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SECOND REPORT ON ALBANIA

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Foreword

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) is a body of the Council of Europe, composed of independent members. Its aim is to combat racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance at a pan-European level and from the angle of the protection of human rights.

One of the pillars of ECRI's work programme is its country-by-country approach, whereby it analyses the situation as regards racism and intolerance in each of the member States of the Council of Europe and makes suggestions and proposals as to how to tackle the problems identified.

At the end of 1998, ECRI finished the first round of its country-by-country reports for all member States. ECRI's first report on Albania is dated 28 November 1998 (published in November 1999). The second stage of the country-by-country work, initiated in January 1999, involves the preparation of a second report on each member State. The aim of these second reports is to follow-up the proposals made in the first reports, to update the information contained therein, and to provide a more in-depth analysis of certain issues of particular interest in the country in question.

An important stage in ECRI's country-by-country work is a process of confidential dialogue with the national authorities of the country in question before the final adoption of the report. A new procedure in the second round of country reports is the organisation of a contact visit for the ECRI rapporteurs prior to the drafting of the second report.

The contact visit to Albania took place on 11-14 April 2000. During this visit, the rapporteurs met with representatives of various ministries and public administrations responsible for issues relating to ECRI's mandate. ECRI warmly thanks the Albanian national authorities for their wholehearted co-operation in the organisation of the contact visit, and in particular would like to thank all the persons who met its delegation each of whom provided much valuable information on their own field of competence. ECRI would also like to thank the Albanian national liaison officer whose efficiency and collaboration were much appreciated by ECRI's rapporteurs.

Furthermore, ECRI would like to thank all the representatives of non-governmental organisations with whom its rapporteurs met during the contact visit for the very useful contribution they made to the exercise.

The following report was drawn up by ECRI under its own responsibility. It covers the situation as of 16 June 2000 and any development subsequent to this date is not covered in the following analysis nor taken into account in the conclusions and proposals made by ECRI.

Executive summary

Over recent years, and despite a very difficult and rapidly evolving economic, political and legal situation, Albania has taken steps to address the problem of racism and discrimination through the introduction of relevant legislation as well as encouraging an institutional framework in which minority groups may develop their collective identity.

Amidst a turbulent and often complex recent history, issues of ethnic discrimination are not recognised as a primary concern for members of Albanian society, either majority or minority, and thus there is little awareness concerning such issues. A positive climate of tolerance is generally considered to prevail with respect to ethnic minority groups, however some negative prejudices and stereotypes exist, particularly with respect to the Roma and Egyptians, which may lead to discrimination in individual cases. The widespread corruption generally recognised to be present in public institutions may also indirectly discriminate against those who do not have the necessary connections or means in order to have access to public services, basic facilities or employment. Furthermore, there is an acute lack of information about the situation and the number of the different minority groups living in Albania.

In the following report, ECRI recommends to the Albanian authorities that further action be taken to combat intolerance and discrimination in a number of areas. These recommendations cover, *inter alia*, the need to ensure that relevant legislative provisions are implemented in practice, the need to establish a system of monitoring and evaluation of the situation of ethnic minority groups as regards possible discrimination in various fields of life, the need to analyse the manner in which vulnerable groups may suffer indirect discrimination and take special measures to address their situation and the need to ensure that a climate of tolerance prevails and that members of minority groups are seen as equal and appreciated for their difference.

SECTION I: OVERVIEW OF THE SITUATION

A. International legal instruments

1. Albania has ratified most of the relevant international legal instruments in the field of combating racism and intolerance. ECRI welcomes the ratification by Albania of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, as suggested in ECRI's first report, as well as ratification of the European Charter for Local Self-Government. ECRI is pleased to learn that ratification of the revised European Social Charter and the European Convention on Nationality is currently being discussed, and calls for a swift and successful conclusion of this process. ECRI furthermore understands that signature of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is under consideration, and urges the Albanian authorities to sign and ratify this instrument as soon as possible. ECRI also reiterates that Albania should make a declaration under Article 14 of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, recognising the competence of the Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) to accept individual complaints. In addition, ECRI is pleased to learn that the Albanian authorities are taking steps to sign and ratify the European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers and the European Convention for the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at the Local Level. ECRI hopes for a swift and successful conclusion of this process.

