical assistance, representation and protection at all stages of the procedures) and secondary legal aid (technical assistance and representation). This assistance is important for child victims and witnesses of criminal offenses who need legal support, guaranteeing equal access to justice and contributing to the protection of their rights through specialized and free representation in judicial and extrajudicial procedures. This service provides legal support to children and their families

⁶LAW No. 04/L-017 & Law No. 08/L-035 on amending and supplementing Law No. 04/L-017 on Free Legal Aid.

who cannot afford the costs of lawyers. It helps child victims and witnesses to have proper representation in legal procedures and to secure their rights.

- **Institute of Forensic Medicine (IFM):** provides forensic expertise and plays a critical role in the identification, documentation, and management of cases of violence, abuse, and maltreatment against children. The Institute performs forensic autopsies, clinical examinations of victims of physical and sexual violence, laboratory analysis of evidence, as well as other services ordered by the court or prosecution. The IFM contributes to the investigation and prosecution of cases through its professional expertise and cooperates with justice institutions, including the Office for Victim Protection and Assistance, the Centers for Social Work and the Kosovo Police, to ensure integrated support for victims and minors.
- **Lawyers:** Provide legal assistance and representation for children victims or witnesses in criminal proceedings, as well as in other procedures if necessary (civil, administrative, or minor offences). The lawyer, as a professional, is licensed by the Kosovo Bar Association and is engaged to ensure the protection of the rights and interests of child victims and witnesses, by representing them before the police, prosecution office, court, or other institutions. They provide services such as legal advice, drafting legal documents, representation, and assistance in dispute resolution through mediation or arbitration procedures. Lawyers also play a vital role in protecting child victims of crime, including domestic violence and abuse, and can provide free legal aid where applicable.
- **The Ombudsman Institution (OI):** plays a key role in protecting the rights of child victims and witnesses, by providing legal support, advice and representation in legal proceedings. The OI ensures that children have access to justice and do not face violations of their rights, especially in cases of violence, abuse and trafficking. Through interventions and protective measures, the Ombudsman contributes to ensuring fair and prompt treatment for children, by monitoring legal proceedings and recommending improvements to policies and practices for their protection in the justice system.
- **Other public and non-governmental sector stakeholders:** In support of these institutions, civil society organizations, educational and professional institutions are often involved. They play an important role in supporting child victims and witnesses, by providing protection, rehabilitation and social integration services, as well as contributing to raising awareness and supporting

the development of protection policies.

2.3. Child protection system

UNICEF, in its 2008 children protection strategy, defines the system as a set of laws, policies, regulations and services needed to support children in preventing and responding to protection risks. This system requires close coordination between state agencies, non-state providers and community groups, including routine referral systems to ensure that all stakeholders work in a coordinated and effective manner.⁷

Definition of the Child Protection System

“Certain formal and informal structures, functions and capacities that are assembled to prevent and respond to violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation of children. A child protection system is generally accepted to consist of the following components: human resources, finances, laws and policies, governance, monitoring and data collection, as well as protection and response services and care management. It also involves different actors – children, families, communities, those working at the international or national level. Most important are the relationships and interactions between these components and these actors within the system. It is the results of these interactions that constitute the system.”⁸

In 2012, the definition of the child protection system was refined, emphasizing the need for an integrated approach that includes all levels of government and society. This system aims to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, and to provide support for the prevention of these acts and assistance to children who are victims of them.⁹

In another more comprehensive definition, the system is understood as a coordinated and integrated network of laws, policies, regulations, and services that support the prevention of and response to child protection-related risks. These systems are closely linked to social protection and extend beyond it, encompassing sectors as diverse as justice, social welfare, education, health, and security.¹⁰

⁷Right there,

⁸United Nations Children Fund, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Save the Children and World Vision, 'A better way to protect all children: The theory and practice of child protection systems, conference report', 2013, p.3.

⁹Right there,

¹⁰The UNICEF Child Protection Systems Strengthening Approach. September 2021. <http://ëëë.unicef.org/media/110871/file/1.%20the%20unicef%20child%20protection%20systems%20strengthening%20approach.pdf>

To ensure effective and comprehensive protection, this system must function as a coordinated mechanism, with clear responsibilities for each sector and actor, ensuring that every child has the necessary and safe protection in every situation.

2.4. Legal innovations

Over the last decade, legal amendments to the Juvenile Justice Code and the Law on Child Protection have introduced important innovations in the field of protecting child victims and witnesses. These changes are essential not only in terms of the legal procedures to be followed in handling cases, but also in terms of institution obligations to build new institutional and human capacities.

Through these reforms, the institution's responsibility has been strengthened to provide child victims and witnesses with comprehensive services, including preventive, protective, and responsive measures, developed in line with international standards for child protection in criminal justice.

Innovations in the Juvenile Justice Code:

The innovations introduced by the JJC are based on the fundamental principle that victims should be assessed fairly and treated with respect and dignity. Child victims constitute a particularly vulnerable category, both because of their personal characteristics and because of the circumstances of the criminal offence. For this reason, they should benefit from treatment tailored to their specific needs and situation.

As part of the review and amendments undertaken in 2018, the Juvenile Justice Code (JJC) introduced several important innovations, the most notable of which is the regulation of the protection of children as victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings. These innovations are addressed in part five of the Code, through two chapters and a total of 26 Articles. This intervention represents the deepest and most significant reform of the JJC since its entry into force, marking an important step towards alignment with international standards of child justice.

Through these provisions, child victims or witnesses are guaranteed a series of specific rights and protections, which are fully consistent with international instruments for the protection of children in the criminal justice system. These innovations include, but are not limited to:

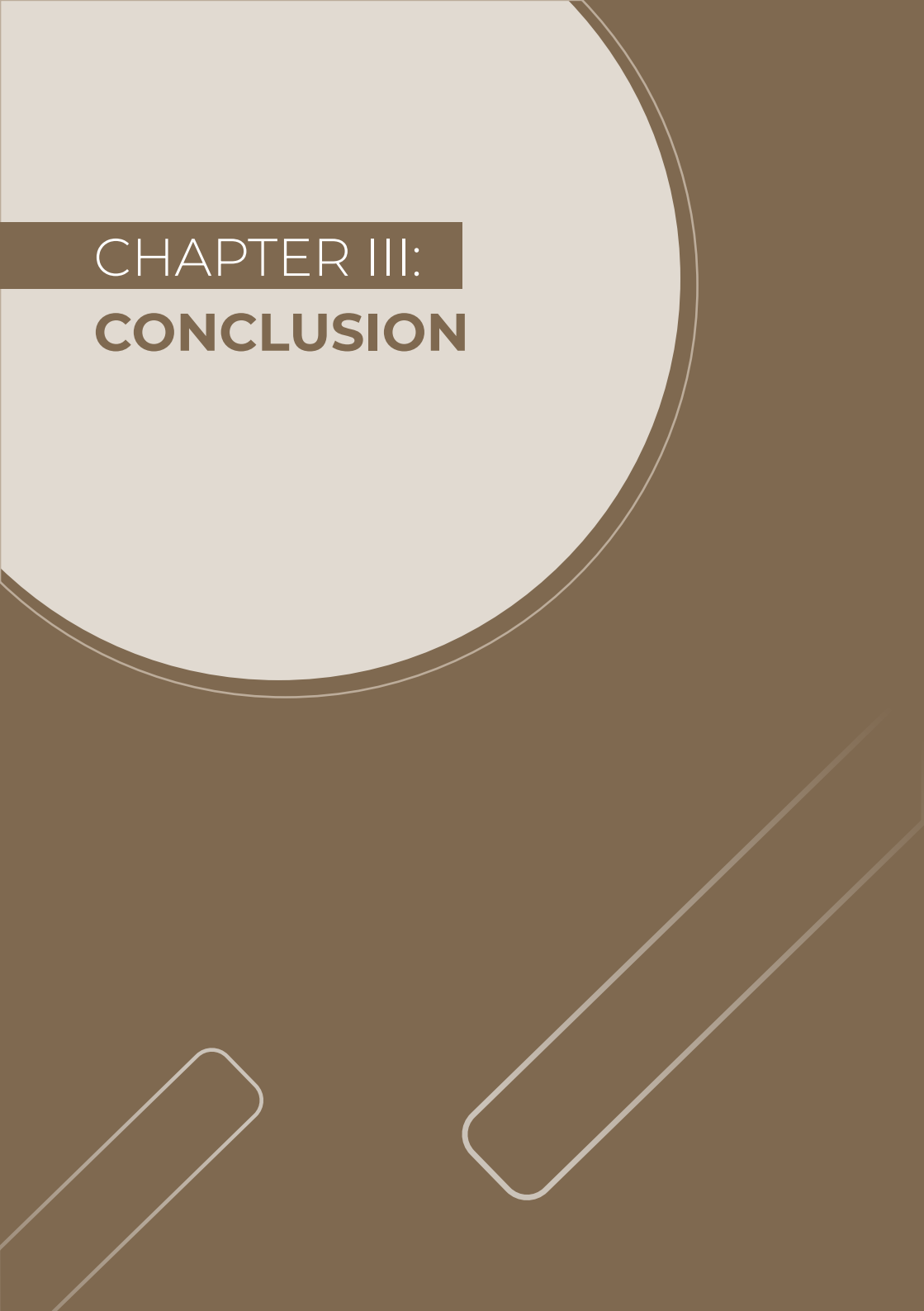
- Judging adults for crimes committed against minors
- Investigation of crimes committed against children by specialized police officers
- The best interests of the child and other recognized principles in the field of child protection
- Procedural actions that provide for questioning by professionals and under the support of psychologists and in special environments, and through technological devices, with the presence of a defense attorney, etc.
- Protecting children from coming into contact with perpetrators of criminal offences
- Office for Victim Protection and Assistance
- Legal protection
- Protective measures and orders
- Language, interpreter and other special measures
- Medical examinations and taking samples from the body
- Support person from the Center for Social Work
- Reception areas
- Courtroom equipment
- Right to return and compensation

Innovations in the Law on Child Protection:

In the context of efforts to further strengthen the protection of children as victims or witnesses, the LCP has brought important innovations that are consistent with the principles of the CRC and other applicable legislation. These innovations have built a comprehensive approach to child protection, emphasizing the need to create new mechanisms, provide adequate services, and place the interests and needs of the child at the center of every legal and procedural action.

These developments, together with the innovations brought by the Juvenile Justice Code (JJC), guarantee a series of rights and protective measures for children who are victims or witnesses, in full compliance with international standards for the protection of children in the criminal justice system. Key innovations include, but are not limited to:

- Principles based on the CRC
- Establishment of Child Protection Houses
- Institutional Line
- Protection from all forms of violence
- Friendly justice
- Legal aid and access to justice
- Medical, psychological assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration measures, etc.



CHAPTER III: **CONCLUSION**

3.1. Assessment findings

Based on the conducted assessment and detailed analysis of the effectiveness of measures for the protection of child victims and witnesses in Kosovo, a number of key findings have been identified related to structural challenges and practical obstacles, which directly impact the implementation, effectiveness and sustainability of these measures.

On the one hand, it has been found that the Law on Child Protection and the Juvenile Justice Code are advanced in terms of the standards they contain, demonstrating a clear institutional commitment to promoting protective measures and procedural safeguards in line with the principle of the best interests of the child. On the other hand, however, the assessment has revealed serious challenges in the practical implementation of these provisions, where most of the relevant institutions have failed to consistently fulfill the obligations arising from this legal framework.

The findings of the conducted assessment have been categorized into two main groups, with the aim of providing a clear and structured overview of the effectiveness of the child justice system in relation to the protection of child victims and witnesses:

- First, the part related to what is intended through the innovations provided for in the Juvenile Justice Code and the Law on Child Protection, especially in relation to procedural measures and guarantees; to what extent are these provisions in line with international standards and what is the level of their implementation in practice (see subchapter 3.2, tabular part);
- Secondly, the section related to the summarized findings regarding the challenges and obstacles that affect the effective implementation of these measures and guarantees, with the aim of identifying the hindering factors and systemic gaps related to the functioning of the juvenile justice system.

3.2. What was the aim of these innovations and how much have they been implemented?

The innovations in the Juvenile Justice Code and the Law on Child Protection intends to further strengthen the justice and protection system for children in Kosovo, ensuring a more comprehensive, age-sensitive and child-oriented approach.

3.2.1. Innovations in the Juvenile Justice Code

Trial of adults for criminal offences committed against children		
What is intended!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation?
The Juvenile Justice Code includes provisions that extend beyond its usual scope of application, to ensure effective protection for child victims of criminal offenses, even in cases where the perpetrators are adults. Article 5, paragraph 4 clearly states that "Certain provisions of this Code shall apply to an adult for criminal offences committed against children." This provision aims to ensure that a child involved in the process, whether as a victim or witness, benefits from all the guarantees provided by the Juvenile Code, even when the person under investigation or trial is not a minor. In cases where joint proceedings are conducted against a minor and an adult, Article 44 of the Code stipulates that a series of provisions (Articles 40-43, 45-47, 60-63 and 66) shall always apply to the minor, in order to ensure the protection of his rights during the criminal proceedings. Similarly, Articles 71-73 of the Code shall apply without exception to the minor in these cases. Article 108 JJC stipulates that for a series of serious criminal offenses (36 types of criminal offenses) that have a child as a victim, even when the perpetrator is an adult, the jurisdiction belongs to the judge or the juvenile court. For other parts of the procedure, the Code allows the application of provisions for adults, only if they do not conflict with the protection of the minor and the nature of the joint procedure.	The Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular: Article 3(1): "In all actions concerning children... the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration." Article 40(2)(b)(vii): Ensures the right of every child involved in criminal proceedings to be treated with full respect for their dignity and to receive appropriate protection. This provision is also harmonized with: ■ Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, which provides for special protection for child victims, regardless of the status of the perpetrator of the criminal offence ■ Directive 2016/800/EU on procedural safeguards for children in criminal proceedings, which, although primarily for accused children, upholds the principle of child protection in every aspect of the proceedings.	Based on interviews with institutional actors and analysis of court decisions, it appears that this provision has begun to be implemented at a satisfactory level. In all Basic Courts, the proper composition of the trial panels has been ensured and the main procedural aspects for minors have been respected, even in cases where the person on trial is an adult. Although the legislation provides that cases involving minors be handled by judges specialized in juveniles, in practice difficulties have been identified in ensuring continuity of case management by the same juvenile judge. This poses a particular challenge, especially in the pre-trial and detention stages of adults involved in cases involving juveniles. In these cases, the juvenile judge usually avoids participating in the initial stages of the proceedings so as not to be excluded from the judicial review, which affects the continuity and consistency of the treatment of sensitive cases.

