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ANAD
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Deaf People in Albania in 2015

A survey study

Edited by
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FINNISH ASSOCIATION OF THE DEAF

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FOREWORD

This survey study, dedicated to the deaf people of Albania, is a pioneer study, and a very necessary one in terms of implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), which was ratified by the Government of Albania in February 2013.

On ratifying the CRPD, the Government of Albania embarked upon immediate measures to make the necessary legal amendments that affect the lives of persons with disabilities in Albania. The approval of Law No. 93/2014 On Inclusion and Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities by the Albanian Parliament in July 2014 set forth a new legal approach, which paved the way for drafting several by-laws that would serve to improve the status of persons with disabilities.

In March 2014, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MSWY) launched the Inter-Ministerial Working Group to focus on the recognition and formalisation of Albanian Sign Language. The work of this group concluded with the adoption of DCM No. 837, dated 3 December 2014, 'On the recognition of sign language in the Republic of Albania'. This process highlighted the need to have a clear overview not only of the number of deaf people in Albania, but also of their socio-economic situation, educational attainment, employment and access to public services. The joint initiative of MSWY, the Albanian National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) and the Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD) to conduct a dedicated survey is now a reality, having been conducted in collaboration with the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT).

Since there have been no studies or reliable qualitative information available regarding the situation of the deaf population of Albania, the purpose of this survey is to collect information on deaf adults, as well as their opportunities to interact in everyday life, their access to information, education and employment, in accordance with the main articles and principles of the CRPD concerning deaf people and sign language.

At the same time, this study also supports the monitoring of the National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (2016-2020), by establishing baseline information from which to measure the progress of indicators in the Action Plan, as well as the impact of the various measures and interventions. Moreover, the outcomes of this study will help in drafting and implementing policies in several sectors, which will have a positive impact on the lives of deaf Albanians.

Our special gratitude goes to all of the collaborators involved in this process who enabled the successful completion of this survey study Deaf People in Albania in 2015.

Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MSWY)
Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT)
Albanian National Association of the Deaf (ANAD)
Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD)
Finnish University of Applied Sciences (HUMAK)
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Albania ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in February 2013. As no studies or reliable qualitative information were available regarding the situation of the deaf population in Albania, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth commissioned the Albanian National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) and the Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD) to conduct a survey in collaboration with the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT).

The purpose of this survey study "Deaf people in Albania 2015" is to obtain information on deaf adults in Albania, their opportunities for human interaction in everyday life, their access to information, education and employment – in light of the UNCRPD articles regarding deaf people and sign language. Applying participatory and collaborative methods of modern disability research, deaf people were involved in all aspects and stages of the survey process from planning to the dissemination of the results. Nine interviewers – deaf ANAD staff and other members – conducted the survey between 20 January and 21 February 2015 through interviews in sign language with 434 deaf people living in Albania. A structured online questionnaire compiled in written Albanian and translated into Albanian Sign Language was used.

Familial status of interviewees

Of the interviewees, 61% were male and 39% were female – mean age being 40,5 years. 67% of respondents (N=434) were married, of whom 86% were married to another deaf person. (3% of the respondents were divorced and 1% widowed.) Most of the married respondents (93%) had children, and 72% had more than one child. One quarter (26%) were single. Nearly half of the interviewees lived with their parents (49%); 62% lived with their spouse and/or their children %; 18% lived with siblings; 12% lived with parents-in-law. Only 4% of respondents lived alone. (The sum of percentages is more than 100% because these categories are not mutually exclusive; e.g. one person can live with his/her parents and with his/her siblings.)

Education of interviewees

Eighty-three per cent of the sample group had attended a deaf school (primary and secondary school), and 319 of 434 interviewees also completed their schooling. All but one (1) attended the deaf school in Tirana. Seven (7) also had experience of attending a school for hearing pupils, for between one and eight years, whereas 14 interviewees had attended only a school for hearing pupils (for three to nine years).

In the sample group, 16 out of 434 people attended high school. However, they had great difficulties due to the low level of their literacy skills. Eleven of this subgroup would have preferred to attend the school with a sign language interpreter. However, this would have been impossible due to the lack of interpreters. Only three (3) of these 16 respondents received higher education after high school, one at art school and two in neighbouring countries (the information gathered did not specify the institution or the programme of study). These three respondents also claimed to have encountered difficulties in their studies because of weak skills in reading and writing Albanian language.