B. Constitutional provisions and other basic provisions

2. ECRI notes that according to Article 122 of the Albanian Constitution, international agreements ratified by Albania constitute part of the internal juridical system, are directly implemented except for cases where implementation depends on the issuance of a law, and have superiority over incompatible domestic laws.
3. The Albanian Constitution establishes the fundamental principle of equality before the law (article 18) and guarantees freedom from discrimination on the basis of *inter alia* race, religion, ethnicity, language, social status or ancestry. The Constitution also provides an extensive framework for the protection and promotion of the identity of national minorities. Furthermore the Constitution prohibits organisations that incite and support racial, religious, regional or ethnic hatred. Foreigners and stateless persons on Albanian territory are also covered by Constitutional rights, freedoms and duties, unless particular provisions specifically stipulate that their application is limited to Albanian citizens. ECRI appreciates the wide-ranging protection of the Albanian Constitution in the area of racism and discrimination, and encourages the Albanian authorities to ensure that these provisions are reflected in legislation and effectively implemented.

C. Criminal law provisions

4. As noted by ECRI in its first report, there are several important provisions aimed at combating racism and intolerance in the Criminal Code of Albania. Article 265 penalises instigation of national, racial or religious hatred. Article 266 penalises endangering of public peace through inciting to hatred towards segments of the population. Further relevant provisions address the crime of genocide (Article 73) and conduct against the freedom of religious faith (Articles 131 to 133).
5. The Albanian Criminal Code also addresses discrimination in the public sphere. Article 253 makes it a crime for an employee in a state function or in public service to make distinctions, for reasons of duty and in the exercise of it, “on the basis of origin, sex, health condition, religious beliefs, political beliefs, labour union activity or one’s belonging to a specific ethnic, national, racial or religious group” that consists in the creation of unlawful privileges or the refusal of a right or benefit that arises from law. Violation of this article is punishable by a fine or up to five years’ imprisonment.
6. ECRI recognises the efforts of the Albanian authorities to address problems related to racism and intolerance in the Criminal Code, and understands that such problems are not at present Albania’s top priority given the multitude of pressing concerns which need to be addressed through new and amended legislation. Nonetheless, ECRI stresses the importance of establishing a comprehensive legislative framework for combating racist and xenophobic crime. In this regard, ECRI recalls its general policy recommendation No. 1 in which it suggests defining racially motivated offences as specific offences or explicitly providing for racial motivation to be taken into account as an aggravating factor by the courts. ECRI is pleased to learn that the Albanian authorities are considering the introduction of a provision in this sense and hopes for a positive conclusion of this process.
7. As ECRI noted in its first report, implementation of legislation in Albania is generally problematic. There is a need for the strengthening of basic institutions, including a well-trained and independent judiciary and police force who are sensitised to issues of racism and discrimination.¹ ECRI notes the co-operation with the Council of Europe on such issues, and encourages the Albanian authorities to continue their efforts to ensure that the legislation in force is properly and systematically implemented at all levels of the law enforcement system. Although information is unavailable as to the application of legislation in this area, and racist and xenophobic crime is not generally considered a problem in Albanian society at the present time, adequate training of concerned officials is nonetheless important for the effective identification and pursuit of such crime when it does occur.

¹ See section “Administration of Justice” below

D. Civil and administrative law provisions

8. Albanian civil and administrative law contains some provisions for combating racism and discrimination. In the field of employment, Article 9 of the Labour Code, covering both the public and private spheres, prohibits "every type of discrimination in employment or professional life". The wording of the Article lends itself to a broad interpretation, which ECRI would favour, covering indirect as well as direct discrimination. Legislation in the area of social insurance, covering benefits in the fields of *inter alia* health insurance, retirement insurance and unemployment insurance, provides for equal rights for all regardless of nationality, ethnicity or race. An Appeal Commission has been established to hear complaints and deliver binding judgments with respect to the application of this legislation. Legislation against discrimination also exists in the field of education. Article 3 of the Law on Pre-University Education guarantees all citizens equal rights at all levels of the educational system covered by the law, notwithstanding their social situation, nationality, language, sex, religion, race, political convictions, health condition and economic situation.
9. ECRI suggests introducing anti-discrimination legislation in different fields of life such as housing, employment, health, education, access to benefits and access to public places. Although discrimination on racial or ethnic grounds is not generally considered a problem at the present time, an effective legal framework in this area may serve a preventive and educative function as well as enabling hidden discrimination to be revealed. In some countries the introduction of a single body of anti-discrimination legislation covering discrimination in several fields of life and providing for effective enforcement, has proved a valuable tool. ECRI notes that a piecemeal approach to such problems, with different provisions scattered throughout various legislative instruments, may not prove as effective. ECRI therefore encourages the Albanian authorities to consider, during this period of legal transition, the possible introduction of a comprehensive body of legislation aimed at combating discrimination.