Principles for the protection of child victims and witnesses in judicial proceedings

What is intended!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
In line with the spirit of child rights protection, every child involved in judicial proceedings as a victim or witness must be treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity. The principles included in the JJC in articles 110 and 111 ensure that proceedings are tailored to the needs of the child: ■ The best interests of the child are established as a paramount consideration in any action or decision that affects them; ■ The child is treated without discrimination, regardless of origin, gender, age or health condition; ■ Procedures should be child-friendly, respecting their sensitivity and adapting the approach according to age, level of development and special needs; ■ Privacy and confidentiality are guaranteed, limiting any unnecessary exposure of the child's personal information or identity; ■ The publication of any information that could lead to the identification of the child is prohibited, except in cases where it is expressly permitted by the court; ■ The child has the right to express his thoughts and opinions, to be heard and to contribute to decision-making that directly affects his life, especially during the judicial process.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 3 – Best interests of the child; Article 12 – Right to be heard; Article 16 – Protection of privacy and reputation) UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (Core Principles: Dignity, Sensitivity, Protection from Harm, Privacy, Participation) Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime (provides for special protection for child victims at every stage of the procedure) Directive 2016/800/EU on procedural safeguards for children in criminal proceedings (Although it focuses on accused children, it contains general principles that ensure appropriate and fair access for children to the justice system).	Compared to previous years, progress has been made in terms of reference to these principles, with particular emphasis on the principle of the best interests of the child. However, child protection professionals¹¹ do not always document and justify this principle in their decisions. In many cases, the reference remains more of a textual description than a proper reasoning that would correspond to the essence of the decision. In the 2022 Annual Report¹², the Ombudsman Institution found that in one case handled, the responsible authorities did not act in accordance with the best interests of the child, failing to implement Article 5 of the Law on Child Protection. In this case, the lack of due care for the child's sensitive history, including previous experiences of abuse and the risk of recurrence of similar situations in the future, was identified as a serious violation of the institutions' legal obligations. (See more findings in the LCP-table on principles)

¹¹ Child protection professionals - means all persons who, within the mandate of their work and in the context of their work, are in contact with a child in need of protection, or have a duty to meet the needs of the child under this law or any other applicable law, local or international standard (Law on Child Protection No. 06/L-084).

¹² <https://oik-rks.org/2023/03/31/raporti-vjetor-2022/>

Procedural actions		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 112 of the JJC, establishes several basic rules based on which all institutions and professionals involved are obliged to implement specific procedures. These rules include but are not limited to: ■ An individualized and sensitive approach, considering the child's age, gender, mental and emotional development, family environment, and special needs; ■ Questioning with the assistance of professionals (psychologists, pedagogues, or other experts), so that the child feels safe and understood; ■ Use of appropriate locations or technologies to avoid direct confrontation with the defendant and to facilitate the child's participation in a more protected manner; ■ Limiting questioning to a maximum of two times; ■ Ensuring an authorized representative for the child in all stages of the criminal procedure; ■ The possibility of audiovisual recording of the testimony as legal evidence, and the obligation to destroy the recordings within 5 years from the entry into force of the court decision; ■ The judge's obligation to notify the guardianship authority if evidence emerges during the procedure showing factors that influenced the commission of the criminal offense, in order to enable timely social and protective intervention.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 3 Best interests of the child; Article 12 Right to be heard; Article 16 Protection of privacy; Article 40 Right to fair treatment in criminal justice) UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (Set out requirements for sensitive interviewing, appropriate environment, assistance from professionals, protection against re-traumatization, etc.) Directive 2012/29/EU Procedure for the protection of child victims (Articles 20 to 24 emphasize the need for limited interviewing, appropriate facilities, the presence of psychologists and the use of technology to avoid confrontation with the defendant) Directive 2016/800/EU (Includes principles for safeguarding the best interests of the child, protecting privacy and providing psychological and legal support during the procedure)	Of these cases, 16 acquittals were recorded ¹³ (15 cases of acquittal and one case of dismissal of the indictment). The reasons for acquittal varied, but most often were related to the lack of evidence of violence, including cases where there was no physical damage to the victim's genital area, which according to the courts made it impossible to prove the crime. Another recurring reason was the victim's withdrawal of the statement during the court proceedings. In one case, the victim stated in court that she had lied, and although the medical report contained evidence of bruises and bodily injuries, the court entered an acquittal. In another case, the victim's changing statements during the different stages of the proceedings (police, prosecutor, court) caused her statement to be considered unreliable by the trial panel. In some other cases, the courts relied on the concept of "implied consent", taking as a reason the previous sexual relations between the victim and the accused. In another case, the court justified the acquittal by the fact that the victim had gone to the scene of the crime with unknown persons, and from this it concluded that she had given tacit consent to sexual relations. In almost all the judgments analyzed, the victim's statement was the main evidence. The victim was often interviewed three times: by the police, the prosecution and the court during the trial. Also, statements of doctors and forensic reports, when available, were used as evidence. In this regard, a positive development is the fact that the number of medical examinations performed and used in trials has progressively increased. However, psychological assessments of the victim have been very rarely used as evidence. Moreover, only in a few cases have additional evidence such as copies of communications via technological devices and crime scene reports (with photographs) been presented during the relevant judicial proceedings. Regarding each of the findings regarding the procedural rights provided for in Article 112, please see the relevant tables below that summarize and illustrate these data in detail.

¹³ In relation to some of the procedural aspects addressed in this article, they have been compared with the findings selected from the EULEX assessment report (European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. Assessment of the Handling of Rape Cases by the Justice System in Kosovo. Monitoring Report. July 2022), which reviewed 36 cases of judgments of the nature of criminal offenses against sexual integrity.

Revocation of parental custody rights		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 113 of the JJC refers to the case when, during the course of a criminal procedure, it emerges that a parent: ■ Misuse of parental duties (e.g. use of violence, etc.); ■ Neglects the children. (e.g. abandonment, lack of basic care); or ■ Violates the rights of the child. (e.g. forces him not to testify, manipulates him, intimidates him, etc.) In these cases, the prosecutor has the legal obligation to notify the custodianship authority, so that out-of-court procedures for the termination of parental rights can be initiated. A similar provision is also established by the Law on Child Protection and related legislation, "... in situations where the child is exposed to immediate or ongoing danger, due to violence, neglect or sexual abuse by the parent or family members, the authorities are obliged to take measures to remove him from the family environment." However, both the JJC and the LCPC, as well as the relevant legislation, foresee the removal of custody, particularly of parental rights <u>define and always view</u> the removal of custody, and especially parental rights, as a measure of last resort. The procedure and decision-making should always be guided by the best interests of the child. In cases where parental care and rights have been temporarily or partially removed, the decision should be reviewed regularly with the possibility of restoring care or rights.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 3 Best interests of the child as a guiding principle; Article 9 The right of the child not to be separated from a parent unless it is in his or her best interests; Article 19 – Protection from violence, abuse and neglect; Article 20 – Special protection for children without parental care) United Nations Guidelines on the Alternative Care of Children (2009) (Specifies that separation from a parent should be a measure of last resort, and the decision should be based on the best interests of the child, with regular review of the decision for possible reinstatement of care). Directive 2012/29/EU (on victims' rights) Articles requiring individual risk assessment and protective measures for victims if they live with the abuser.	Unfortunately, from the cases analyzed and interviews conducted, it appears that this provision has never been implemented in the sense of removing the right to parental care. In some rare cases, there has been an initiative to start this procedure but it has not been pursued further. This situation is extremely concerning, especially when the child victim or witness is forced to stay in the same environment as the abuser, even after the parent has served their criminal sentence. Such an approach not only contradicts the legal and ethical standards of child protection but also seriously endangers their psychological and physical safety and well-being. Furthermore, one of the most concerning findings is related to the influence of traditional norms and pressure from the extended family, which often hinder the implementation of the provision for the removal of the right to parental care. In practice, authorities are reluctant to take legal action to remove a child from a dangerous and abusive environment, due to the fear that such an intervention would stigmatize not only the parent but also the entire family or tribe. This situation constitutes a clear example of the dominance of traditional societal norms and expectations over the fundamental principle of the best interests of the child. Such an approach is deeply unacceptable and demonstrates major gaps in the implementation of child protection standards.

Confidentiality of information		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 115 of the JJC highlights the obligation of all professionals involved in criminal cases involving child victims or witnesses to strictly maintain the confidentiality of information obtained in the course of their duties. This obligation applies to everyone, including the police, the prosecution, the courts, social workers, psychologists, and any other institutional or non-governmental actor involved in child protection. This article also establishes the only exception in the cases specified in Article 12, paragraph 3, of the JJC when the publication or dissemination of information is for the purposes of the procedure or legal protection of the child, always in a limited and controlled manner.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 16 Protects the child's right to privacy, including protection from unlawful interference with his or her private life, family, reputation and correspondence.) The UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (Require the protection of the child's identity and personal data at every step of the criminal process. Emphasizes that information about the child should be accessible only to responsible persons and only for the purposes of protection or legal prosecution in accordance with the best interests of the child. Directive 2012/29/EU on the Rights of Victims (Provides that child victims have the right to the protection of privacy and personal data, in particular when they are victims of sexual violence or domestic violence).	Regarding the level of implementation, although the legal framework is harmonized with international standards, implementation in practice poses challenges. (furthermore on the findings, see the table regarding the child's right to privacy...)

Protection of children from contact with perpetrators of criminal offences

What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 116 establishes clear preventive measures to protect children from the risk of contact with adults who have committed or are under investigation for criminal offenses against children, including in particular the criminal offenses provided for in Chapter XX (criminal offenses against sexual integrity) of the Criminal Code, such as sexual rape and other forms of sexual abuse of children. The provision includes two lines of protection: 1. Mandatory exclusion from positions involving work with children: Any adult convicted by a final decision of such a criminal offense cannot be considered a candidate for employment or engagement in any institution, organization or service that provides services to children, whether in education, health, social care, recreation, etc. This is a permanent protective measure, aimed at protecting children from exposure to potentially dangerous persons; 2. Avoiding contact in case of accusation: Even if the person has not yet been convicted, but has been accused of a criminal offense against a child, organizations and institutions that work with children should take immediate measures to stop his contact with children. These measures may include: suspension from duty, transfer to an administrative position without contact with children, or other protective measures until the procedure is completed. In addition to the JJC, the LCP also contains a similar prohibition in Article 58, which stipulates that: "Persons sentenced for sexual abuse, child exploitation, enabling prostitution and child pornography shall not be allowed to exercise their professions [...] that include any contact with children."	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 19 and 34 require States Parties to protect children from all forms of violence, sexual abuse and exploitation) UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime, (emphasize the need to avoid contact with perpetrators of criminal acts) Guidelines for Alternative Child Care, (requires criminal background checks for all persons working with children) The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Abuse and Sexual Exploitation (Lanzarote Convention) (obliges states to implement a ban on the employment of persons convicted of sexual abuse in institutions working with children).	Despite the fact that the provision is clear, its implementation remains challenging and accompanied by significant delays. There is a lack of clear definition of institutional responsibilities for monitoring and implementing the ban in cases of indictment or temporary suspension from duty. Also, the level of inter-institutional coordination remains low, especially between the justice system, educational, social and health institutions, which hinders the uniform implementation of these preventive measures. Despite a delay of over six years, on December 5, 2024, the Kosovo Judicial Council adopted Regulation No. 18/2024, that regulates the creation of the Registry of Persons Convicted of Criminal Offenses against Sexual Integrity, which entered into force on January 1, 2025. However, so far the registry has not been operationalized.

The right to be informed		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
The JJC in Article 119 guarantees the right of the child victim or witness to be informed promptly, clearly and in a manner that is understandable to him/her, including also his/her legal representatives, custodian, victim advocate or other authorized person. Information must be provided from the first contact with the justice system and throughout the entire judicial process. This provision includes information on the following aspects, and has a broader meaning than just formal notification of these rights. It also implies the assistance and support that should be provided to the child victim or witness in relation to these rights and the services that are available to them: -Criminal procedures, the role of the child as a victim or witness, the manner and importance of giving testimony, and interview procedures; -Support mechanisms, including the appointment of a representative or assistant for the child during the procedure; -The schedule and place of the hearings, as well as the protective measures that may be taken; -Means for reviewing decisions that may harm the child's best interests; -The rights of the child victim or witness, including the possibility of financial compensation from the perpetrator of the criminal offence or from the institutions; -Access to health, psychological and social services, as well as legal assistance or emergency support; -Data on the progress of the case, including measures such as the arrest or detention of the accused and any other significant developments in the criminal process.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 12 and 17 establish the right of the child to receive appropriate information and to participate in processes that affect him or her). UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (emphasize that information must be complete, continuous and adapted to the characteristics of the child). Directive 2012/29/EU on the Rights of Victims (establishes the right of victims, including children, to receive information that is accessible, understandable and adapted, including using non-technical language). The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) requires that children be provided with appropriate information to understand the judicial process and exercise their rights. The Beijing Rules and the UN Riyadh Rules (although these set out rules for juveniles in conflict with the law, their rules can nevertheless be applied mutatis mutandis to the perpetrator when it comes to supporting the principle of information as part of a fair and inclusive process for children in contact with justice).	Unfortunately, this right and many of the guidelines set out in this provision are not implemented at all, or when implemented, it is done improperly and not in the spirit intended by the law. The information provided to the child is mainly formal and procedural, limited only to the completion of official forms, rather than being based on the substantive and comprehensive approach provided for by the law. It is no coincidence that the legislator has emphasized: "This provision includes information on the following aspects and has a broader meaning than just formal notification of these rights..." What is even more concerning being that the forms and notifications are not analyzed and appropriately adapted to the age and procedural status of the child victim. This is also emphasized in one of the findings of the report of the Ombudsman Institution, which states: "When the child was heard as an injured witness, he was not a minor, therefore he cannot be warned that he may be prosecuted, when it is known that persons under the age of 14 are criminally irresponsible... Therefore, in this case the responsible authorities had failed to correctly implement part five of Chapter II of the Criminal Procedure Code." Failure to properly implement the provisions, or their implementation in the form of a "checklist", has led to the re-victimization of the child victim of sexual abuse and has jeopardized her interest in proper protection. At the same time, this approach may have brought procedural benefits to the defendants, which is contrary to the fundamental principles of justice for children. It is also concerning that responsible professionals, including police officers, prosecutors, social workers and victim advocates, do not communicate and act in a manner that is coordinated. Communication between them often occurs in an isolated, unstructured manner. Such an approach and communication between institutions occurs only in exceptional cases, when we are dealing with very serious cases or when a case becomes a media issue and public pressure is exerted on the institutions through the media.

Legal protection		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 120 of the JJC clearly specifies the institutional obligation to provide legal representation for child victims of criminal offenses. This article is based on adequacy and refers to Article 63 of the Criminal Procedure Code of Kosovo (this article is now Article 64 with the new KCPC) and implements the principle of mandatory and free representation for children in criminal proceedings where they are involved as victims.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 12 guarantees the right of the child to express his/her opinion freely and to legal representation in procedures affecting his/her interests, then Articles 37 and 40 relate to aspects of the child's right to protection). UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (requiring free and mandatory legal representation for child victims at all stages of criminal proceedings). Directive 2016/800/EU (requires the provision of free representation and the protection of the rights of child victims during criminal proceedings). Council of Europe Child-friendly Justice Guidelines (underlines the need for specialized lawyers and continuous training for appropriate treatment and sensitivity towards children in the judicial process).	In terms of practicality and physical assurance of the presence of a lawyer or victim advocate, this right applies in all cases. The Kosovo Bar Association ensures the presence of lawyers in relevant procedures through ex-officio engagement, in all cases where a child is a victim. This positive practice has been established for several years in Kosovo and all services provided by lawyers are covered by the state budget. Despite this positive practice regarding the engagement of lawyers and the presence of victim advocates, and the fact that children do not pay for legal protection services, the professionals interviewed have expressed doubts and reservations regarding the quality of these services, and whether they are truly in line with the specific needs of child victims or witnesses. Another concern raised is related to the difference in approach and commitment between lawyers appointed ex-officio and those engaged with direct authorization from the child's family. In the case where the lawyer is engaged with authorization, a greater commitment and a higher level of seriousness on the part of the lawyers was observed. Also, the lack of specialized capacities of lawyers was highlighted, and victim advocates, especially in terms of training on appropriate communication with children, as well as ensuring the protection of their best interests throughout the judicial and investigative process.