Employment of interviewees

Fourty-six per cent of interviewees said that they are unemployed. According to the statistics by INSTAT the general unemployment rate among Albanian citizens between 15 and 64 years old is approximately 15%. Therefore the unemployment rate of deaf adults is three times higher than among the hearing population at large. Regarding the educational background and employment of interviewees, it can be inferred that those who attended and graduated from a deaf school were statistically more likely to be in employment than those who did not finish their schooling, or who attended schools for hearing children.

Linguistic accessibility for interviewees

In order to obtain a diagnostic impression of the competence of interviewees in written Albanian, a short reading test was included in the survey. A story containing seven phrases was presented along with nine drawings. Only seven (7) people (2% of the whole sample group) were able to select pictures that were somehow connected to the storyline and place them in an acceptable order. 38% of all respondents answered immediately that they were illiterate in the Albanian language and did not want to answer to this survey question, and 23% (102 people) chose pictures that were not semantically connected to the story. The latter group of 102 respondents can therefore be considered illiterate in the Albanian language, alongside those who declined to participate in this test. This can be

compared to the National Census of 2011, where the illiteracy rate for the population aged 10 years and over is 2.8%, and the comparison shows that the rate of illiteracy in written Albanian among deaf adults is very high. This rate remains high when compared to the population of hearing people who have a disability (aged 15 years and above), for whom the rate of illiteracy is 21%.

In the deaf school, besides spoken language, teaching is conducted using fingerspelling (where the Albanian language is transliterated using a manual alphabet, with one sign for each letter), accompanied with gestures. (Only four respondents claim to have received education in sign language.) The communicative skills of teachers were claimed to be 'poor' by 97% of respondents; the remaining 3% said that communication was understandable ('average'). No respondent gave a positive evaluation ('good') of the communicative skills of teachers.

Contrary to the traditional socio-cultural history of deaf populations in other countries, only a small number of respondents (9%, n=139) who know some Albanian Sign Language (AlbSL) acquired it from deaf peers in school. It seems that others acquired AlbSL at a later age, mostly from other deaf people and/or through contact with ANAD.

Respondents say that the language they use with hearing family members is some form of spoken or written Albanian that can be produced using the manual alphabet in order to visualise singular words. Only nine people were able to use sign language to communicate with hearing members of their family. When communicating with hearing people outside the family, deaf people need help from others, since 94% declare that they cannot understand the speech of hearing people (the remaining 6% of respondents are able to understand to some degree, but with difficulties). 87% of respondents report that they are not understood by hearing people (only 11% perceive that they are understood – but with difficulties). Besides the two people who work in ANAD, there are only four sign language interpreters available in the whole country who have received basic training. Because of this, the parents, siblings and friends of respondents act as facilitators of communication with other hearing people, despite the fact that they are not proficient in sign language.

Access to information

Access to information was measured by asking interviewees about how they obtain information about news and current events. Most of the respondents (87%) report that they obtain information from news channels in sign language on television or on websites, or from friends who use sign language. Around 60% of respondents try to obtain information by looking at the images on television. Nevertheless, a third of those who are illiterate continue to try and gather information from written text in newspapers and on websites.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the survey results show that the deaf population in Albania does not enjoy equal opportunities with regard to independent living, the right to general education and further studies, the right to employment that accords with one's potential, and access to information as their hearing peers. Moreover, an additional burden is created, because social protection schemes fail to recognise the needs of deaf people.

There is a need to accelerate the paradigm shift from the medical model of deafness as a medical condition, to the social model of deafness. One important step towards this goal is to give Albanian Sign Language the status of a minority language. Once the deaf population is regarded not only as a disability group, but also as a linguistic minority, responsible parties will have better tools with which to address linguistic and other barriers that deaf people face – barriers that are clearly evidenced by this survey report.

The last chapter of the survey study includes concrete proposals for actions that can be taken to fulfil the rights and raise the capacity of deaf people in the surveyed areas. It highlights the importance of early intervention, of using sign language and a bilingual method in education, and of enabling constant exposure and access to and through sign language in all aspects of a deaf person's life. The recommendations form a framework and road map for implementation that will require solid commitment from several government ministries and for inter-ministerial collaboration, as well as collaboration with the Albanian National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) as the expert and key actor representing the target group. In addition to amending the legislative framework, the relevant initiatives need be granted the required budgetary resources, with the implementation ensured over electoral mandate periods and followed through at all stages from central to district levels.