E. Administration of justice

10. It is generally agreed that the judicial system in Albania does not yet function effectively. Problems are widely believed to remain with the independence and professionalism of the courts, the enforcement of decisions and the infrastructures needed to support the judiciary, such as the postal services, police and state administration. Widespread corruption also pervades the judicial system. This situation affects the application of legislation in the area of racism and discrimination as it does legislation in other areas.

F. Specialised bodies and other institutions

11. The Albanian Parliament ratified enabling legislation for a "People's Advocate" (Ombudsman) in February 1999, and elected the first Ombudsman in February 2000. The Office of the Ombudsman is expected to begin functioning as soon as a budget and facilities are allocated to it. The Ombudsman has the power to investigate the complaints of citizens, to issue non-binding recommendations

and to propose measures when he or she observes violations of human rights and freedoms by the public administration. The Office may act on its own initiative as well as upon the instigation of individuals, non-governmental organisations or other interested parties. A plan has been established to divide the Office into three sections: complaints about violations from high administration, ministries and other governmental structures; complaints about violations of the police, military or judiciary; complaints having to do with non-governmental organisations, social and environmental issues.

12. ECRI welcomes these developments and urges the Albanian government to ensure that sufficient funds are allocated to the Office of the Ombudsman in order that it may effectively carry out its mandate. ECRI also draws the attention of the Albanian authorities to its general policy recommendation No 2 in which it stresses the important role played by specialised bodies, such as commissions or ombudsmen, in combating racism and discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity of all groups in society. Specialised bodies may play a role not only in addressing problems of discrimination, but also in revealing hidden patterns of discrimination in various fields. ECRI therefore encourages the Albanian authorities to draw inspiration from the above-mentioned policy recommendation and consider the possibility of developing the competence of the Ombudsman in this field.

G. Education and awareness raising

13. There is a strong tradition in Albania of emphasising tolerance between the different ethnic groups, and ECRI feels this identification of Albania as a tolerant society can play a very positive role in furthering the participation of minority groups in society, preventing problems from developing, and in dealing with new phenomena such as immigration. In this regard, ECRI encourages the authorities to include in the school curriculum at all levels materials focusing on issues of tolerance and respect for difference and the contributions to society made by ethnic minorities and to ensure teachers are trained in this area. Such teaching could perhaps be integrated into the general human rights education currently being introduced into schools at the primary and secondary level.
14. ECRI is pleased to learn that the Albanian government, in co-operation with the Council of Europe, is undertaking a review of the manner in which history is taught at all levels of the education system. In this regard ECRI recalls its general policy recommendation No 1 on combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance, whereby it recommends that member States “ensure that school-curricula, for example in the field of history teaching, are set up in such a way to enhance the appreciation of cultural diversity”. The Albanian authorities may wish to consider incorporating information about the cultural heritage and contribution to Albanian society of the various minority groups in the country.

H. Reception and status of non-citizens

- *Asylum seekers and refugees*

15. Albania accepted approximately 480 000 refugees fleeing Kosovo in 1999. ECRI congratulates the Albanian government and society for its hospitality and openness in accepting refugees of different ethnic backgrounds, including Roma and Serbs, and treating these individuals in the same manner as ethnic Albanians from Kosovo. Most of the refugees who came to Albania from Kosovo in 1999, have left the country. Approximately 3900 refugees now remain, mostly of Albanian ethnic origin. Many of these individuals need general assistance, education, resettlement abroad and medical attention. The refugees are provided with accommodation, food and assistance. They have the legal right to work, although there are reportedly difficulties with the application of this right. Children from Kosovo also attend Albanian schools.
16. In December 1998, Albania passed a new Law on Asylum. The UNHCR has commented favourably upon the comprehensive protection offered by this law. The law grants asylum according to the definition of a refugee enshrined in the Geneva Convention Related to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951 and the 1967 New York Protocol, as well as providing temporary protection on humanitarian grounds and in the case of a mass influx. The new law also guarantees to an individual granted asylum the right to family reunification with a spouse, children under 18 years of age and to any other relative under their legal custody, provided they reside together. Furthermore the law guarantees protection against non-refoulement in accord with international human rights treaties and the right *inter alia* to social assistance to the same extent as an Albanian national. ECRI supports the Albanian authorities in their efforts to establish an organic law on asylum in accordance with relevant European and international legal norms.
17. The Albanian asylum system is still not prepared to process applications and is operating on the basis of provisional regulations. In the case of the first asylum seekers who applied for refuge in 1999, there are long delays in the processing of the applications. The Albanian authorities are working with international experts in the field, and in particular with the UNHCR, in order to fill existing legislative gaps and address remaining infrastructural problems. ECRI encourages the Albanian authorities to continue their efforts to implement an effective asylum system as swiftly as possible. ECRI also urges the authorities to ensure that border guards and officials who will be involved in the asylum procedure receive adequate training, including training in human rights and relevant legislation in the field.