Language, interpreter and other special assistance measures

What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 122 of the JJC guarantees the child victim or witness not only the right to interpretation, but also emphasizes the use of a child-friendly language, as well as the provision of additional support measures according to individual needs, with the aim of increasing children's participation in legal proceedings in an equal and non-traumatizing manner. The following paragraphs of this article define additional elements that facilitate the communication and involvement of the child in the judicial procedure, such as: 1. Simple and understandable language for the child, an element often overlooked in practice, but essential for true inclusion; 2. Free of charge interpreter, when the child does not understand the language of the procedure; 3. Additional measures for special assistance for children with: • Disabilities; • Special psychosocial needs; • Risk of re-victimization; • Vulnerable economic situation. All of these provide essential support for guaranteeing the right of children to understand and be meaningfully involved in judicial processes in which they are involved as victims or witnesses.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 12 and 13 establish the right of the child to receive information in an appropriate and understandable form, which guarantees active and free participation). UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (requires the use of language appropriate to the age and psychological state of the child, as well as support measures for children with special needs). EU Directive 2012/29/EU (requires that information and interaction with victims, including children, be in plain and understandable language, providing free interpreters where necessary). The Council of Europe Child-Friendly Justice Guidelines (requires adapted support measures for children with disabilities and for children in vulnerable situations).	Court interpreters are present in all cases where the child does not speak the language of the proceedings. However, interpreters are not always trained to communicate in a sensitive and age-appropriate manner with children, which undermines the inclusive and child-friendly approach. Usually, the translation is conducted using a technical and official vocabulary, which may not be understandable to children, especially the youngest ones. For children with disabilities, particularly for children who are blind or deaf-mute, interpretation and communication in sign language are provided. However, there is no clear data confirming the use of Braille in communication with children with visual impairments, and it is not known whether capacities exist for this form of alternative communication. Furthermore, the use of simple, child-friendly language remains limited, both in verbal communication and in documentation delivered to children. There is a lack of standardized materials and training for interpreters on "child-friendly and appropriate approach". Additionally, clear protocols are lacking for providing personalized assistance to children with disabilities, including measures to support them during procedures. Decisions regarding the provision of special assistance measures usually remain at the discretion of professionals on a case-by-case basis, operating without any institutionally approved guidelines or standards. A positive development that is being observed in the context of efforts to include and provide language or special assistance measures is the installation of sign language communication devices in some of Kosovo's courts. This project, supported by USAID, aims to enable easier and more effective communication for persons with speech and hearing disabilities, including the blind and deaf-mute. However, despite this positive technical development, there is a lack of official data on the level of practical implementation of these devices, as well as assessments of their real impact on improving access to justice for persons with disabilities.

Medical examinations and taking samples from the body

What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 123 of the JJC stipulates clear legal restrictions on the physical examination and taking of samples from the child's body, considering this as an exceptional measure and conditional on specific guarantees aimed at preventing further trauma. To ensure that the child is protected and that this procedural action is in full compliance with international standards, in the following paragraphs this article requires the following legal guarantees: ■ Written court authorization: it is required that any medical examination or sampling be authorized formally and only if there are legally justified reasons. ■ Participation of the child's parent, guardian or supporter: supervision of the examination by an adult representing the child's interests is mandatory. ■ Listening to the child and parents' consent: involving the child in decision-making and respecting his/her physical and psychological integrity. General health care: authorities are obliged to act promptly if there is suspicion of physical or psychological harm to the child. Treatment should be provided based on the recommendations of health professionals, including hospital treatment if required.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 16, 19 and 39) guarantee the protection of the child's physical and psychological integrity, the prohibition of any form of violence and the right to rehabilitation after trauma). UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (requires that medical examinations be authorized only when strictly necessary, by competent authorities, and be conducted in conditions that avoid traumatizing the child). WHO Manual for the Interview and Forensic Examination of Victims of Sexual Violence (recommends informed consent, the presence of a child representative, and the use of an interdisciplinary approach during the examination). Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Union (requires that all measures taken towards victims of violence, including children, respect their dignity and avoid any intervention that could cause further traumatization). European Convention on Human Rights (Article 8 guarantees the right to respect for private life and bodily integrity, including protection against unnecessary medical or institutional interventions).	The main finding identified in the analysis regarding medical examinations, taking samples from the body and examination of evidence is the significant discrepancy between the statements of the interviewed professionals and the facts established in the concrete cases, documented by official reports, including those of the Ombudsman Institution. According to professionals, medical examinations of child victims of sexual violence are carried out within the legal deadlines, respecting the child's right to be examined by a professional of the same gender, and avoiding interviewing the child during the medical examination. As part of a new internal protocol, the Institute of Forensic Medicine is reported to have modified its approach, restricting communication with children to medical questions only, which are used to compile a report for the justice system. However, the Ombudsman's report provides respective cases of serious violations, including significant delays in the actions of the responsible institutions. In the Ex-Officio report no. 468/2022 (dated 03.04.2023), which deals with the case of the rape of an 11-year-old girl, the following critical violations are documented: ■ The Kosovo Forensic Agency delayed 68 days to conduct the examination and retrieval of photos/evidence from the victim's phone and 137 days to conduct the DNA examination; ■ The Institute of Forensic Medicine sent the physical examination report to the prosecutor's office only after 90 days. According to this report, these delays have had a direct impact on the efficiency of investigations and the provision of evidence, delaying the identification of suspects and jeopardizing the integrity of the investigative procedure and the child's right to effective justice. Furthermore, interviews with professionals have shown that not all child victims of violence are sent to the IFM for examination. In many cases, especially those related to domestic violence or other forms of abuse, children are initially sent to the MFMC or to the emergency centers of regional hospitals. Only then, based on the reports compiled by these institutions, the prosecution requests the IFM to provide a forensic medical expertise. This practice poses a high risk to the integrity of evidence and violates the child's right to specialized and professional protection.

What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 124 of JJC ensures that every child victim or witness has a trained support person who provides direct and continuous assistance throughout the criminal process, with the aim of protecting against re-victimization and ensuring a more sensitive experience. In the following paragraphs of this article, several selection criteria and the responsibilities of the support person are defined: ■ Careful and appropriate selection of the support person by the Court, in direct consultation with the child and his/her family; ■ Guarantee for sufficient time to build the relationship between the child and the support person, before the start of the interviews; ■ Mandatory presence of a support person during every interview of the child within the framework of criminal proceedings; ■ Continuity of the child's contact with the same support person throughout the process. ■ Court supervision of the support person's work and the possibility of replacement if he does not act in accordance with his duties. Further, Article 125 of the JJC defines in detail the main duties and responsibilities of the support person, with the aim of providing continuous emotional, practical and legal support to the child victim or witness throughout the criminal procedure. According to Article 134, the support person has a role and responsibility to ensure continuity of support for child victims or witnesses even after the end of the judicial process, guaranteeing a comprehensive and continuous approach to protecting their well-being.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 3, 12 and 39 require approaches that focus on the best interests of the child, their participation and rehabilitation). UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (establish the right of children to emotional and practical assistance throughout the process, through support from a trained professional). Directive 2012/29/EU on the rights of victims (requires the provision of support to child victims through ongoing interventions, sensitive representation and the role of trained mediators in the criminal justice system). Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Abuse (Articles 14 and 31 define psychological and social support during and after the procedure).	Despite the fact that the provision constitutes a fundamental innovation in the JJC, its implementation in practice is almost non-existent. In most cases, this provision is confused with the usual role of social service officers at CSWs. From the interviews conducted with professionals, none of them has clear knowledge about the existence of this provision in the relevant legislation. One of the main reasons for this discrepancy is related to the chronic lack of staff in CSW/s, as well as the overload of tasks stemming from their broad competencies. This challenge is also confirmed by the report "Analysis of Social Work Centers" published by KOMF (April 2023), which, among other things, emphasizes that: "... in addition to the number of families in need and the needs of municipalities for services, the number of social service officials in CSW/s is insufficient. According to information from CSW/s, there is a decrease in the number of staff... there is no defined formula that reflects the real needs of the population with the number of officials or professionals such as psychologists or social workers." Furthermore, a fundamental aspect that directly affects the lack of implementation of this provision, and which constitutes a serious violation of the rights of the child, is the non-functionality of the custodianship body in most municipalities in Kosovo. This concern is also clearly raised in the Ex-Officio Report no. 37/2023 of the Ombudsman Institution, which states that: "... in this specific case there is a violation of fundamental human rights and freedoms, namely the rights of children, as the relevant authorities have not fulfilled their constitutional and legal obligations, nor the international standards applicable in Kosovo, regarding the formation and functioning of the Custodianship Body pursuant to the Law." The report further concludes that: "Consequently, the failure to establish this body makes it impossible to implement the provisions of Law No. 06/L-084 on Child Protection and Juvenile Justice Code No. 06/L-006." These findings prove a large gap between the progressive legal framework and institutional reality, directly influencing the lack of adequate legal protection for child victims and witnesses, as well as the failure to fulfill the state's obligations to protect the best interests of the child.

Competency examination		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 126 of the JJC addresses the manner and conditions under which an examination of a child's capacity to testify in court proceedings may be conducted. It provides guarantees that this process is not abused and is conducted only when necessary to protect the best interests of the child. ■ Compelling reasoning: a competency examination is conducted only when there are compelling reasons that justify this step. The decision to carry out the examination must be justified and recorded in court. The primary criterion for decision-making is the best interest of the child; ■ Purpose of the examination: it aims to determine whether the child is competent to understand the questions addressed to them in a language they can comprehend, as well as the importance of telling the truth. Age alone is not the sole reason for requesting a competency examination; ■ Participants in the examination: the judge may appoint a psychologist or other relevant expert. Those present may include (the judge himself; the prosecutor, the authorized representative; the support person, the parents, the guardian or other persons who assist in the well-being of the child); ■ Exemption from the presence of the expert: In cases where the expert cannot be present, the judge may conduct the assessment himself based on questions prepared by the parties; ■ Questions must: be appropriate for the child's age and level of development, and not be related to the facts of the criminal case, but only to the assessment of the child's ability to understand and express himself truthfully; ■ Psychological/psychiatric examinations: allowed only if there are strong reasons for their implementation; Stopping repetition: the examination is not repeated, to avoid emotional burden and secondary trauma to the child .	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 12 and 40 recognize the right of the child to be heard and to participate in procedures that affect him or her, emphasizing the importance of individualized and non-discriminatory assessment, not using age as the sole criterion). UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (establish that children should be considered competent to testify if they can understand and communicate appropriately, and that competency examinations should be avoided unless absolutely necessary). The Council of Europe Guide to Child-Friendly Justice (recommends sensitive assessments of competence only when necessary, through methods appropriate to the development and psychology of children, and in order to avoid re-traumatization). Directive 2012/29/EU on the rights of victims, (includes principles for the protection of child victims through appropriate procedures and non-stigmatizing assessments). The European Court of Human Rights has issued many decisions criticizing countries where children are denied the right to testify due to unnecessary or repeated assessments.	According to interviews conducted with professionals, it turns out that not in all cases is an examination carried out to determine the child's competence, although this procedure is provided for by law. Usually, this examination is carried out only in cases where there are clear doubts regarding the child's mental or emotional capacities, or in cases where there is uncertainty regarding his age or level of understanding. In some cases, judges have requested the examination solely because of the child's young age, without there being any other indicators justifying such an examination. This approach conflicts with the principle of proportionality and non-discrimination, according to which age should not be the sole criterion for assessing capacity. A significant challenge in the implementation of this provision is the lack of psychologists or specialized experts, which means that, even when the examination is carried out, it does not always meet professional and ethical standards, and does not guarantee the protection of the best interests of the child. In some cases, the questions used during the examination are formulated in a generalized manner and include elements that affect the criminal facts of the case, which contradicts the principle of protecting the child from influence on the evidence. Also, repeating the examination has been identified as a problem in cases where super-expertise has been requested, causing unnecessary emotional burden for the child, and increasing the risk of secondary psychological damage. Another notable shortcoming is the lack of a protocol or detailed procedural guide.

Reception areas		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 127 of the JJC stipulates minimum standards for the physical premises and procedural organization of the reception of children who are victims or witnesses in criminal proceedings. The aim is to guarantee safety, privacy, emotional well-being and protection from secondary victimization. Justice institutions, with particular emphasis on the police, prosecution and courts, must ensure, among other things: ■ Creating special and appropriate environments: special only for children; furnished in a friendly, comfortable and non-intimidating way; have facilities for children with special needs; ■ Prohibition of contact with defendants: the premises must not be visible to and accessible to the defendants; ■ Separation from adult witnesses: when possible, there should be separate spaces from those of adult witnesses, to avoid contact with unknown adults who may be frightening or discouraging to children; ■ Waiting away from the courtroom: the judge may decide that the child should not stay near the courtroom, to avoid the stress of waiting or confronting other parties; ■ Priority on hearing children: the judge should prioritize children's testimony, to limit exposure and long waits in courtrooms.	The Convention on the Rights of the Child (particularly articles 3 and 19, stipulate that in all institutional interactions, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration, including protection from violence, fear and emotional distress). UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (requiring safe, personalized and physically separate environments from defendants, as well as excluding the child from any unnecessary confrontation with the suspect or other persons who may negatively affect his or her well-being). Directive 2012/29/EU on minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime, (Articles 23 and 24 emphasize the obligation to provide "appropriate facilities for child victims", including separation from suspects and adults, and minimizing contact with traditional justice settings). Child-Friendly Justice Guide (suggests that children wait and be heard in non-threatening spaces, adapted to their age and needs, and that the use of a neutral and "normalized" environment is essential to reduce stress).	The level of implementation of this provision varies significantly between institutions and is dependent on two main indicators derived from the JJC: 1. Establishment of physical facilities by responsible institutions: So far, several police stations, prosecutor's offices and courts have established waiting areas conceived as "child-friendly rooms", but this process is still under development in many stations, prosecutors' offices or other courts. It is noted that the creation of these spaces has been done in a non-standardized manner, based on the contributions and approaches of different donors, without any unifying institutional model. As a result, the quality and content of these rooms varies significantly from one institution to another. 2. Use and exploitation of created environments: Even where rooms or similar environments exist, their use in practice remains very limited. Interviews with professionals show that some of the most common reasons for non-implementation are: - technical difficulties in using the installed equipment; - lack of inter-institutional coordination, including delays by institutions that should participate in the session; - preference to conduct the interview in offices, due to logistical "Simplicity". These obstacles raise serious doubts as to whether there is a real willingness to implement the principle of child-friendly justice in practice. As a result, child victims or witnesses often wait in the same premises as adults, including defendants or other witnesses.