As long as the revision of legislation is adopted and enforced, and the recommended actions are implemented, Albania has an opportunity to become a leading country in the Balkan region when it comes to fulfilling the duties of the CRPD and respecting the human rights of deaf people.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Päivi Rainò & Inkeri Lahtinen

1.1 A recent history of Albanian deaf people, the Association of the Deaf, and Albanian Sign Language

For 50 years after the Second World War, Albania was the most inaccessible country in Europe. Those times were challenging for all Albanians, and also for Albania's deaf people.[1] Many of them were socially isolated within their hearing families, signing was regarded shameful, and the Communist regime impeded the participation of people belonging to any ethnic or linguistic minority. Although a school for deaf children, the *Institute for Deaf Students* in Tirana, was founded in the 1960s, a deaf community could not emerge before the collapse of Communism in the 1990s (Hoyer 2007; Andoni, Shabani & Baçi 2003). In those times, deaf education all over the world had strong foundations in the oral method, where deaf pupils were forced to use speech and lip-reading to communicate at school. The use of sign language was impeded, often violently, because signing was (wrongly) considered to be one of the factors that hinders the learning of the spoken language. While in Western countries oralism started to lose ground in the 1980s, Albanian teachers of the deaf obtained training in the Soviet Union and China, where the oral tradition predominated (Hoyer 2007). In addition to spoken and written Albanian, the transliteration of Albanian words with a manual alphabet (*daktilim*) was permitted by some teachers, as the only visual means of communication. Only very recently have some teachers of the deaf begun to adopt the use of signs when teaching.

As described in Hoyer's seminal work (2007) and in the following personal testimony by Eduard Ajas, the deaf youth used to return to their homes in the countryside after leaving school, and were not often able to meet with other deaf children. Deaf women in particular were not allowed to leave their homes, although deaf men living in the same cities or villages could meet with each other. Many deaf children from poor families in remote villages never had the chance to attend the boarding school in Tirana. They still live isolated from other deaf people, and may be hidden away by parents who consider their deafness to be shameful.

It was not until Communism collapsed in 1990 that deaf people were able to gather in an organised way on a regular basis. The Albanian National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) was formally established in 1993. However, ANAD was not operative until the deaf community made contact with the Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD) towards the turn of the new millennium. ANAD and FAD started official cooperation in 2000. The cooperation process was then (and still is) funded by the Finnish Ministry for Foreign

1 In this report, we have adopted the convention of always using a lower-case *d* when referring to the deaf population, and to people who are identified, or who identify themselves as deaf. We do not make any distinction based on their level of hearing, their preferred language or language modality (be it signed or spoken), or their adherence to d/Deaf or "hearing" culture.

Affairs and FAD to improve the human and linguistic rights of deaf Albanians. Along with changes in society's attitudes that favour the acceptance of linguistic minorities, long-term and wide-scale collaboration with FAD has been the major contributor to the active promotion and encouragement of deaf people to use sign language in their communication. (See also the following personal testimony from Eduard Ajas.)

In 2002, ANAD and FAD started to document the emerging Albanian Sign Language (AlbSL). In 2005, a dictionary – a book and a DVD – *Gjuha e Shenjave Shqipe 1* ('Albanian Sign Language 1') was published containing approximately 250 signs (Hoyer 2007, reflight). However, Albanian Sign Language emerged and began its long process towards becoming a shared language mainly via the informal and formal social activities of deaf individuals, still mostly organised by ANAD, and along with ANAD's support to form local activist groups. Nowadays information from ANAD to deaf community members is delivered mainly in AlbSL using ANAD website and Facebook pages, with services that allow video recordings (e.g. WhatsApp). Additionally, in 2008, as a result of ANAD advocacy and training, the national TV Channel TVSH started transmitting daily news presented with deaf in-vision signers (Skinner 2013).

While Albanian Sign Language emerged and slowly started to take shape, as deaf people gathered and socialised with one another, ANAD and FAD have actively promoted the linguistic rights of deaf people and improved the social status of AlbSL so that it could be recognized as the primary language of deaf people. The national Parliament officially recognised sign language in Albania by a decree signed in December 2014 (Decision of Council of Ministers No. 837, dated 3 December 2014, cf. People's Advocate 2015, 37). Still, besides the two people who work at ANAD, and four freelancers who received basic interpreter skills during a short-term training programme (2007–9), there are no professional AlbSL interpreters in Albania. Six sign language interpreters are clearly too few in number, but deaf people cannot afford to pay for an interpreting service that is not compensated by the public sector.