- *Illegal migration*

18. Albania has become an important trafficking route for illegal migrants, perhaps as many as 40 000 people pass through the country per year, according to unofficial estimates. These individuals include economic migrants, asylum seekers and women being trafficked into prostitution. The Albanian Government is aware of this situation, and cites as a central problem the lack of appropriate resources to deal adequately with this problem, and in particular a lack of

adequate detention facilities. Individuals caught in Albania are often detained in police stations, and sometimes in the one existing reception center. ECRI is concerned at reports that some instances of mistreatment have taken place in detention facilities and recommends that the Albanian authorities thoroughly investigate such reports and take steps to address problems in this area. ECRI encourages the authorities to ensure that individuals caught illegally in Albania are not treated as criminals. Furthermore, ECRI urges the Albanian authorities to ensure that all officials dealing with illegal migrants receive special training, including training in human rights.

19. ECRI voices its concern that the different categories of illegal migrants - economic migrants, asylum seekers and women being trafficked into prostitution - are treated in the same way, and emphasizes the need to deal differently with each category.

I. Access to public services

- Access to social services such as health care, welfare and housing

20. There are reports that members of the Roma and Egyptian communities may have difficulties finding housing and that in some localities, their villages lack basic facilities, such as water and sewage. Members of these groups reportedly also have difficulties accessing basic social services and benefits. This situation must be viewed in the Albanian context, where many ethnic Albanians suffer similar fates and villages throughout the country lack basic facilities. The possible role played by discrimination will be discussed in section II of this report.

- Access to education

21. ECRI is concerned about reports that the drop-out rate amongst Roma and Egyptian children is high and increasing and that the education level amongst members of these groups is disproportionately low. ECRI understands that the reasons for this situation are complex and there is no easy solution, however emphasises the need to increase the participation of members of these groups at all levels of education. The Albanian authorities are encouraged to make special efforts in this regard. The problem is widely perceived in Albania in terms of cultural differences and the lack of desire in these communities to send the children to school. ECRI urges the authorities to delve deeper into this phenomenon and to make special efforts to encourage children of these communities to pursue their schooling. In this regard ECRI draws attention to its General Policy Recommendation No 3 on combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies where the existence of discrimination in explaining the process of social exclusion is highlighted.
22. The role that prejudices and stereotypes may play in affecting the success of children in the school system is discussed below in section II of this report.

23. ECRI is pleased to learn of a number of programmes, organised in different municipalities by the Albanian government in cooperation with civil society, which aim to improve the participation and integration of Roma children in schools. These programmes include the organisation of sports and cultural activities in which both Roma and ethnic Albanian children participate. The authorities may also wish to consider the possibility of special assistance programmes for Roma and Egyptian children as well as other children from extremely poor families who lack proper school dress, hygiene or conditions in which to study. Security arrangements to protect children at risk of abduction may also be helpful. ECRI understands that the possibilities for such programmes are constrained by the lack of adequate resources.
24. Officially-recognised minority groups have the legal right to receive education in their mother tongue. Mother tongue schools aim to provide students with fluency in both the mother tongue and Albanian. A network of Greek language schools exists in those areas where the majority of ethnic Greeks live, and Macedonian language schools in the Prespa region of the country, where there is an officially recognised Macedonian community.

J. Employment

25. Although precise figures are unavailable, estimates indicate that the unemployment rates among the Roma and Egyptians² are well above the national average of 18%, perhaps as high as 90% in some communities. This situation and the role of discrimination will be discussed in section II of this report.