Emotional support		
What is intended!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 128 of the JJC reinforces the right of child victims and witnesses to emotional support throughout the judicial process, with the aim of protecting their psychological well-being and reducing trauma. This support includes: - Presence of a support person during the proceedings: the competent judge allows the support person (in addition to the parent, custodian or authorized representative) to accompany the child throughout the entire time he or she participates in the judicial process, in order to reduce stress or anxiety; - The right to a break: the support person and the child themselves are entitled to request a break from the hearing, and the judge has the obligation to inform about this right; - Exclusion of parents/custodians: the judge may remove the parents or custodian from the hearing only if this is in the best interest of the child, to protect his/her emotional stability.	Convention on the Rights of the Child, (Articles 3 and 12 define the child's right to appropriate protection and representation, in view of his or her emotional well-being). UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (requiring the provision of "ongoing emotional and psychological support before, during and after the judicial process"). Directive 2012/29/EU on the rights of victims (guarantees access to adequate emotional and psychological support and the presence of a companion during the process, especially for children).	In the absence of a support person from the CSW, this provision has also been implemented improperly. In the absence of this professional, this responsibility usually falls on psychologists who are called upon by the prosecution or court, as well as on the parents or guardian, who are not professionally trained for this role. The psychologist called by the prosecution office or court is not specifically engaged to provide the professional support defined in Article 128. He/she, among other commitments, also plays this role. However, his/her role is restricted due to the scope and level of tasks that he or she must perform in the specific case. Another aspect highlighted is related to the child's right to a break. This right is also not implemented in a regular and proper manner. Although this right is guaranteed by international standards, its implementation in practice depends on the Prosecutor, Judge or Lawyer, and in cases where it is implemented, it is not subject to any clear written rule but is left to the discretion of the latter to request rest. Another requirement of this provision is the exclusion of parents or custodians, which occurs very rarely and only in extreme cases. In the absence of professional psychological assessments before the hearings, the judge rarely makes exclusion decisions. Even when a decision to exclude is made, it is usually for some reason that hinders the development due process, rather than based on the best interests of the child.

Courtroom equipment		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 129 of the JJC adjusts aspects of appearance and physical and functional changes in the courtroom in order to facilitate the participation of child victims or witnesses, taking into account their individual needs. The competent judge has the duty to ensure that the courtroom environment is adapted to the needs of the child, including: ■ Chairs with raised seats to ensure comfort and good visibility; ■ Assistance for children with disabilities, to enable them to participate equally and with dignity; ■ The list of equipment is not exhaustive, leaving room for other adjustments that the judge deems necessary; ■ Placement of the child close to the support persons; ■ The room plan should provide for the child, whenever possible, to sit next to a support figure (parent, custodian, authorized representative or support person).	Convention on the Rights of the Child, (Article 3 stipulates that adjusting the judicial environment to suit the needs of the child is an integral part of protecting his or her best interests and Article 12 stipulates that to guarantee this right, the physical environment must be such that the child feels safe and secure to communicate freely). UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (emphasize the importance of arranging the court environment to reduce fear, stress and trauma for children, including equipment adapted to age and physical ability). Child-Friendly Justice Guidelines (requires that the physical court environment be "child-friendly, non-intimidating, and provide them with a sense of safety and protection"). Directive 2012/29/EU (guarantees the right of child victims to give evidence in conditions that avoid fear and distress, including the use of assistive devices, adaptation of the physical environment and reduction of contact with the defendant).	Based on interviews with professionals, it is noted that this provision is not understood correctly. This provision, although when reading the title of the article, creates the impression that it is related to technological devices, in fact it is more related to furnishings that enable the child to have easier access to the judicial procedure, which implies his or her comprehensive participation. However, in practice, it is rare for courtrooms to be adapted or modified to meet the needs of the child. The courtrooms visited lack the equipment/furniture required by this provision, such as: they are not equipped with chairs suitable for children (e.g., with raised seats or furniture adapted to the child's body). In most cases, children use the same chairs that serve adults, which can create a feeling of discomfort or inability to see or hear well. There are also difficulties in providing assistive devices for children with disabilities, especially in cases where there are no elevators or when they are out of order and the courtroom is on the upper floors.

Questions from the opposing side		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 130 of the JJC addresses the manner in which questions are asked of child victims or witnesses by the opposing party in criminal court proceedings, establishing protective and restrictive measures to avoid emotional harm to the child. Asking questions must be subject to the following rules: -Prohibition on direct questioning by the perpetrator: the judge does not allow the child to be directly questioned by the perpetrator of the criminal offense, to protect the child's emotional integrity and sensitivity. -Alternative questioning mechanism: the questioning can be done through an authorized representative (e.g. the defendant's lawyer), and goes through the juvenile judge, who has a filtering function; -The protective role of the juvenile judge: the judge has the active duty to prevent any questioning that threatens the child emotionally or psychologically or causes unnecessary difficulties, as well as those that bring excessive anxiety and traumatic experiences.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 3 and 12 establish the determination of the best interests of the child and the right to express opinions in a safe environment). EU Directive 2012/29/EU (Article 23 requires measures to avoid direct contact with the suspect). UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (requires the intervention of a trained figure to filter the opposing party's questions).	Although the prohibition on direct questions by the defendant towards child victims or witnesses is respected in most cases, it is not accompanied by the use of appropriate mechanisms such as video-links or the child being in a separate environment from the room where the hearing takes place. This lack of protective mechanisms limits the effectiveness of the ban and may negatively affect the child's emotional state. The application of the prohibition on direct questioning by the defendant is most pronounced in cases involving criminal offences against sexual integrity. In other criminal cases, however, questions addressed to the child are usually channeled through the judge, without the involvement of a professional trained in communicating with children. The absence of a specialized professional can negatively affect both the quality of the testimony given by the child and his or her emotional experience during the course of the court proceedings. The use of alternative methods for taking evidence, such as video conferencing or separate rooms, remains very limited due to the lack of technological infrastructure and relevant logistics in most judicial institutions. Also, judges' capacities to assess the emotional impact of questions vary and depend largely on individual experience and level of professional training. In practice, professionals involved in the process of interviewing and questioning child victims or witnesses rarely refer to ¹⁴existing protocols in a structured and coordinated manner. In most cases, reference to the protocol is made on an individual basis and not as part of a coordinated approach between institutions for its implementation. This lack of institutional coordination negatively affects the standardization of practices and the provision of a child-sensitive and harmonized approach during the judicial process.

¹⁴The state protocol for handling cases of sexual violence was approved with Decision no. 11/109 dated 23.11.2022.

Measures to protect the privacy and well-being of children

What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
The participation of child victims or witnesses of sexual violence in judicial proceedings constitutes a serious risk to their private life and psychological and physical well-being, both now and in the future. To address this risk, the JJC in Article 131 has established a series of measures aimed at the effective protection of these children during the judicial process. At the request of the child, parents, guardian, authorized representative, support person or even on the initiative of the institution itself, the competent judge, based on the best interest of the child, may order protective measures such as: -Deletion of any identifying information from the archives; -Prohibition of disclosure of identity by legal representatives or publication of materials leading to identification; -Non-publication of documents containing identifying data; -Use of pseudonyms or identification numbers; -Taking measures to conceal physical features or using devices that alter the image or voice; -Provision of testimony through opaque glass, with pre-recorded video or through a closed-circuit monitor; -Use of specialized experts as interpreters for disabled children; -Holding closed sessions and temporarily removing the accused when this prevents the child from freely testifying; -Allowing breaks during testimony and setting a schedule appropriate for the child's age and development; -Any other measure that the court deems necessary to protect the best interests of the child and preserve the rights of the accused. Such measures are also stipulated in the Law on Child Protection: "The privacy of the child shall be respected at all stages of judicial or administrative proceedings, including their publication in the media." (Article 38). Also, Article 57 of this law stipulates that "Measures to support the child must be taken in an environment conducive to the safety, health and well-being of the child, ensuring careful treatment of his or her privacy, including protection from confrontation with the perpetrator, accommodation in a safe place and psychological preparation for the future."	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 16 and 40 establish the child's right to protection of privacy and dignity during criminal proceedings). UN Guidelines on Justice for Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (emphasize the importance of maintaining confidentiality, protection from public stigma, and the use of remote witnessing devices such as video links or opaque glass). Directive 2012/29/EU on the rights of victims (requires ensuring that personal information of victims, especially children, is not made public and that procedures avoid re-experiencing trauma through confrontations with the perpetrator or repeated questioning).	As for the deletion of identifying data and the ban on publications, they are officially foreseen and respected in practice. But what is very concerning has to do with the leakage of this data by the professionals involved in the case. Unfortunately, this has become a very worrying 'disease', because this puts not only the child victim or witness at great risk, but also the conscientious professionals themselves who carry out their work with professionalism, and ultimately harms the entire judicial process. In regard to the questioning and presence at the hearing via video-links or other related measures foreseen in this provision, their implementation in practice leaves much to be desired and is far from their proper use. This is related to the fact that in many hearings where children are victims or witnesses, these provisions are not implemented as required. As we highlighted above, in many courtrooms and prosecutor's offices, technological equipment is already installed and present for questioning children via video or audio connections, without the need for the child to be present in the same room as the accused. Here too, as above, the justifications for not using these rooms and equipment are unconvincing and contrary to the best interests of the child. The following justifications are mentioned: ■ lack of such halls and equipment in all halls, ■ giving priority to cases where adults are tried, the difficulties in using these devices, as well as ■ the fear of reviewing these recordings in cases where omissions have been made during the judicial process and this can serve as an indicator for performance assessment and in certain cases even as evidence of procedural violations in the event of an appeal to the Court of Appeal. For other findings regarding other points of this provision, please see the relevant tables.

Right to return and compensation		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 132 of the JJC guarantees the right of child victims to the restitution of property and compensation for damages suffered as a result of a criminal offence. This article ensures access to restorative justice and contains important provisions aimed at the protection, rehabilitation and recovery of the child after experiencing the consequences of the criminal offence, and includes: ■ Information on the right to compensation: the competent judge has the obligation to inform the child victim or witness, as well as his/her parents, guardian or authorized representative, regarding the procedures for requesting compensation for the damages caused; ■ Order for restitution or compensation: after the conviction of the perpetrator of the criminal offense, the court, at the request of the prosecutor, the victim, the parents, guardian or authorized representative or even on the initiative of the institution itself, may order the following measures against the convicted person: 1. Return or replacement of damaged property: if the child's property has been damaged, lost, or destroyed as a result of the crime, the perpetrator may be required to return the property or pay its value if return is not possible; 2. Compensation for physical and psychological damages: the judge may order that the child be financially compensated for the physical or emotional damages suffered by the crime, including expenses for social and educational reintegration, medical treatment, mental health care, and legal assistance; 3. Compensation for separation from family: in cases where the child was part of the perpetrator's family and was forced to leave due to violence or threats, the perpetrator may be ordered to cover the costs associated with this separation. Compensation for damage, including property-legal claims, can be sought and decided both in criminal proceedings and in contested proceedings. In principle, and taking into account the best interests of the child, the decision on compensation and property-legal claims should be taken in criminal proceedings (as an adhesion procedure), so as not to delay the realization of this right in other procedures that would increase the trauma of the child through facing a second judicial process, and to help ensure effective and fast justice.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 6 The right of the child to life and development in full, which is related to the need to address the harm caused by criminal acts; Article 12 The right of the child to freely express his or her views in any matter affecting him or her, including matters of compensation and justice; Article 39 Guarantees protection and assistance to child victims of abuse, violence, or any other form of maltreatment, including rehabilitative and restorative treatment for their recovery). EU Directive 2012/29/EU, (emphasizes the importance of prompt access to restorative justice and compensation for victims, including children). Child-Friendly Justice Guidelines (encourage the judicial system to provide adequate protection and compensation for child victims, focusing on their best interests and on preventing further victimization). United Nations Guidelines on Restorative Justice (promote a restorative approach that aims not only at material compensation, but also at the rehabilitation and social integration of victims, including children). The Beijing Rules and the Riyadh Rules, which require judicial systems to provide adequate protection and compensation to victims;	The application of this provision is not the same and varies depending on the interpretation that individual judges make of this article, as well as their willingness to simultaneously apply the right to restitution and compensation in criminal proceedings. What is applied almost uniformly by all has to do only with the first item of this provision, which is related to information about this right. However, there is a reluctance to implement the attached procedure for compensation of damage, including property-legal claims, which as a procedure can be requested and decided in both criminal and contested proceedings. The judges' justification for not establishing this right in criminal proceedings is related to the delays in decision-making on this right, which would also affect the delay in the merits of the criminal proceedings, and according to them, this is not in the child's interest. Usually, children and their representatives are instructed to act in a contested procedure to exercise this right. Even in cases where the case of a child victim is resolved through a contested procedure, the court should not limit itself to granting monetary compensation or addressing the damage in a material and legal aspect. In line with international standards on justice for children, compensation should be understood more broadly as a form of restorative justice, which aims to restore the child to a situation similar to that before the violation of his or her rights occurred. This approach reflects the fundamental principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the standards of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which emphasize that any form of reparation should be sensitive to the age, gender and specific experiences of the child. Such an approach also promotes not only reparation of harm, but also the prevention of further victimization, as well as increasing the child's opportunities for full integration into society.

3.2.2. Innovations in the Law on Child Protection

Child protection principles		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
The Law on Child Protection, in Chapter II of the General Part (Articles 5-9), stipulates a set of fundamental principles that guide child protection in Kosovo. These principles are derived from the Convention on the Rights of the Child and constitute the normative basis on which all relevant legislation on the rights and protection of children is built and interpreted. Although the principles may appear declarative in content, they have binding force in a legal sense, serving as mandatory guidelines for the implementation and interpretation of the provisions of the LFC, and, where necessary, of other applicable legislation that has an impact on the rights of the child. These principles cannot be interpreted or applied in isolation. They must be understood as interconnected and inseparable, as they simultaneously have a normative (fair) character and a guiding function for all law enforcement officers, including public institutions, child protection professionals, NGO/s and all entities operating in the field of child protection. The fundamental principles incorporated into the LCP by the CRC are: ■ The best interest of the child: it is the fundamental pillar that must guide every action, decision, or intervention that affects the child's life, whether by parents, public institutions, service providers, or judicial and administrative bodies. This principle establishes that the best interest of the child must be the primary, paramount, and prevailing consideration in every case concerning the child. This principle should guide not only practical decision-making, but also the drafting, interpretation and implementation of all legislation affecting the protection and well-being of children. The best interests of the child require the protection and promotion of his or her physical, psychological, moral and spiritual integrity, always taking into account the individual characteristics and life circumstances of each child;	Convention on the Rights of the Child (The best interests of the child is the primary and fundamental principle set out in Article 3 of the CRC and constitutes the basis for any action, decision or intervention affecting the child's life, ensuring the protection and promotion of the child's physical, psychological and social well-being); (The gradual development of capacities and respect for the child's views are in line with articles 5 and 12 of the CRC, which promote the active participation of the child in decisions affecting him or her, taking into account his or her age and maturity). (The principle of non-discrimination, as provided for in Article 2 of the CRC and human rights documents, ensures equal treatment for all children, regardless of origin, gender, ethnicity, language or social status). European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) (Although not specific to children, the ECHR protects fundamental rights such as the right to life, the right to treatment with dignity, the right to privacy, etc., which also apply to children). European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) (has developed considerable jurisprudence on children's rights, promoting the principle of the best interests of the child). European Charter of the Rights of the Child and the European Union (Article 24 of the Charter guarantees the rights of children, including appropriate protection and care, participation in decision-making and protection against discrimination).	Despite the fact that for the first time the main principles of the CRC are uniquely incorporated into Kosovo legislation, they are still not understood and interpreted according to what the CRC and the LCP itself have determined. As we have noted in the findings above (see the table describing the implementation of the principles in the JJC), compared to previous years, progress has been made. In terms of reference to these principles, with particular emphasis on the principle of the best interests of the child. However, professionals rarely provide a rationale for this principle in their decisions. In many cases, the reference remains more of a textual description than a proper rationale that would be consistent with the essence of the decision. The interpretation or reference to the principle of best interest remains only declarative and not substantial and guided by the correct understanding of this principle. In the ex-officio report no. 468/2022 dated 03.04.2023, the Ombudsman Institution in the case of an investigation where the child was a victim of rape: "...assesses that the authorities had not correctly assessed the best interest of the child nor the circumstances of the case, granting the parents' trust, although the risk assessment was high." Although the interpretation in this specific case appeared to be made in the "interest of the child", the consequences of the child's removal from the shelter were decisive for the child, as a potential victim of trafficking, to become a victim of sexual abuse with very serious consequences.