Nevertheless, the major challenge is in the field of deaf education, where oral traditions still prevail. At present, there are only a few teachers who have good command of sign language, or other skills to communicate visually with their pupils, besides fingerspelling (use of the manual alphabet).

PERSONAL TESTIMONY:

Glimpses of the history of deaf people in Albania from 1960s until today

Eduard Ajas

Translated from Albanian Sign Language to English

This is an account of my life as a deaf person in Albania, starting with my educational background. I attended the deaf school in Tirana which was established in 1963. During the nine years that I spent there (from 1973–1982), fingerspelling was in use, which was fortunate, but apart from that the teachers strongly believed in using oralist teaching methods. Deaf pupils were forced to use speech, and spoken Albanian was the language of instruction, both for deaf and hard of hearing students. We would try to speak, but at the same time, we would use fingerspelling under the desks as we spoke. If the teacher spotted this, we were beaten. We were, however, able to communicate with each other using gestures and a few signs during breaktimes, mealtimes, and in the dormitory. We had our own signs, including TOILET, TEACHER, CAR, and FATHER, and we would use phrases such as 'FATHER DROVE THE CAR'. These signs have been in use from the 1960s until today.

Once I left school, I returned to my family. Sometimes I could meet my deaf friends, visiting them at their houses, but we could never meet in a café, for instance, because of the Communist regime that we lived under until 1990. We were not allowed to meet in any public places. During those gatherings at each other's homes, we communicated mostly via fingerspelling, using a few signs along with gestures.

After each meeting we would make an appointment for the next one, setting an exact date, time and place. Our families begged us to stay at home and not go out. I could not understand this as I was not aware of the strict Communist rules. After 1990, when democracy came, deaf people started meeting each other more freely in public spaces (usually in cafés). However, older people and young people met each other separately. They did not meet in mixed age groups because group identity based on deafness, or on using signed communication, had not yet emerged.

Life in the 1990s

During the 1990s Albania became a democracy, and in 1996 a deaf adviser, Katja Merentie, came to Albania from Finland. It was the first time I saw a foreigner using sign language, even though we communicated with her using gestures. The purpose of her visit was to collect information regarding the situation of deaf people in Albania, our way of communication, and life in general during the Communist era. After the visit, she proposed to her organisation, the Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD), that a group representing the Albanian deaf community should visit Finland. In order to respect gender equality, Ms. Merentie emphasised that the group should contain both males and females. At that time, we were not able to recognise the importance of equality, and we were convinced that men were stronger and more knowledgeable than women. We decided, however, that a group of five people – two women and three men – should travel to Finland, and I was one of them.

It was in 2000 that I visited Finland for the first time. That was a unique experience for me, as I had never been outside my country before – we were so incredibly isolated during the Communist era. I learned a lot from that trip.

The study trip began with a visit to FAD's office. We observed how an organisation led by deaf people works. We also visited a couple of deaf clubs in three cities, Tampere, Kerava and Pori. It was a thrilling experience, and the Finnish deaf community appeared to

be strong. Those clubs were not led by hearing people, but by deaf people themselves, and I was impressed by how these people worked together harmoniously. I also saw a sign language interpreter for the first time in my life. At that moment, I didn't realise what it meant to work with an interpreter. Later I understood the essential role that interpreters play in advocacy work, facilitating communication between deaf and hearing people. Another thing that surprised me was the availability of television programmes in sign language.

When we came back to Albania I wondered how we could obtain training to unite the deaf community, because it was separated into subgroups that were not on good terms with each other. I wanted all of the things that I had seen in Finland to happen in Albania too. But things in Albania were different: young deaf people could not approach deaf elders; they were simply excluded due to their age. It was – and still is – a normal phenomenon in our culture. Nevertheless, we understood that this was discrimination, and we tried to abolish that principle. I wanted to create a strong deaf community for us, too, and FAD promised to support us.