K. Vulnerable groups

This section covers certain minority groups which may be particularly vulnerable to problems of racism, discrimination and intolerance in the country in question. It is not intended to provide an exhaustive overview of the situation of all minority groups in the country, nor to imply that groups not mentioned face no problems of racism and discrimination

26. Members of the Roma and Egyptian communities figure disproportionately amongst the poorest segments of Albanian society and suffer an unemployment rate well above the national average. Such individuals also reportedly have difficulties accessing public services and their children are increasingly dropping out of schools: these issues are dealt with in more detail in section H above covering "access to public services". The manner in which discrimination may affect the situation of these communities in various areas of life will be discussed in section II of this report. Leaders of the Egyptian community highlight that a particular problem they face is the non-recognition of their identity.

² *The 'Egyptians' are a group of people who claim to be of Egyptian origin. They are often confused with the Roma, but speak a different language and distinguish themselves from the Roma.*

27. The situation of the Greek and ethnic Macedonian minorities seems to have been positively affected by improved relations between Albania and the governments of Greece and "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" . Both groups assert that their numbers are far greater than official figures dating from 1948. Representatives of the ethnic Macedonian community are particularly concerned about the non-fulfilment of their rights as minority groups, such as mother-tongue education, in various regions where members of their community are allegedly not recognised as such. Representatives of the Greek community are particularly concerned that certain positions, for instance in the army and police, still seem to be closed to them. ECRI is of the opinion that these concerns should be considered by the Albanian authorities.
28. Under-representation in state institutions, such as the public service, the police and the military, appears to be a problem for minority groups in Albania, although no statistical information is available in this regard. ECRI urges the Albanian authorities to consider measures to monitor and, where necessary, improve this situation. See below under Specific issues for discussion of the possible role played by discrimination.

L. Monitoring the situation in the country

29. It is very difficult to determine accurately the size of any ethnic group in Albania, since there has not been a census registering ethnic identity in recent years. Estimates about numbers diverge considerably depending on the source. Preparations for a general census are reportedly underway. ECRI strongly urges the Albanian authorities to include a question pertaining to ethnic identity, respecting the principle of voluntary self-identification. ECRI also believes that representatives of ethnic minority groups should be involved in the various stages of this process.
30. ECRI also encourages the Albanian authorities to consider ways of establishing a coherent and comprehensive means of data collection to enable the situation of the various minority groups living in Albania and the extent of manifestations of racism and discrimination to be assessed. Such a system of data collection should be based on the voluntary self-registration of the persons involved, and be designed with due respect paid to the right to privacy and to standards of data protection and free and informed consent of the persons in question.

M. Conduct of certain institutions

- *Police*

31. Excessive use of force and ill-treatment by law enforcement officials continues to be a widespread problem in Albania. Members of minority groups, particularly those in a weaker social position, such as the Roma and Egyptians, may be particularly vulnerable to such abuses. The Albanian authorities recognise that there is a pressing need to offer further training to the police forces as well as to fight corruption, and they cite this as a priority. Human rights training is included in the curriculum of the police academy. Special human rights training courses lasting from 15 days to a month are also being

offered to law enforcement officials. However, training possibilities are limited by a lack of resources, both human and financial. ECRI encourages the authorities to continue their efforts in this regard.

32. Authorities should not tolerate any police brutality, and this should be made clear by a firm and public condemnation by politicians and police leaders. ECRI feels that steps should be taken to investigate all alleged malpractice and to punish offenders. An internal investigation procedure into complaints of police abuse exists, however ECRI is concerned that cases are not adequately investigated and perpetrators of such acts often go unpunished. ECRI stresses the urgent need for the improvement of the response of the internal control mechanisms and recommends that an independent body be charged with the task of enquiring into all cases of ill-treatment by police officers.

N. Media

33. ECRI is pleased to learn that there is not considered to be a widespread problem in the Albanian media with respect to promoting intolerance or discrimination towards members of ethnic minority groups. There have, however, been some reports that the media sometimes promotes negative stereotypes about members of minority groups, particularly by naming alleged perpetrators of crimes as Roma. The media has an important role to play in creating an atmosphere of general tolerance and understanding between members of different ethnic communities, and ECRI hopes the media will take measures to ensure it continues to promote such a climate. Members of the press may, for instance, adopt codes of self-regulation to combat racist, xenophobic and discriminatory reporting and to promote coverage that is balanced and impartial.

SECTION II: ISSUES OF PARTICULAR CONCERN

34. In this section of its country-by-country reports, ECRI wishes to draw attention to a limited number of issues which in its opinion merit particular and urgent attention in the country in question. In the case of Albania, ECRI would like to draw attention to the phenomenon of indirect, hidden or unrecognised discrimination.