Child protection principles		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
■ Gradual development of abilities: means that the exercise of the child's rights must take place in accordance with their age and maturity, taking into account the child's continuous development of capacities to understand, to make decisions, and to take responsibility; ■ Respect for the child's views: requires that in all actions and decisions affecting the child, whether taken by parents, guardians, institutions, or child protection professionals, the child must be granted the right to freely express their views. This principle recognizes the child as an active subject of rights, with the capacity to influence matters that concern them, to the extent that their age and level of maturity allow. Institutions are obliged to properly assess the child's views and take them into consideration during decision-making. Non-discrimination: every child has the right to enjoy the rights guaranteed by law, without any form of discrimination, regardless of gender, race, ability, social status, ethnicity, religion, language, or any other personal or family characteristic. This principle requires institutions, service providers, and child protection professionals to take proactive and effective measures to prevent and address all forms of discrimination that a child may experience in any area of life. Furthermore, parents, custodians, or trusted individuals who consider that a child has been treated unequally or in a discriminatory manner have the right to initiate legal proceedings for the child's protection, in accordance with the relevant law on protection from discrimination.	Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse and its Protocol (Lanzarote, 2007) (aims to prevent and punish sexual abuse of children, ensuring comprehensive protection). Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the protection of children's rights (include guidelines for respecting the best interests of the child in all legal and institutional processes). Directive 2016/800/EU on the rights of children who are victims or witnesses in criminal proceedings.	So, in this specific case, the best interests of the child were not properly assessed. and the requirements of the law were not taken into account, as stated in the LMF: "the history of the child, taking into account the specific situations of abuse, neglect, exploitation or other forms of violence against the child, as well as the potential risk that similar situations will occur in the future." The institutions involved had not taken into account all the necessary elements for their decision to be in the full sense of the word "in the best interests of the child". And it is no coincidence that the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child emphasizes the importance of understanding the principle of the best interests of the child according to these three concepts: a) This is a substantial and inalienable right: The right of the child to have his or her best interests assessed and considered as a primary consideration, when different interests are being considered at the same time, and to guarantee that this right will be applied whenever a decision has to be made concerning the child, for the identified and unidentified group of children or children in general. b) Fundamental legal principle with a predominant character in the case of legal interpretations: If a provision is open to one or more interpretations, the interpretation that effectively serves the best interests of the child should be selected. The rights set out in the CRC and the Optional Protocols provide the framework for interpretation.

Child protection principles		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
		c) Procedural rule that guides the implementers of legislation in general: Whenever a decision has to be taken which affects a specific child, an identified group or children in general, such decision-making process should include an assessment of the likely impact (positive or negative) of the decision on the child or children. The assessment and determination of the best interests of the child requires procedural guarantees. Furthermore, the reasoning should show that the right concerned has been taken into account. In this regard, member states should clarify: ■ how the right was respected in that decision; ■ what is considered to be the best interest of the child; ■ on what criteria is it based? ■ how the best interests of the child are weighed against other considerations;
Comment		
The principle of the best interests stipulated in Article 5 of the LCP, respectively paragraphs 1-3, does not in itself constitute only a substantive or procedural right. It constitutes more than a principle to be considered in the implementation of other rights. It is worth noting that these paragraphs create obligations for parents, guardians, institutions, services, professionals, courts, administrative authorities or legislative bodies to consider the best interests of the child in all actions relating to children. It is precisely their obligation to undertake measures to ensure the best interests of the child as a primary consideration, which constitutes the main prerogative in relation to the extension of this concept both in the field of public, institutions and private activity. The way the paragraphs are worded makes it clear that the best interests of the child are not the only factor in situations where action will have to be taken regarding children. It is precisely the phrase "overriding and paramount consideration" that implies this and at the same time provides a solution to the priorities of the competing interests in a given situation. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), ¹⁵when interpreting the principle of the best interests of the child, has emphasized that it is an obligation of the state to incorporate or reflect the principle of the best interests of the child in domestic legislation and to apply it in any proceedings concerning children.		

¹⁵The Committee is a mechanism established by the United Nations to monitor the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols.

Establishment of Child Protection Home ¹⁶		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Child protection homes are established under Article 30 of the Child Protection Law and represent one of the most significant and advanced innovations within the system of institutional and professional protection of child victims. These structures are conceived as integrated centers that operate according to the “one-stop shop” model, guaranteeing comprehensive and coordinated interventions. There, children are offered emergency services, immediate protection and temporary shelter for children who are at serious risk to their health, safety or well-being. The homes also serve as safe spaces for the development of investigative and judicial procedures, especially in cases of violence and criminal offenses against sexual integrity, when the child is a victim or witness. The key principles of the Houses' operation include: - Provision of 24/7 services: All child protection services are provided uninterruptedly, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, in a single functional space, with the aim of immediately and comprehensively addressing the needs of the child victim; - Implementation of child-friendly justice: The homes ensure that the child is treated with dignity and respect, guaranteeing the right to participation, information and psychological and legal support. The child's right to be heard and to contribute to the process that directly affects him/her is respected; - Urgent response and without unreasonable delay: In cases where there is a risk to the life or well-being of the child, all decisions and measures must be taken immediately, excluding any delay that could lead to irreparable consequences. The priority of professionals must always be the safety and best interests of the child.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Article 3 The best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration in all actions affecting children; Article 12 The child's right to be heard in any process affecting his or her life; Article 19 Protection of the child from all forms of violence, maltreatment and abuse; Article 34 Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse). Child Friendly Justice Guidelines (principles for ensuring sensitive and protective treatment for children during judicial proceedings, as well as inter-institutional cooperation for the protection and well-being of children. European Convention on Human Rights; Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention); Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Persons Directive 2011/93/EU against the Sexual Abuse and Exploitation of Children; Directive 2012/29/EU on the Rights of Victims; Directive 2011/36/EU against Anti-Trafficking Barnahus Network Standards and Best Practices (Barnahus operational standards) World Health Organization, (Multidisciplinary and integrated approach to addressing cases of violence against children.	Despite many initiatives to establish child protection homes, they have not yet been established and functionalized. some preparatory steps have been taken so far, including the adoption of a bylaw defining the scope and organization of the houses, as well as the development of minimum structural and functional standards, including standard operating procedures. A budget has also been allocated ¹⁷for the establishment of some of the houses. Although the lack of establishment of these homes itself represents a serious challenge and concern, especially considering that more than six years have passed since the entry into force of the Law on Child Protection (LCP), what represents an even greater concern is the fact that among professionals there are still dilemmas and different interpretations regarding the mandate of these homes. These dilemmas relate precisely to the basic concept and mandate of these shelters. Although they have not yet been established and tested in practice, professionals have already raised doubts and prejudices regarding the possibility of implementing the envisaged concept, according to which immediate treatment should be undertaken within 72 hours for cases of child victims of sexual abuse. This biased approach and the lack of professional consensus around the clear mandate of these houses risks undermining their fundamental purpose, which is to provide a coordinated, comprehensive and immediate response to sensitive cases as defined by the LCP.

¹⁶ At the time of the assessment, Child Protection Houses had not yet been established.

¹⁷ The Government of Kosovo has allocated special budgetary funds for the construction of child protection homes. According to Law No. 07/L-041 on Budget Allocations for the Budget of the Republic of Kosovo for 2021, an amount of 300,000 euros has been allocated for this purpose (see Table 3.2 – Capital Projects at Central Level, page 66). Also, based on Law No. 08/L-193 on Budget Allocations for the Budget of the Republic of Kosovo for 2023, 160,000 euros have been foreseen for 2024 and 175,000 euros for 2025 (see Table 4.2 – Financing of Municipal Capital Investments, page 111).

Establishment of Child Protection Home		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
- A multidisciplinary approach and inter-institutional cooperation: The houses operate on the basis of close cooperation between professionals from different fields (psychologists, social workers, doctors, prosecutors, police officers, etc.) and the relevant institutions, in order to ensure a harmonized, comprehensive, and non-traumatizing response for the child. -Comprehensive and accessible services: The child and the non-abusive parent or custodian are provided with services that address not only emergency and safety needs, but also psychosocial, educational, and legal needs, with the aim of ensuring the child's full recovery. - Guarantee of high professional standards: Professionals working at the Home are provided with specialized training and appropriate resources to provide a trauma-sensitive, fair and effective approach to child victims or witnesses. Efficient and professional implementation within legal deadlines: All services and interventions are provided in accordance with legal standards and within established deadlines, avoiding any bureaucratic obstacles that may undermine child protection.		The non-functionality of the homes not only delays the treatment and rehabilitation of child victims, but also leaves major gaps in the institutional chain of protection, creating a direct risk of repetition of abuse or deterioration of the child's condition. Therefore, it is necessary that, in addition to technical and budgetary aspects, investments are also made in increasing the awareness and capacities of professionals to understand and support the function of these homes in accordance with child protection standards.
The Barnahus (Children's House) model as an international model!		
It presents an innovative international approach to the protection of child victims of violence and abuse, which began in Iceland and has spread to many countries in Europe and the world. This model provides a safe and protective environment where children can give their testimony once, while in the same place, justice, health and social protection institutions cooperate and coordinate. Barnahus minimizes the need for multiple traumatic interviews and procedures for children and improves the quality of their protection. Countries where this model is present: Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark¹⁸, etc.		

¹⁸To understand more about the concept and the countries that implement it, click on this website: <https://barnahus.eu/barnahus/about-barnahus/>

Formal institutional system and children's Phone line¹⁹

What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
The formal institutional system and the child phone line represent an essential mechanism for child protection within the framework of the Law on Child Protection, which aims to provide immediate assistance, professional counseling, and institutional referral for children facing violence, abuse, neglect, or trafficking. Designed as a free service available 24/7 throughout the territory of Kosovo, the phone line provides support without discrimination based on age or background. It functions as a direct channel for reporting cases by children, parents, or professionals, enabling emergency intervention, emotional support, and guidance for further treatment. The phone line is managed by specialized child protection staff and plays a key role in identifying, coordinating, and linking support services, always acting in accordance with the best interests of the child.	The functioning of the system is based on the principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, guaranteeing the right to protection, participation and dignified treatment. The hotline is in line with international child protection practices and recommendations from specialized institutions such as UNICEF and other international organizations. Providing 24/7 support without discrimination reflects the highest standards of access to child protection services. Management by trained professionals guarantees psychological protection and confidentiality, providing children with a safe environment for reporting and assistance.	Even the institutional system and telephone lines for children, as well as child protection homes, although they were promoted as among the greatest reforms in the field of child protection in Kosovo, unfortunately, even after more than six years since the entry into force of the Law on Child Protection, continue to share the same fate: they have not yet been created and functionalized. Similarly, as in the case of shelters, several preparatory steps have been taken here. Specifically, a guideline and a conceptual map have been developed for the establishment and functioning of this mechanism, which is provided for in the Law on Child Protection. This guideline contains in detail the basic elements necessary for the operation of the line, including organizational forms, the method of establishment, the necessary budget, the structure of the staff involved, as well as other technical aspects related to the effective functioning of this service. However, the delay in the practical implementation of this mechanism has direct consequences for children, leaving a significant gap in the protection system. The child hotline is one of the fastest and most accessible means of reporting, emergency protection and referral to appropriate services, especially for children in situations of violence, abuse or neglect. Its non-functionality diminishes the possibility for children to have a reliable channel of communication and assistance, and significantly complicates timely intervention by the competent authorities.

¹⁹ At the time of the evaluation, the Children's Phoneline was not yet operational.

Friendly justice		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 55 of the Law on Child Protection sets out the fundamental principles of child-friendly justice, ensuring that all criminal, civil or administrative proceedings fully respect the rights of the child, in accordance with his or her age, needs and maturity. This Article stipulates that the procedures must be appropriate, sensitive, expeditious and oriented towards the well-being of the child. It obliges institutions to create safe conditions for the child to testify, to avoid unnecessary interference and to guarantee legal, psychological, social and financial assistance, as well as the presence of support persons during the procedures. It also stipulates that child witnesses and victims have access to adapted facilities and be interviewed by trained professionals, always maintaining distance from the alleged perpetrator and giving priority to issues involving them.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 3, 12, 19, 37, 40 which protect the best interests of the child, the right to be heard and not to be victimized during proceedings); The Council of Europe's Child-Friendly Justice Guidelines (requiring sensitive and child-friendly procedures in contact with the justice system).	The implementation of this provision remains limited and sporadic, despite the existence of a clear legal basis and the Administrative Instruction issued by the Ministry of Justice, which has been in force for more than five years now. The level of knowledge about this guidance remains low among justice system professionals and institutions involved, reflecting the lack of structured approaches and institutional awareness. In practice, a significant number of children, both victims and witnesses, continue to be interviewed in inappropriate settings and by professionals who often act in a formal manner and are not sensitive to the needs of the child. Of a particular concern is the presence of uniformed police officers when dealing with child victim cases, particularly during the interview, a crucial stage that requires a careful psychological and emotional approach. Although some efforts have been made in the past to avoid this practice, the recent reintroduction of uniforms is a regression and risks seriously compromising the child's well-being and emotional security, as well as undermining the integrity of the investigative process. Also, there is no functional mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the instruction, and no sanctions are foreseen for cases of non-compliance. Failure to implement this provision seriously undermines the well-being of the child, exposing him or her to additional trauma, the risk of repeat victimization and the lack of adequate support during the criminal process. This negatively affects the quality of investigations and the credibility of the justice system, constituting a violation of the fundamental rights of the child guaranteed by law and international instruments.

Legal aid and access to justice		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 56 guarantees free legal aid to children who are victims, perpetrators of illegal acts or witnesses, with the aim of protecting and realizing their rights during legal proceedings. It includes legal representation, advice on the rights and best interests of the child, as well as full and prompt information on judicial processes and decisions. The child is also guaranteed the right to express his or her views and concerns throughout the process, ensuring that they are taken into account with sensitivity and respect, thus strengthening a child-friendly approach to justice.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 12, 37 and 40 the right of the child to express his/her opinion and to receive protection during legal proceedings.) United Nations Juvenile Justice Standards (Beijing Rules) (ensuring sensitive and appropriate legal treatment for children). Council of Europe Child Friendly Justice Guide (emphasis on legal protection and support for children). Directive 2013/48/EU on the right of access to a lawyer in criminal proceedings and to have a third party informed upon deprivation of liberty. Directive 2012/29/EU establishing minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime.	As previously noted (see table on legal protection above), free legal aid, although provided for by legislation, is in practice provided mainly to meet a formal procedural requirement, rather than as genuine and specialized support for cases involving children. The expertise necessary for the sensitive and appropriate handling of cases involving children is often lacking. There is a clear lack of specialization among professionals providing legal aid, including lawyers and victims' advocates, who are often not specifically trained to work with children. This undermines the quality of legal representation and negatively impacts the sensitive and appropriate handling of cases involving children, increasing the risk that their rights and interests are not properly protected. This provision, in addition to regulating the provision of free legal aid, also guarantees the child's fundamental right to effective access to justice. However, this right is often misunderstood or overlooked by professionals, and is not implemented in accordance with the content of the provision and international standards for child-friendly justice. As a result, children face serious barriers in realizing their legal rights, and active participation in processes that directly affect them. The level of implementation of the part of the provision relating to access to justice remains far from the expected standards. Current practice in the justice system still does not treat the child as an active and deeply involved subject in the judicial process, as a person with rights and the capacity to make decisions, where this is possible. On the contrary, the child continues to be seen primarily as an individual dependent on others, with limited capacity for decision-making and participation in matters affecting his/her rights and interests.