External support (2000–2006)

ANAD started to train, develop and strengthen our Albanian deaf community, and FAD recruited an international adviser, Colin Allen, who came from Australia to stay with us. In the beginning, we communicated mostly with gestures, since our respective sign languages differed a lot. But when Mr. Allen met with young deaf people, he communicated with them freely. It was a surprise to us, because our deaf elders would patronise deaf youths. Nevertheless, Mr. Allen patiently explained to them that, despite their age, all people should be treated with respect and dignity.

Mr. Allen, along with other advisers from FAD, have supported us enormously – not only me, but the whole of ANAD's staff. I am very grateful to them. Without all of the support and training from the advisers, we would not have reached the stage of development where we are now.

In 2003, for the first time in the history of the Albanian deaf community, ANAD started to conduct sign language research in Albania. Karin Hoyer, a linguistic adviser from FAD, trained three deaf ANAD staff members in how to conduct Sign Language Work. They developed their training skills and are now sharing their knowledge regarding sign language with the deaf community in the provinces.

Recent developments (2007–2016)

Thrilling things have happened during the last ten years because of the training that ANAD staff received from foreign advisers. We have started to share the fruits of this training in the provinces, and our local deaf people can now develop their knowledge and signing skills much further, compared to earlier times when they knew very little about signing, and used only fingerspelling.

Unfortunately, deaf Albanians do still have problems, especially in remote villages. The deaf people who live there, when they have finished school, live their lives enclosed in their homes. We have deaf people who are 40 years and older who only use fingerspelling, with some gestures. Their families sometimes hide them, which prevents them from having contact with the wider deaf community. Over time, they forget the sign language and fingerspelling that they may have learned at school. There are many such cases, due to a lack of information.

During the survey interviews, we met a family with a deaf girl who used fingerspelling. After I greeted her parents, they seemed surprised to learn that I am also deaf. The daughter asked me when I went to school, who my friends are, and how it is that I can sign so well. I told her about ANAD, and about how deaf people use sign language to communicate, and so forth. The daughter knew nothing about this, and she was disappointed that she had been kept at home by her parents. I tried to explain the situation to her family as well, but it was very difficult due to their lack of information even about the basic human rights that all citizens should enjoy.

When meeting a hearing person, communication is still very difficult. When I go shopping, for example, I point to different items and indicate with my fingers how many I want, and then I ask with a gesture how much it costs. This is my "visual communication". Lip-reading is also a challenge. If I meet a hearing friend who I know, it is of course much easier, as s/he will use iconic signs and gestures, but again, trying to lip-read what s/he is saying is very, very hard.

1.2 Statistics and terminology on hearing loss and deafness

Päivi Rainò

A person who is not able to hear as well as someone with normal hearing – with hearing thresholds of 25 decibels (dB) or more in both ears – is said to have a hearing loss. This hearing loss may be *mild*, *moderate*, *severe* or *profound*. It can affect one ear or both ears, and it leads to difficulty in hearing conversational speech or even loud sounds. 'Hard of hearing' refers to people with hearing loss ranging from mild to severe. People who are hard of hearing usually communicate through spoken language and can benefit from hearing aids, cochlear implants and other assistive technologies as well, such as subtitling (captioning).

'Deaf' people mostly have a profound hearing loss, which implies very little or no hearing. They often use sign language for communication. A *disabling hearing* loss refers to a loss greater than 40dB in the better ear in adults, and a hearing loss greater than 30dB in the better ear in children (cf. Table 1). According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), the majority of people with a disabling hearing loss live in low- and middle-income countries (WHO 2016, 2015a).

Table 1. Grades of hearing impairment (European Commission 2016, WHO 2008).

Grade of impairment	Corresponding audiometric ISO value	Performance	Recommendations
0 - No impairment	25 dB or more (better ear)	No or very slight hearing problems. Able to hear whispers.	
1 - Slight impairment	26–40 dB	Able to hear and repeat words spoken in normal voice at a distance of 1 metre.	Counselling. Hearing aids may be needed.
2 - Moderate impairment	41–60 dB (better ear)	Able to hear and repeat words spoken in raised voice at a distance of 1 metre.	Hearing aids usually recommended.
3 - Severe impairment	61–80 dB (better ear)	Able to hear some words when shouted into the better ear.	Hearing aids needed. If no hearing aids are available, lip-reading and sign language should be taught. *)
4 - Profound impairment including deafness	81 dB or greater (better ear)	Unable to hear and understand even a shouted voice.	Hearing aids may help understanding words. Additional rehabilitation needed. Lip-reading and sometimes signing is essential. *)

Grades 2, 3 and 4 are classified as a disabling hearing impairment.
The audiometric ISO values are averages of values at 500, 1000, 2000, 4000 Hz.