O. Indirect or hidden discrimination

35. Albania continues to be in a process of rapid transition and reform in most important spheres of life including the economic, legal, political and social spheres. Limited economic resources and widespread problems of criminality and corruption hinder the process of change. Various forms of intolerance, particularly of differences of political opinion, further impede developments within the country. Within this context problems of racism and discrimination on ethnic grounds are not generally considered to be the principal problems for members of Albanian society, either majority or minority, and there is a corresponding lack of awareness concerning such issues. Furthermore where members of minority groups suffer disadvantage, the link to discrimination is

not immediately obvious, particularly since ethnic Albanians often face similar difficulties. A general climate of tolerance of racial, ethnic, cultural and religious differences is also seen to prevail.

36. Despite this generally positive situation in ECRI's area of concern, ECRI stresses that an attitude of complacency should be avoided. Attention should nonetheless be paid to negative stereotypes and prejudices which may lead to discrimination in individual cases and to the phenomenon of hidden or indirect discrimination. Furthermore ECRI believes it is important that the general climate of tolerance remains and is strengthened.
37. There is a perception in Albanian society that members of Roma and Egyptian communities are not quite equal to other members of society. This attitude may, it seems, have been internalised by members of these groups, affecting their own expectations and self-perceptions as well as the attitudes of other Albanians towards members of these communities. For instance, it seems to be generally accepted that members of these groups will fill inferior jobs and roles in society. When Roma or Egyptian children drop out of school or are unsuccessful, this may be accepted as a relatively normal occurrence by teachers, parents and even the children themselves due to prejudices about these groups. Such prejudices may also affect their prospects in the job market where rates of unemployment among these two groups are well above the national average. ECRI believes that negative stereotypes and attitudes are frequently explanatory factors contributing to the low position of members of minority groups in various spheres of society, particularly in the education system and the labour market.
38. ECRI encourages public opinion leaders, such as politicians, journalists and intellectuals, to make special efforts to ensure that such attitudes are countered within the general public as well as amongst minority groups themselves. The equality of Roma and Egyptians with other members of Albanian society and the fact that they should benefit from the same opportunities as other Albanian citizens should be emphasised. Special efforts should also be made by the Albanian authorities to ensure that children, of both the majority and minority groups, learn of the fundamental equality of the different groups making up Albanian society and that they learn about their contribution to society as a whole. In this regard ECRI draws attention to its General Policy Recommendation No. 3 on combating racism and intolerance against Roma/Gypsies, in which it proposes that governments should "introduce into the curricula of all schools information on the history and culture of Roma/Gypsies and ... provide training programmes in this subject for teachers."
39. Special work should also be carried out to ensure the performance of Roma and Egyptian children in the school system is not adversely affected by negative perceptions about them. An investigation could be carried out into the role of stereotypes and prejudices of teachers, which may lead to low expectations for Roma and Egyptian children, reinforcing the attitudes these children and their families may already have internalised. ECRI recommends, in this respect, that training be offered to teachers, including information about the particular needs and expectations of Roma and Egyptians and guidance in how to assist and support children from these groups in participating successfully in the school system.

40. Members of minority groups, and particularly the Roma and Egyptians, may also suffer from a form of indirect or hidden discrimination in various fields of life connected to the manner of functioning of Albanian society and institutions. It is widely recognised that contacts, corruption and bribes are prevalent in most institutions of Albanian society. Thus it is often the case that in order to benefit from a public service, such as social insurance, one must either be closely linked to someone who works within the public administration at the local or national level or pay a bribe. This system benefits those with family members and close friends in public institutions or money to pay and disadvantages those without these connections who are unable to pay.
41. ECRI believes that it is important for the Albanian authorities to analyse the manner in which vulnerable groups, such as the Roma and Egyptians, may be particularly disadvantaged by the corruption which currently exists. ECRI appreciates the various efforts being carried out by the Albanian authorities to combat the problem of corruption generally. ECRI feels, however, that in addition to these efforts, it might prove necessary to implement special measures to ensure that members of these groups have the same access to public services and basic facilities as other Albanians. In particular the responsible authorities should make certain that those most in need of public services who are likely to be negatively affected by the existing corruption, are able to access these services.
42. The Albanian authorities should also investigate whether the underrepresentation of members of minority groups within the public sector may be linked to their lack of connections or inability to pay bribes. ECRI encourages the authorities to undertake initiatives to address this problem, such as making special efforts to recruit members of minority groups into the public service at the local and national level.

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