Medical, psychological assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration measures

What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 57 of the Law on Child Protection guarantees the provision of free medical and psychological assistance to child victims, with the aim of their rehabilitation and reintegration into society. It includes emergency treatment, long-term care, protection from contact with the abuser, and the prohibition of pressure or manipulation of the child. The Law highlights the need for continuous assistance that includes educational, professional and psychological support until full rehabilitation, always preserving the privacy, safety and well-being of the child. Municipalities are also obliged to allocate a budget for an emergency fund to respond to urgent cases in accordance with the established standards.	Convention on the Rights of the Child (Articles 19 and 39 define the right to physical and psychological rehabilitation after abuse or neglect). Child-Friendly Justice Guidelines and the United Nations Standards for the Protection of Victims of Trafficking (emphasize the need for specialized services and comprehensive support for child victims). Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (oblige states to provide comprehensive support to child victims, including aftercare services and return to normal life).	All professionals interviewed unanimously share the same opinion: institutions fail to provide the necessary support to child victims, not only in the implementation of this specific provision, but in general throughout the entire protection trajectory. This failure is particularly evident in the post-trial phase, which is considered by professionals as one of the most critical and challenging periods for the child. Regardless of the outcome of the legal process, whether or not the perpetrator is convicted, children continue to face the psychological, social and educational consequences of the violence they experienced. After the procedure is over, institutional support is often terminated or significantly weakened, leaving the child and family exposed to further challenges without structured support. However, in the period before and during the judicial process, some elements are generally accessible, such as medical assistance or emergency shelter, but psychological and rehabilitation services are restricted, especially at the municipal level. In cases where children cannot remain in the family due to high risk or lack of parental skills, the Center for Social Work, in coordination with the Prosecution Office, has a mandate to provide protection through temporary placement in alternative care, such as residential shelter. Currently, three shelters for child victims of abuse and trafficking operate in Kosovo, one public and two managed by NGO/s. These provide shelter and rehabilitation services, including psychological and social support.

Medical, psychological assistance, rehabilitation and reintegration measures

What's the target?	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
		Despite progress in ensuring the financial sustainability of these shelters by 2025, the lack of long-term reintegration programs remains a major challenge. Children leaving shelters often face difficult circumstances and are at risk of returning to abusive situations. In addition, the lack of support for biological families, as well as the limited capacities of the Centers for Social Work, impedes the process of the child's safe return home and increase the risk of re-victimization. Municipalities do not allocate dedicated funds for supporting children in situations of risk or emergencies. In some isolated cases, some municipalities have allocated such funds, but these remain the exception and occur very rarely. In the majority of municipalities, such a fund does not exist at all. As a result, the institutional response to emergency situations often depends on the assistance of non-governmental organizations or international donors, creating an uncertain dependency that endangers the sustainability and coherence of the child protection system. This situation has been identified and consistently raised as a concern by professionals working in the field of child protection, who emphasize that the lack of emergency funds significantly limits the ability of local mechanisms to act in a timely and coordinated manner in cases of acute risk. Inter-institutional coordination is also weak. A comprehensive approach to rehabilitation and reintegration is lacking, and cases are often treated in a fragmented manner. There is no structured monitoring or evaluation of the quality of rehabilitation services, nor indicators to measure the progress of reintegration.

Persons convicted of sexual abuse or exploitation of a child		
What's the target!	Compliance with international standards?	Current level of implementation!
Article 58 provides protective measures against the risk posed by persons convicted of sexual abuse or exploitation of children, prohibiting them from exercising professions that involve contact with children, in accordance with the Criminal Code. This article also obliges the Kosovo Judicial Council to establish a database with the DNA/s of persons convicted of crimes against sexual integrity, while educational institutions are prohibited from employing such persons in their system. These measures intend to prevent a return to abusive actions and guarantee the safety of children in public and educational environments.	Convention on the Rights of the Child, especially Article 19 (protection from abuse) and Article 34 (protection from sexual exploitation). Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) (obliges states to prohibit employment in professions involving contact with children of persons convicted of sexual abuse). EU standards and best practices of member states regarding criminal screening and verification for persons applying to work with children. United Nations Principles of Prevention and Non-Discrimination in the Field of Protection of Children from Sexual Violence.	Regulation No. 18/2024 on Registers of Persons Convicted of Criminal Offenses Against Sexual Integrity, approved by the Kosovo Judicial Council on December 5, 2024, entered into force on January 1, 2025. Despite the delays, the issuance of this regulation is to be welcomed. (For more on the findings, see the table: Protecting children from contact with perpetrators of criminal offences)

3.2.3. Summary findings related to the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Code

Achievements, challenges and obstacles

Despite the limited achievements in the practical implementation of the Juvenile Justice Code, which include improvements in respecting the best interests of the child and the establishment of certain legal mechanisms for the protection of child victims and witnesses, implementation in practice continues to face considerable challenges and obstacles. The lack of specialized capacities, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient training of professionals, and poor inter-institutional coordination directly affect the effective protection of children during their contact with the justice system. These obstacles increase the risk of further victimization and hinder the full realization of children's rights in judicial processes.

- **The Juvenile Justice Code is in line with international instruments:** from the analysis of the legal provisions and by-laws of the Juvenile Justice Code, it results that this Code is in considerable compliance with international and European standards for justice for children. Its provisions reflect the principle of the best interests of the child, guarantee the protection of the rights of child

victims and witnesses, and ensure the preservation of procedural integrity even in complex cases. Overall, the JJC provides a solid basis for building a justice system for children, in line with relevant international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the European Union Directives.

- **Low implementation of part five of the Juvenile Justice Code:** the provisions of part five of the Juvenile Justice Code, which regulate procedural aspects, measures and guarantees for the protection of child victims and witnesses, remain far from being fully and effectively implemented. Unfortunately, some of these provisions are not implemented at all, are only partially implemented, or in some cases are implemented incorrectly and contrary to the purpose set by the legislator. This discrepancy between legislation and practice represents a serious obstacle to the fair and just functioning of the juvenile justice system;
- **Misunderstanding or misrepresentation of terminology:** A significant lack of accurate understanding and misrepresentation of the relevant terminology by professionals has been identified. Terms such as “minor”, “child”, “injured” or “victim” have in certain cases been used interchangeably, without the awareness that the incorrect use of these terms may negatively affect the child’s status as a victim and potentially favor the perpetrator of the criminal offense. The Juvenile Justice Code, in Article 3, clearly defines the differences between these concepts and emphasizes the importance of the correct use of terminology, as a basis for guaranteeing the proper treatment of the child in criminal proceedings. This finding is also confirmed by the report of the Ombudsman Institution²⁰ which: *“notes that the state authorities involved in the case, as well as some media outlets, referred to the 11-year-old child as a minor, which, in the spirit of implementing this Code and in other circumstances, is not only a distortion of the facts but may also be considered as re-victimization of the child. Furthermore, without establishing the age of the suspects for the act in question, this, among other things, raises the level of responsibility attributed both to the victim and to the person(s) as perpetrators of the criminal offences...”*
- **Child witnesses remain in the shadow of child victims:** Although the legislation in force, in most of the provisions related to child protection, equally guarantees the protection of children regardless of their status in the proceedings, whether as victims or witnesses, it remains concerning that in practice professionals rarely provide child witnesses with the same care and attention as child victims. This situation often arises from uncertainties regarding the procedural status of the child, especially in cases of domestic violence or other related forms of

²⁰ Ex-officio report no. 468/2022 Positive obligations of the state for the protection of children from violence (protocol no. 607/2023 dated 03.04.2023).

violence, where the child may simultaneously be both a victim and a witness. As a result, child witnesses are often not provided with adequate protection and treatment during proceedings. Moreover, in the name of “procedural efficiency,” their rights are sometimes not fully respected, exposing them to inappropriate treatment and a lack of support or services to which they are legally entitled.

- **Lack of specialized profiles:** It continues to be one of the most serious gaps in the child justice system in Kosovo. Despite more than two decades of institutional reforms in this field, which have included the development of dozens of curricula, practical guidelines, and manuals for handling cases involving child victims or witnesses, the system has still not succeeded in creating and maintaining a stable framework of specialized professionals. Even in cases where police officers, prosecutors, or judges are assigned specifically for juveniles, their specialization in child justice is often partial. Even more concerning is the tendency for those professionals who have developed capacities in this field to be transferred to other sectors for career reasons or promoted to higher judicial and prosecutorial levels, as is the case with their movement to the Court or the Prosecutor’s Office of Appeal. This creates a continuous institutional gap and undermines the development of a stable professional framework, which is essential for the protection of children and for their sensitive and appropriate handling in contact with the justice system.
- **Child protection professionals still operate according to an office-based model:** Regardless institutional commitments, efforts undertaken and some tangible achievements, professionals working in the field of child protection continue to operate mainly according to the traditional office-based model. This model implies that it is the child who should go to the professionals and not the other way around. Instead of these professionals being proactive and providing support and services where the child is and where the need is identified, institutional practice continues to rely on formal approaches, requiring the child to adapt to existing structures and follow bureaucratic procedures, often inappropriate for their age and situation. Although the legal framework is built in line with international standards, the practical implementation of the “child-centered” approach remains limited.
- **Bureaucracy over child-friendly approach:** Some child protection professionals still consider the practical implementation of a child-oriented and friendly justice approach difficult or even impossible. It has been observed that professionals find it easier to operate according to the traditional bureaucratic model than to adopt a child-friendly and sensitive approach. This bureaucratic approach often results in placing procedures above the individual needs of the child and undermines the principle of the child’s best interests. Furthermore, the

Administrative Instruction on child-friendly justice ²¹, which provides standards and guidelines for practical implementation, continues to be inconsistently implemented at the institutional level.

- **Lack of suitability of appearance and facilities for child victims:** Unfortunately, during the investigation phase and in some cases at other stages, institutional practice is often not sensitive to the needs of the child. Police officers appear in official uniform even during interactions with the child, which can cause fear or anxiety in the child. Furthermore, interviews and other procedural actions often take place in official settings that are inappropriate for children, such as prosecution offices, social work centers or other institutional spaces that do not provide a safe, warm and conducive environment for open and calm communication. This not only negatively affects the emotional well-being of the child, but also jeopardizes the quality and accuracy of the testimony given by him.
- **Non-use of child-friendly rooms:** In some key institutions, such as the Police, the Prosecution, the Courts or even the Centers for Social Work, child-friendly rooms have been established with the aim of creating an appropriate and safe environment for children during criminal proceedings. However, despite the existence of these spaces, in many cases they remain unused or are used only in cases considered to be more serious. This selective use shows a lack of a standardized and institutionalized approach to the implementation of child-friendly justice. The regular non-use of child-friendly rooms limits the possibility to protect children from additional trauma during the justice process and to fully respect their emotional and psychological rights and needs.
- **Lack of professional knowledge at the support level:** A significant portion of the support staff in the prosecution and courts including: receptionists, court recorders, translators, legal officers and professional associates, etc., are not adequately trained to understand the essential role they play and the high responsibility they bear in their interactions with child victims and witnesses. This lack of knowledge and professional preparation significantly increases the risk of violating children's rights and worsening their experience in contact with the justice system.
- **Data discrepancies and lack of categorized data:** A lack of categorized data by important criteria such as age, gender, type of offense, and other status aspects has been identified. Furthermore, in some cases, the data that does exist does not match between different sources, making accurate analysis and monitoring of the situation difficult.

²¹ Administrative Instruction (GRK) - No. 02/2021 on the implementation of child-friendly justice in criminal, civil and administrative proceedings.

- **Weak inter-sectoral cooperation:** Cooperation between the Police, CSW, Lawyers, OPAV, Prosecution Office and Court in handling cases with child victims and witnesses often remains formal and bureaucratic, lacking effective coordination and oriented towards the “child-centered” principle. This situation causes fragmented procedures, delays and the risk of traumatization of children due to separate treatment and lack of real-time information exchange. To improve the protection of children in the justice system, cooperation must be integrated, with joint, coordinated and rapid actions that minimize unnecessary contacts and ensure sensitive and appropriate treatment for children throughout the process.

3.2.4. Summary findings related to the implementation of the Law on Child Protection

Achievements, challenges and obstacles

Despite limited achievements in the implementation of the Law on Child Protection, such as the establishment of several institutional mechanisms and increased awareness of children’s rights, the practical implementation of this law faces numerous challenges and obstacles. The lack of infrastructure, human and financial resources, the limited capacities of professionals involved in child protection, as well as weak coordination between responsible institutions, hinder the effective functioning of the protection system. The implementation of legal provisions often remains fragmented and uneven at the municipal level, limiting children’s equal access to protection services and risking the violation of their fundamental rights.

- **The Law on Child Protection is in compliance with international standards:** From the analysis of the provisions of the Law on Child Protection, it results that this law is harmonized to a considerable extent with international and European norms and standards for the protection of children’s rights. Its provisions promote and ensure respect for the best interests of the child, guarantee protection from any form of maltreatment, violence and abuse, and create mechanisms for the support and active involvement of children in processes that affect their lives. The law provides for comprehensive measures for the legal, social, health and psychological protection of children, creating a strong legal framework that is consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and relevant European Union Directives.
- **Delays in the implementation of the Law on Child Protection:** despite its adoption more than six years ago, its implementation has been slow and fragmented, seriously questioning the effectiveness and purpose of this law’s

existence in practice. Instead of serving as a solid basis for building a functional child protection system, many of its provisions have remained unimplemented. One of the most noticeable delays has been the adoption of the bylaws necessary for the implementation of the Law.

Although this process was only concluded last year, the practical implementation of these acts is far from what is required by law, both in terms of institutional structures and at the level of human and financial resources. Child protection homes, 24/7 hotlines, and the harmonization of educational curricula and academic training have also not yet been established and implemented. These shortcomings, together with the frivolous approach of the responsible institutions, have not only hindered the effective implementation of the Law on Child Protection, but have also deepened the gap between legal provisions and reality on the ground, making the law a largely formal instrument and not functional in practice.

- **Lack of knowledge about the Law on Child Protection:** one of the most serious concerns that was highlighted during the interviews with professionals is the lack of in-depth knowledge about the Law on Child Protection. Most professionals involved in the juvenile justice system are not sufficiently familiar with the content and purpose of the Law. Their knowledge in this regard is often general and does not include the ability to actively use or refer to specific provisions of this law when handling cases. In practice, the legal references used are almost exclusively those originating from the Juvenile Justice Code, leaving the Law on Child Protection in the shade, although the latter provides a broad basis and concrete obligations for public institutions and professionals.
- **The failure to establish a Guardianship Body:** represents one of the biggest and most persistent failures of the child protection system in Kosovo. Given the essential mandate of the Centers for Social Work and their leading role in child protection, the absence of this body for more than two decades²² has blocked or weakened the effective functioning of a number of important laws, including the Law on Child Protection, the Juvenile Justice Code, the newly adopted Law on Social and Family Services, the Family Law, etc. This institutional gap is not just a technical or procedural issue, it is a systemic deficiency that has had direct and serious consequences in the lives of children. In the absence of this necessary legal mechanism, children's basic rights to adequate protection and representation have been violated, resulting in certain cases in which children are not only not protected, but are also further at risk of secondary victimization.

²²The legal basis of this body was established in 2004 with the adoption of the Family Law No. 2004/32.