*) In a more recent report WHO recommends also that deaf children should have early exposure to sign language and they should be educated as multilinguals in reading and writing. Teachers should get training in sign language and accessible educational material should be provided for children. (WHO World Report on Disability 2011, 227)

Hearing impairment can be referred to as 'low incidence disability' (Mitchell & Karchmer 2006), occuring seldom in the population. Before 2011 there were no official statistics on the population of people with a hearing loss in Albania. In the National Census of 2011, people with impaired vision, hearing, mobility, cognition, self-care and communication were identified for the first time. The main objective of the Census was to determine the number of people with a disability, and the type and degree of disability, framed by the following terms: *no difficulties – some difficulties – a lot of difficulties – completely unable* (INSTAT 2012, 14; 90). In the Census, a profound impairment ('completely unable to hear') was identified in 5,351 persons in the population aged 15 years or over. The number of people in that age range is 2.2 million (the whole population being 2.8 million), and so the prevalence of deafness is 2.4 per every 1000 persons. There are slightly more women in this category (N=2 806) than men (N=2 545). (INSTAT 2012, 90.)

According to the 2011 Census, 10% of the population aged 15 years or older have a hearing loss that ranges from mild to profound. 38,000 people (1.7%) have a lot of difficulties with hearing or a complete hearing loss that – according to WHO's classification – would fall into the categories 'severe' or 'profound' (cf. INSTAT 2012, 90; 164). The number of people completely unable to hear is 5,351 (INSTAT 2012, 90) while 10,378 people were regarded as completely unable to communicate (INSTAT 2012, 98). On the other hand, in the Living Standard and Measurement Survey (LSMS) conducted in 2012, the correlation between the disability in "communication" and "hearing" (0.54) was weaker than that of "cognition" and "communication" (0.79) (Ferré, Galanxhi & Dhono 2015, 15). These correlation scores indicate that limitations in communication do not necessarily depend on hearing, but more likely on limitations in cognition. However, a strong difficulty or complete inability in hearing and in communication was found – in both classes – in 0.5 % of the population (Ferré, Galanxhi & Dhono 2015, 13). On request in April 2016, INSTAT also provided this survey with figures from the 2011 Census for the population aged 15 years and over, by prefecture, who are reported as not able to hear and not able to communicate: this group constitutes a total of 3,051 people (see Appendix 2, Table I).

These figures provide an excellent *tertium comparationis* with studies on prevalence rates of hearing loss in different populations. The newest estimates from the WHO for Central Europe (including Albania) suggest that 9% of the population has a disabling hearing loss (WHO 2012). In light of the previous figures provided by INSTAT, the WHO estimate is somewhat high for Albania. In other European countries, such as the United Kingdom, the prevalence of a hearing impairment greater than 40dBs (see Table 1) is around 1.65 per 1,000 live births, and the prevalence of less severe, but educationally significant hearing impairment is around 2.05 per 1,000 children (Fortnum, Summerfield, Marshall, Davis & Bamford 2001).

2 BACKGROUND OF THE SURVEY

Inkeri Lahtinen & Päivi Rainò

Albania ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in February 2013 (United Nations Treaty Collection 2016). As part of the alignment of legislation regarding deaf people, the Government set up an Inter-Ministerial Working Group to process the recognition of sign language in Albania, assigning the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth as the lead ministry. Apart from the statistics gathered on the disabled population in the 2011 National Census, there were no studies or reliable qualitative information available regarding the situation of deaf Albanians.[2] It was necessary to commission a statistically valid baseline study in order for the ministries to develop amendments to existing legislation. The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth launched the operation of the Sign Language Recognition Working Group in March 2014, and commissioned the Albanian National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) and the Finnish Association of the Deaf (FAD) to conduct a survey in collaboration with the Albanian Institute of Statistics (INSTAT). The purpose of this survey is to obtain information on deaf adults in Albania, their opportunities for human interaction in everyday life, and their access to information, education and employment, in light of the UN CRPD articles regarding deaf people and sign language. A key focus of the research is linguistic accessibility: the status of signed and written languages in the lives of deaf people, and access to information and interpreting services (CRPD articles 2, 9 and 21). Another aim is to assess the impact of teaching methods (CRPD article 24) in special schools for deaf children upon the abilities of deaf people to meet the linguistic requirements of society at large. (Cf. United Nations Treaty Collection 2016.)

The research was conducted as a survey study through interviews, in sign language, with 434 deaf people in Albania. These interviews were conducted by deaf ANAD staff and ANAD members, using a structured online questionnaire in the Albanian language. The interviews were conducted by nine deaf interviewers from 20 January to 21 February 2015. The content of the questionnaire was designed by Dr. Päivi Rainò (a sign linguist and researcher in deaf culture and sign language studies at the Humak University of Applied Studies (UAS), Finland) in close collaboration with the General Coordinator of ANAD, Florjan Rojba, and the Project Manager of FAD, Inkeri Lahtinen. Later on, during the analysis phase, an expert in statistical analysis, Liisa Martikainen D.Ed. (Humak UAS) joined the research group.

2 Later, in January 2015, a study of the disabled population in Albania was published (Ferré, Galanxhi & Dhono 2015), commissioned by the United Nations Development Programme. That study is based on data from the 2011 Census and the 2012 Living Standard and Measurement Survey, and gives a generic picture of Albanian persons with disabilities, the prevalence of disability, and socio-economic conditions. However, the study contains only a few details about people with difficulties in hearing and communication.

The approach used in the Albanian survey was to develop a questionnaire, according to participatory and collaborative research methods, to enable the systematic collection and analysis of data in this very specific geo-political and linguistic context. It was essential that the process respected the expertise of deaf Albanians, and that deaf people were involved in all aspects of the research process, from the formulation of hypotheses to the collection, and analysis of data, the interpretation of the results, and dissemination. These principles (condensed into the slogan "Nothing about us without us") are also stated by the Disability Rights Promotion International D.R.P.I, 2002. (Boucher & Fiset 2015; Samson 2015; Pinto 2011; WHO 2011; Hoyer 2007; Kitchin 1999, Charlton 1998).

The first "deaf specific survey" conducted in the Balkan area took place in Kosovo (Kosovar Association of the Deaf & Finnish Association of the Deaf, 2010). That survey proved once again that the main challenge in a survey conducted in a culturally diverse environment is to adjust the question setting and interview methodology to the target group, in terms of communication and cognitive-educational framework.[3] This means, for example, that preformatted questions and/or questionnaires designed for disabled people cannot be used as such with people who cannot read and cannot hear well, or with deaf people who use less shared ("standard") sign language, or some other form of visual-gestural communication as their main language.[4] Nevertheless, based on the long-term experiences of ANAD, it would be normal that the interviewers would encounter a large variation of language abilities in their fieldwork. The structure and contents of the Kosovo survey were modified largely by the research group, adapted to comply with the linguistic and cultural traits of the differing environment and context in Albania. Some modifications were implemented after piloting the questionnaire with six deaf adults resident in Tirana. From the very beginning, the research group was also able to consult experts at INSTAT. It had previously conducted a nationwide Census (*Census of Population and Housing 2011*) which generated data on respondents with disabilities, including hearing loss and problems regarding communication. The results of the 2011 Census enabled INSTAT to estimate the sampling frame that would cover that stratum of population identified as 'completely unable to hear' (cf. Chapter 3). Based on this national database, the Social Statistics Directory of INSTAT evaluated the representativeness of the sample group that was drawn from the membership of ANAD, and compared it to the target group.

The target group of this survey was the deaf population, and no enquiry would be reliable if it was conducted using a spoken or written language. The only way to get first-hand information from deaf people was to use signed language, and the only possible way to reach such people in the short time-frame available was to contact the whole membership of ANAD. This membership consists of people who have voluntarily joined the national deaf organisation due to their severe hearing loss and their linguistic preference of using some form of signed language for communication.

3 The very same questions were also pondered in the first deaf specific survey conducted in Finland on the whole deaf population (Jalonen & Pohjonen 1975).

4 The Washington Group (cf. WHO 2011) General Measure on Disability gathers information about limitations in basic activity functioning at a general level among national populations. It is unable to identify, for instance, the restrictions in participation created by society due to differences in the linguistic behaviours of its deaf and hearing members. However, such restrictions have always been the main challenge encountered by deaf minorities during their history in all parts of the world (e.g. Lane 1984).