- **Abuse of children trust:** Most of the professionals interviewed have raised serious concerns regarding the fact that one of the main factors associated with the sexual exploitation and abuse of children is the abuse of trust by adults, through deception and manipulation, often involving the use of narcotic substances and luring via online communication. Particularly alarming is the fact that the victims in these cases are often very young children. Due to time constraints and the lack of systematic and verified data, this finding could not be fully documented. Nevertheless, given the importance and high risk of this phenomenon, it has been considered essential to include it as a significant finding, accompanied below by a corresponding recommendation.
- **Central and local authorities and structures are little known:** The Inter-Ministerial Committee for the Rights of the Child, the Council for the Rights of the Child, the Municipal Team for the Rights of the Child and the Multidisciplinary Roundtables for Case Management, although already established and operational, still remain very little known by justice professionals. This lack of recognition and low use of these mechanisms is a serious concern, as it weakens inter-institutional coordination and cooperation, undermining the effectiveness of child protection in the system.
- **Challenges in providing temporary protection and lack of long-term reintegration programs:** Despite progress in the legal aspect and increased institutional funding for shelters in 2025, serious challenges remain in the full implementation of the provisions of the Law on Child Protection related to the provision of temporary protection and support after leaving shelters. In cases where children cannot remain with their families due to dangerous circumstances, the Centers for Social Work (CSW), in coordination with the Prosecution Office, are obliged to place children in alternative forms of care, such as residential shelter. Currently, three licensed shelters for child victims of abuse and trafficking operate in Kosovo, one under public management and two others run by NGO/s, which provide 24/7 services through psychological, social and rehabilitation support. However, one of the most prominent systemic gaps remains the lack of structured programs and services for the long-term reintegration of children after the end of residential shelter. This gap makes it difficult for children to return to a stable life and increases the risk of returning to abusive situations. In some cases, children experience a continuous cycle of victimization, returning to shelters due to the lack of sustainable solutions.²³

²³The data is based on updated information from shelter management organizations and Social Work Centers, collected during the assessment process.

- **Lack of structured work on family empowerment and parental training:** The Law on Child Protection provides for a series of measures for parental training and family empowerment in cases where a child victim is removed from the family and placed in alternative forms of care, with the aim of preparing parents for the child's return to the family after the end of the protective measure. However, families often do not receive the necessary support. CSW/s face a lack of staff and resources, which limits their work to emergency interventions and immediate case management, making it impossible to follow the long-term reintegration process.

3.3. Conclusion

All international and regional instruments stipulate clear criteria through which states are called upon to ensure the protection of children from all forms of violence. In this regard, **current legislation and policies in Kosovo have also incorporated these standards** in order to guarantee the protection of children.

The entry into force of the Juvenile Justice Code and the Law on Child Protection has strengthened the legal framework for the protection of child victims and witnesses of violence and related forms. These laws have been drafted in **a comprehensive manner, regulating not only the substantive and procedural aspects, but also providing for the establishment of mechanisms, bodies and institutions** to address previous gaps in the system.

Based on the assessment conducted, it can be **concluded that these laws and relevant policies have contributed to the construction of several components of the** justice system for children in Kosovo. However, their harmonization with international requirements and standards **remains partial and not at a satisfactory level.**

Currently, the juvenile justice system **does not actively and consistently promote the use of procedural measures and guarantees for the protection and appropriate treatment** of children throughout all stages of criminal proceedings, including the period after their completion, which is related to the rehabilitation and reintegration of children into the family and society. Despite progress in partially building this system, the assessment has identified that **the practical implementation of the Law on Child Protection and the Juvenile Justice Code,** in the part that regulates the protection of child victims

or witnesses, **remains limited and does not fully comply with the legislator's intentions and international standards.**

The lack of proper knowledge of these two Laws, then the considerable delays in issuing the bylaws of the Law on Child Protection, which have exceeded the legal deadlines, the failure to establish child protection homes, the lack of a functional telephone line for reporting and support, as well as the deficient implementation of the provisions that provide for protective measures for child victims and witnesses, **have significantly affected the effectiveness of the work of professionals and have prevented the full implementation** of the provisions of the Law on Child Protection, the Juvenile Justice Code and other relevant legislation. As a result of all these shortcomings, **the adequate protection of child victims or witnesses has been seriously questioned, endangering the violation of their rights and exposing them to further victimization.**

Similar conclusions have been drawn for the States Parties to the CRC by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, which: *"appreciates the efforts undertaken by States and other stakeholders to prevent and address violence against children, but at the same time highlights that **these efforts remain, in general, insufficient.** Legal frameworks in most States do not fully prohibit all forms of violence against children and, **even where adequate laws exist, they are often not properly implemented.** Social and cultural approaches that normalize violence against children continue to be widespread, while **policies and measures taken are often fragmented and reactive,** focusing more on treating the consequences than on addressing the root causes of violence. **The lack of data, proper analysis and adequate human and financial resources constitutes another factor that limits the real impact of these efforts**" (General Comment No. 13, paragraph 12).*

Addressing these challenges is essential to ensure that the legal provisions of the Child Protection Law and the Juvenile Justice Code, especially those related to measures and mechanisms for the protection of children, **do not remain only on paper, but are implemented in practice,** effectively and sustainably. The start of **the implementation of new measures, the establishment of** institutional mechanisms and structures, **the budgeting of services,** as well as the building of professional **capacities, constitute key elements to align** the justice system for children in Kosovo with international human rights standards and to guarantee the comprehensive protection of children in contact with the law. In order to support the implementation of the identified findings, **the assessment**

contains a series of recommendations aimed at assisting justice institutions, and not only them, in strengthening the implementation of the justice system for children and ensuring that this system provides the intended protection for children, through an effective implementation of measures and mechanisms for their protection.

3.4. Recommendations

In order to address the challenges and obstacles identified during the assessment of the implementation of measures for the protection of child victims or witnesses in Kosovo, it is recommended to undertake a series of concrete actions aimed at improving the enforcement of the legislation in force. These actions should ensure a more effective, fair, and sustainable approach to child protection within the justice system, encompassing not only the implementation of existing laws but also the strengthening of supportive measures and procedural guarantees that ensure the full protection of the child's rights at every stage of the proceedings.

3.4.1. Short-term recommendations:

- **Functionalization and strengthening of institutions, mechanisms and councils deriving from the LCP:** The Ministry of Justice and municipalities should undertake immediate measures to:
 - *the establishment and functioning of child protection homes,*
 - *creating a telephone line,*
 - *the establishment of custodianship bodies,*
 - *strengthening the councils,*
 - *ensuring that all training and educational materials for professionals are harmonized and in accordance with the Law on Child Protection (LCP).*
- **Establishing and operationalizing an emergency fund:** Municipalities should plan and allocate a budget for the establishment of a permanent emergency fund to provide immediate interventions, such as emergency shelter, psychological and medical support, safe transportation, or meeting the basic needs of the child. To this end, it is necessary for the municipality to fully implement the legal obligations for the allocation of the dedicated budget and to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation to guarantee effective and equal protection for every child, regardless of residence.

- **Assistance and support for the child in the post-trial procedure:** The Center for Social Work must coordinate the process of emotional and psychological rehabilitation, as well as reintegration into the family, school and social environment. These are delicate processes that require: a) sustained and coordinated involvement of mental health professionals, social workers, school psychologists and other local actors; b) support and education of family members, so that they have the capacity to be a supportive factor and not an additional risk factor; c) continuous access to rehabilitation and social services, which help the child develop coping strategies and recover from trauma.
- **Develop monitoring and investigative mechanisms:** specialized for identifying and preventing abuses that include the manipulation of children through narcotic substances and digital platforms. At the same time, invest in education and awareness programs for children and parents about the risks associated with online communication and building dangerous relationships with adults.
- **Effective implementation of the principle of urgency and inter-institutional strengthening:** all institutions in contact with the child should ensure the implementation of the principle of urgency in handling cases involving child victims and witnesses, increasing the level of inter-institutional coordination in accordance with national and international standards. All professionals involved, including justice bodies, social services, police, health and educational institutions, should act according to the principle of “child-centeredness” and “professionals to the child”, ensuring an integrated, sensitive and coordinated approach at every step of the process.
- **Use of technology and professionals without exception:** all stages of criminal proceedings involving child victims should be conducted with the help of technology available in the prosecution and court, as well as with the assistance of psychologists and other relevant professionals. The use of technology, including remote interviews and video-recording of statements or evidence, allows for the avoidance of direct contact with the suspect and reduces the child’s exposure to traumatizing environments. The involvement of psychologists and other experts ensures an approach sensitive to the age and emotional state of the child, contributing to the protection of his or her well-being and to ensuring a fair, appropriate and non-traumatizing hearing throughout the criminal process.
- **Development of structured programs for the long-term reintegration of child victims:** It is recommended that responsible institutions develop and finance sustainable programs for the long-term reintegration of child victims. These programs should aim to create conditions for a stable life. and prevent children from falling back into the cycle of victimization.

- **Implementation of measures for parental training and family empowerment :** As part of the preparation for the return of the child victim to the family environment after the end of the protective measure, it is recommended that municipalities invest in strengthening the capacities of the Social Work Centers, by increasing the number of professional staff and the resources necessary for the systematic and long-term follow-up of cases, in order for the intervention to be not only emergency, but for the services to continue until long-term rehabilitation and reintegration.
- **Implementation of Regulation No. 18/2024:** The Kosovo Judicial Council should prioritize the implementation and continuous and serious supervision of the establishment and functioning of the registry of persons convicted of criminal offenses against sexual integrity. This registry is an essential mechanism for the protection of children and the prevention of the involvement of convicted persons in roles that are vulnerable to their safety and public security. The registry should be functional, easily accessible by competent authorities and administered in accordance with standards for the protection of personal data and human rights.
- **Increasing human and infrastructural capacities:** All institutions involved in proceedings where children are victims or witnesses should be strengthened through the enhancement of human and infrastructural capacities. In particular, it is urgent to fill staffing gaps with trained personnel, especially in social services and with psychologists, who should be permanently and continuously involved in the judicial process. Furthermore, the necessary resources must be provided to offer supportive services such as: psychological services, medical and psychiatric care, protection during court proceedings, social and educational support, as well as reintegration programs.
- **Compensation for damage and post-judicial support should go beyond the monetary aspect:** Courts, when deciding on compensation for damage, should not be limited to material elements, but should also take into account non-material measures of reparation for child victims. Where possible, the judicial decision should guarantee access to psychological support, medical care and psychiatric services as needed; support for educational and social rehabilitation to enable sustainable reintegration; and the development of life skills through training and educational and social support, in order to strengthen the child's autonomy and self-confidence. Other relevant institutions should support the child in implementing the judicial decision and provide additional support opportunities, where feasible.

- **Specialization of child protection professionals:** All institutions working within the child justice system, including the Police, the Bar Association, OPAV, Social Services - CSW, Prosecution Offices, Courts, as well as any other professionals in contact with children, must be engaged in the development and assignment of specialized professionals for child victims or witnesses. This should be achieved through attractive and comprehensive training programs, including mandatory training and certification systems. At the same time, it is necessary to develop motivational and supportive mechanisms that ensure the long-term retention and commitment of these professionals in their respective positions;
- **Support person:** In case CSW/s are unable to employ a person dedicated to this role, then temporary training of current staff to take on this function should be envisaged, equipping them with the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill the responsibilities set out in the Juvenile Justice Framework.
- **Awareness and information campaign:** all justice institutions should develop and implement regular awareness and information programs for their staff, in order to increase knowledge and deep understanding of the purposes and principles of the Law on Child Protection and the Juvenile Justice Code.

3.4.2. Medium and long term recommendations:

- **Continuity of issuing ex-officio reports:** The Ombudsman institution should ensure continuity of ex-officio investigation and monitoring, as well as publication of reports on cases involving child victims or witnesses. Where possible, this institution should also follow any judicial process from beginning to end, to closely assess the implementation of legal provisions and the guarantee of children rights in practice. This approach would provide an independent oversight mechanism; help identify shortcomings and contribute to proposing concrete measures for further improvement of the justice system for children.
- **Develop mandatory and tailored training:** For all support staff (receptionists, court interpreters, court clerks, legal officers, professional associates) in justice institutions, with the aim of raising awareness of the sensitive approach to child victims and witnesses and strengthening standards of professional conduct.
- **Strengthening access for children with disabilities:** The Prosecutorial Council and the Judicial Council should ensure full implementation and systematic monitoring of the use of sign language communication devices in all courts and prosecution offices. Regular assessments of the impact of these devices

on improving access to justice for children with disabilities should be carried out, and mandatory training on their effective use should be developed. It is also recommended that these measures be extended to all relevant institutions, including the police and social work centers, to ensure comprehensive support for children and adults with disabilities.

- **Conducting the study or research:** The Ministry of Justice, in partnership with local universities and research institutions, should undertake a comprehensive national study on children involved as victims and witnesses of criminal offences, with a particular focus on those affecting the sexual integrity of the child. This research should aim to: a) Assess the extent and trends of the involvement of children as victims and witnesses in criminal offences against sexual integrity; b) Compile a socio-demographic profile of these children (age, gender, educational, family and economic status); c) Identify factors and causes that influence the deception, manipulation or misuse of children trust by adults, including the use of narcotic substances and digital technology; d) Analyze the protective measures taken so far, assess their effectiveness and identify existing gaps in the current justice system for children.
- **Full and consistent implementation of the concept of child-friendly justice:** throughout all stages of the procedure. This includes the systematic use of child-friendly rooms equipped and specially designed to provide a safe, calm and non-intimidating environment for the child, in accordance with international standards and best practices. The concept should be implemented by trained professionals, respecting the age, gender, psychological maturity and emotional needs of the child, in order to avoid revictimization and to guarantee that the child is heard in a sensitive and effective manner. The implementation of this concept should include inter-institutional cooperation and the provision of the necessary technical and human capacities for a more comprehensive and protective approach to children in justice processes.
- **Development of a module on child protection principles:** develop a specific training module at the Academy of Justice and the Kosovo Institute of Public Administration, dedicated to the fair and meaningful implementation of the fundamental principles of child protection, with particular emphasis on the principle of the best interests of the child. This module should include practical guidance and concrete examples for the application of these principles across all levels of the justice system and child protection services, ensuring that decision-making is always sensitive to the needs, age and well-being of the child.

- **Improving the knowledge of child justice actors:** Organize a series of individual and joint trainings for police officers, lawyers, victim advocates, social service officials, shelter representatives, prosecutors, judges. These trainings should focus on the proper implementation of the legal provisions stemming from the Child Protection Law and the Juvenile Justice Code, with particular emphasis on the innovations that these laws bring into practice. The aim is to harmonize the inter-institutional approach and strengthen capacities to ensure a more protective, inclusive and child-sensitive justice system.
- **Ensure the fair application of the concept of access to justice for children:** by rethinking the way their role in the justice system is addressed. Professionals working in child protection need to move from an approach that sees the child as a dependent subject, to an approach that recognizes the child as an individual with full rights. This includes recognizing and guaranteeing their right to active participation in procedures that affect them, the right to express their opinion, and to make decisions in accordance with their age and maturity. Such an approach not only reinforces the legal subjectivity of the child, but is also in line with international standards, in particular the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- **Improving the collection and harmonization of statistical data:** justice institutions should ensure the systematic and up-to-date collection of data disaggregated by relevant criteria, such as age, gender, type of criminal offence and status of the child (victim or witness). It is also essential to harmonize reporting formats and methodologies between institutions to avoid inconsistencies and to enable accurate and comparable analysis and monitoring of the situation. This would contribute to better planning of interventions and policies for the protection of children in the justice system.

3.5. Good practices

Despite the numerous challenges in the implementation of legislation and child protection measures, the assessment found that there are also good practices in the juvenile justice system that should be strengthened and replicated as much as possible. These are some of the good practices:

1. Issuance of ex-officio reports by the Ombudsman Institution

The Ombudsperson Institution has undertaken initiatives to investigate and monitor cases involving child victims, through the ex-officio competence derived from the Law on OI. This practice helps to shed light on systematic and repeated violations of children's rights, as well as to highlight structural and institutional obstacles that affect their effective protection.

Such reports are important to influence the improvement of public policies and to promote accountability in sensitive cases involving children.

2. Creating infrastructure and friendly environments

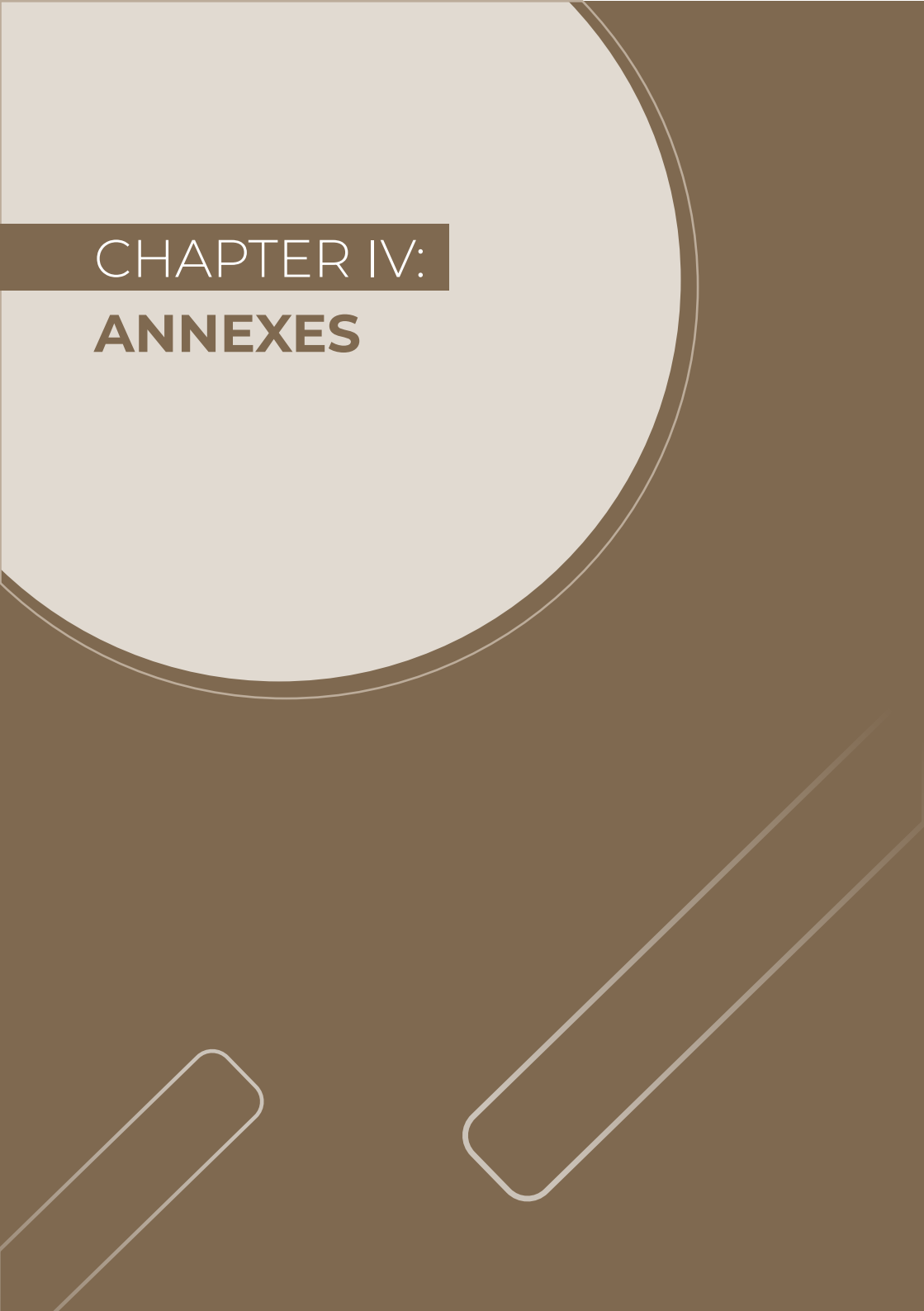
Some key institutions, such as the police, the prosecution, and the courts, have begun creating child-friendly rooms and spaces designed to minimize stress and trauma during a child's interaction with the justice system. These special environments are warmer, safer, and less harmful compared to traditional office-based spaces. This practice makes the process more acceptable for children and helps create an atmosphere where they can feel heard and protected. This model should be institutionalized and uniformly implemented across all relevant institutions to ensure equal and high-quality access for all children.

3. Ex-officio representation and engagement of victims' advocates

The implementation of ex-officio representation for child victims by lawyers, as well as representation by victim advocates, constitutes a significant advancement in guaranteeing the procedural and substantive rights of children in the criminal justice system. These professional representatives provide legal assistance that helps children navigate complex judicial procedures, understand their rights, and be protected from exposure to dangerous or traumatic situations. This practice should not only be continued but also strengthened through specialized training for these professionals and regular assessment of the quality of services provided.

4. Changing the interview format by the Institute of Forensic Medicine

The Institute of Forensic Medicine has taken steps to change the methodology of interviewing children, aiming to avoid multiple and unnecessary interviews. This approach helps to preserve the psychological well-being of children, reduces secondary trauma and ensures that evidence is obtained in a more humane, sensitive and age-appropriate manner. The use of structured interviews and their recording for later use in the criminal process is a practice that should become standard in all cases involving child victims or witnesses. This practice also helps to strengthen the evidence at trial and avoid re-traumatization of children.

The background is a solid dark brown color. A large, light beige circle is positioned in the upper left quadrant. A horizontal dark brown bar is placed across the middle of this circle, containing the text 'CHAPTER IV: ANNEXES'. In the lower half of the image, there are two diagonal, light beige rectangular outlines with rounded corners, one on the left and one on the right.

CHAPTER IV:

ANNEXES

4.1. Reference sources

Local legislation

- Constitution of the Republic of Kosovo
- Law on Child Protection (Law No. 06/L-084)
- Juvenile Justice Code (Code No. 06/L-006)
- Criminal Code of the Republic of Kosovo (Code No. 06/L-074) and Law No. 08/L-188 on Supplementing and Amending the Criminal Code No. 06/L-074
- Criminal Procedure Code (Code No. 08/L-032) and Law No. 08/L-187 on Supplementing and Amending the Criminal Procedure Code No. 08/L-032
- Law on Family (Law No. 2004/32)
- Law on Social and Family Services (Law No. 08/L-255)
- Law on Prevention and Protection from Domestic Violence, Violence against Women and Gender-Based Violence (Law No. 08/L-185)
- Law on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Protecting Victims of Trafficking (Law No. 04/L-218)
- Regulation (GRK) No. 18/2024 on establishing effective procedures for identifying, reporting and referring child exploitation, neglect and abuse and protecting children in street situations
- Administrative Instruction (GRK) No. 03/2024 on the cooperation of institutional structures and mechanisms with NGOs for the implementation of rights policies and the provision of child protection services
- Regulation (GRK) No. 07/2024 on the organization and scope of child protection homes
- Regulation (NRC) No. 23/2023 on working procedures in multi-disciplinary tables for assistance in case management
- Administrative Instruction (GRK) No. 06/2023 on determining preventive and protective measures to prohibit the participation of children in nightclubs and similar spaces
- Administrative Instruction (GRK) No. 05/2023 on measures to prevent and protect children from drug abuse
- Administrative Instruction (GRK) No. 04/2023 on medical and psychological treatment of child victims of abuse, for rehabilitation and reintegration
- Administrative Instruction (GRK) No. 08/2022 on the Council for the Rights of the Child
- Administrative Instruction (GRK) No. 07/2022 for child rights authorities
- Administrative Instruction (GRK) No. 06/2022 on the establishment and functioning of the child rights team

- Administrative Instruction (GRK) No. 04/2022 on measures to protect children from websites with pornographic content and that harm the health and life of the child
- Administrative Instruction (GRK) No. 02/2021 on the implementation of child-friendly justice in criminal, civil and administrative proceedings.

International Instruments:

- United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
- European Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), ETS No. 5, 1950 and Protocols
- Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
- Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse
- Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
- Directive 2011/93/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography
- Directive 2012/29/EU on minimum standards on the rights, support and protection of victims of crime
- Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims
- Directive 2016/800/EU on procedural safeguards for children who are suspects or accused persons
- EU Strategy on the Rights of the Children (2021–2024)
- Council of Europe Guidelines on Child-Friendly Justice (2010)
- Recommendation CM/Rec (2018)7 on the rights of children in the digital environment
- Recommendation CM/Rec (2012)2 on the participation of children under 18 years of age
- Recommendation CM/Rec (2011)12 on child rights and child-friendly social services
- Guidelines for child-friendly healthcare (2011)
- Recommendation CM/Rec (2009)10 on integrated strategies for the protection of children from violence
- Recommendation R (98)8 on the participation of children in family and social life
- General Comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (Nos. 1, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12)

- Resolution 2002/12 on Basic Principles for the Use of Restorative Justice Programs in Criminal Matters

International instruments, protocols, strategies, books, studies and reports

- State Protocol for Handling Cases of Sexual Violence (Government Decision No. 11/109, dated 23.11.2022)
- Annual Report of the Ombudsman Institution (years 2023 and 2024)
- Ex-officio report Case no. 381/2020 regarding the implementation of the Child Protection Law (protocol no. 1213/2021 dated 17.08.2021)
- Ex-officio report no. 468/2022 Positive obligations of the state for the protection of children from violence (protocol no. 607/2023 dated 03.04.2023)
- Ex-officio report no. 37/2023 regarding the establishment of the guardianship body (protocol no. 1654/2023 dated 12.10.2023)
- KOMF Childcare Report Cards (2023, 2024)
- Evaluation of EU support to juvenile justice in Kosovo (Final Report 2018)
- Legal Framework for Child Rights in Kosovo (UNICEF, 2014)
- Child Protection Strategy 2021–2030 (UNICEF)
- Reimagine Justice for Children (UNICEF, 2021)
- Assessment of administrative data systems for justice for children (UNICEF, 2021)
- Children equal access to justice – Central and Eastern Europe (UNICEF, 2015)
- Sectoral Strategy for Labor and Social Welfare (2018–2022)
- Minimum Standards for Social Services (Standards 1, 2, 3, 6 and 13)
- Design and Evaluation of the Child Protection System in Kosovo (Office of the Prime Minister, 2012)
- European Commission Reports on Kosovo (2016–2024)
- Compensation for victims of domestic violence (Kosovo Law Institute & CLARD, 2023)
- Assessment of the handling of cases of sexual violence by the justice system in Kosovo (EULEX, 2022)
- EULEX Reports on Monitoring the Justice System in Kosovo (2021–2024)
- Child-centered justice – Preventing and responding to violence against children in juvenile justice systems (PRI, TDH, AIMJF, 2025)
- African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, 27 June 1981, CAB/LEG/67/3 rev. 5, 21 ILM 58 (1982)
- Cappelaere, G., Grandjean, A., Naqvi, Y., *Children Deprived of Liberty: Rights and Realities*, Editions Jeunesse et Droit, 2005
- Children's Legal Center and United Nations Children's Fund, 'Administrative Detention of Children: A Global Report', New York, 2011

- Cipriani, D., 'Children Rights and the Minimum Age of Criminal Responsibility: A Global Perspective', Ashgate, 2009
- Ellison, Louise, 'Cross-examination and the intermediary: bridging the language divide?', *Criminal Law Review*, 114, 118, 2002
- Inter-Parliamentary Union and United Nations Children's Fund, 'Child Protection: A handbook for Parliamentarians, Inter-Parliamentary Union, No. 7', Geneva, 2004
- Johnstone, G., 'Restorative Justice: Ideas, Values, Debates', 2002
- Klaus, JF, Handbook on Probation Services: Guidelines for Probation Practitioners and Managers, United Nations
- Morris, A. and Maxwell, G., 'Restorative Justice in New Zealand: Family Group Conferences as a Case Study', *Western Criminology Review*, 1998
- F. Ross, MP Toglia, *Perspectives on Children Testimony*, New York: Springer Verlag, 1989
- Seymour, J., *Dealing with Young Offenders*, The Law Book Company, Sydney, 1988. United Nations
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, Model Law on Juvenile Justice, 2011
- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and UN-Habitat, 'Crime Prevention Assessment Tool', United Nations, New York, 2009.

4.2. List of professionals interviewed, meetings held and focus groups

First and Last Name	Position/Institution
1. Anita Kalanderi	Secretary General Ministry of Justice
2. Blerim Shabani	Director of the Department for Social and Family Policies - Ministry of Justice
3. Qëndresa Ibra-Zariqi	Senior Officer for Children's Rights Office of the Prime Minister - Office for Good Governance
4. Adile Basha-Shaqiri	Head of the Division for Social Services - DPSF Ministry of Justice
5. Adnan Isufi	Judge on Juveniles Basic Court Pristina
6. Lumnije Krasniqi	Judge on Juveniles Basic Court Pristina
7. Sahit Boroci	Judge on Juveniles Basic Court Gjilan
8. Mimoza Shala	Prosecutor on Juveniles Basic Prosecution Office in Pristina
9. Rabije Jakupi	Prosecutor on Juveniles Basic Prosecution Office Gjilan
10. Isuf Sadiku	State Prosecutor Basic Prosecution Office in Gjilan
11. Baki Gimolli	Senior Legal Advisor The Ombudsman Institution
12. Ramadan Ahmeti	Director of Community Policing Kosovo Police
13. Luljeta Limani Sylejmani	Director of Domestic Violence Prevention and Investigation - Kosovo Police
14. Nilgyn Kosova	Head of the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Sector - Kosovo Police
15. Dr.Bergita Curri	Forensic Medicine Specialist Institute of Forensic Medicine

16. Burhan Maxhuni	Office manager Office for Victim Protection and Assistance
17. Yll Zekaj	Lawyer based in Pristina
18. Sherif Sherifi	Lawyer based in Gjiilan
19. Abaz Gjigolli	Acting Director Association of Social Work Centers
20. Mursel Zymberi	Director of the Center for Social Work in Gjiilan
21. Makfirete Shamolli	Director of the Center for Social Work - Lipjan
22. Amir Bushi	Director of the Center for Social Work - Hani i Elezit
23. Arrita Dervishi	Social Services Officer Social Work Center Gjakova
24. Berlina Dushi	Social Services Officer Social Work Center Gjakova
25. Teuta Abrashi	Executive Director - MVPT Center
26. Arilona Kastrati	Official - MVPT Center
27. Gresa Kelmendi	Program Manager - MVPT
28. Afërdita Kçiku	Clinical Psychologist - QKMF Gjiilan
29. Dren Rexha	Social Policy Specialist - UNICEF
30. Feride Dashi	Child Protection Officer - UNICEF
31. Donjeta Kelmendi	Executive Director - KOMF
32. Klevis Vaçari	Project Manager - KOMF
33. Fjolla Hoxha	Justice Program Manager - TDH
34. Jussi Valtteri Ohisalo	Justice Monitor - Case Monitoring Unit EULEX
35. Verginiya Micheva-Ruseva	Justice Monitor - Case Monitoring Unit EULEX