Having informed its membership of the survey in sign language via ANAD's homepage and Facebook site, nine deaf interviewers were instructed in the use of the online questionnaire and its signed translation. These interviewers travelled in pairs to interview all those members of ANAD who volunteered to participate in the survey: a total of 305 people around the country. In addition, 129 other people, identified by local deaf people as possible interviewees, were recruited as participants using the so-called snowball method. Interviewers used a structured online questionnaire that was compiled in written Albanian and translated into Albanian Sign Language. Each question was signed to interviewees in person, and each signed answer was recorded immediately on site, into the database of the online survey tool (*Webropol*, provided by Humak UAS).[5] If web connections were unavailable in the survey location, the signed answers were documented in writing on survey sheets and recorded on the same day in the Webropol database. (See also the next chapter by Florjan Rojba describing the fieldwork.)

Interviewers kept a signed digital journal on their mobile phones or laptops, where they regularly recorded their observations on survey sites in sign language (cf. Excerpts from signed field reports, p. 29). They were constantly in contact with other interviewers and the coordinator via a video messenger system that allowed the use of sign language (cf. WhatsApp group messaging, p. 52). In addition, four interviews were filmed in their entirety in four different locations for quality control purposes.

The statistical analysis based on this fieldwork has been conducted by Dr. Rainò and D.Ed. Liisa Martikainen. The most common types of measurement collected were on nominal and ordinal scales. In the nominal scale type, the measurement only indicates the category of a case (e.g. "Where did you learn sign language?", "What is your additional disability?"). The ordinal scale type allows cases to be ordered by degree ("Did you have difficulties in education in high school?" no difficulties / yes, a little / yes, a lot) but the distance between categories is unknown. These scales are both categorical in nature (see e.g. Argyrous 1997). As a consequence, most of the statistical methods used in the analysis are compatible with categorical variables, such as frequency and percentage distributions, cross tabulations and chi-square tests. In a few cases, correlation tests were used. The general problem with analysing and interpreting the results is that some respondents may have misunderstood certain questions. This may derive from the complex nature of some of the questions, as well as a complicated data-gathering process: interviewers were signing questions from a questionnaire written in a language that is not their preferred language, and many respondents are not fully competent in any language, signed, written or spoken. Nevertheless, the results of the study are reliable enough to cast light on important issues in question.

5 www.webropol.fi; www.webropol.com

Fieldwork conducted by deaf sign language users

Florjan Rojba

Translated from International Sign to English

Preparation of the signed questionnaire and training for fieldwork

The survey questionnaire, with its 48 questions, was first translated from English (in which it was originally written) to Albanian, and from Albanian to Albanian Sign Language, and then back into Albanian and English again. The final translation stage included several back translations between Albanian–English–Albanian Sign Language. This was done in close collaboration with the researcher, ANAD's interpreters and staff, who are deaf sign language users. The work was also supported by a Finnish deaf adviser of FAD, Artu Liikamaa, who acted as a cultural interpreter. The translations for each question were videotaped so that any question could be checked on the laptop that each interviewer took to the field. In my role as ANAD's coordinator, I prepared a 5 minute presentation explaining the purpose of the survey, to be shown on the fieldworker's laptop to all participants before the actual interview took place. After seeing this signed message, the interviewee was to decide whether to take part in the survey or not.

A group of nine people (five men and four women) representing different age groups took part in the training process, which prepared them for fieldwork. The requirements of Albanian culture were taken into consideration: e.g. a female fieldworker was used when women were being interviewed. Training took place twice, lasting for one week at the end of December 2014 and another week in January 2015. Before that, instructions and guidelines were received from INSTAT.

The training sessions that I led focussed on the scope of the research, practicalities and responsibilities when conducting the interviews, working as a pair, the division of tasks (interviewing, handling and registering the data into the Webropol), and mutual support. We also had lengthy discussions about how to show respect to the enormous degree of variation in signing skills, the diversity of communication modes

Figure 1.
Deaf interviewers in training at ANAD office in Tirana before heading to the field.

Figure 2.
Eduard Ajas walking with a local interviewee to his home in a distant village.

in our deaf community, how to take into account the educational background, age and socio-cultural contexts that the interviewers were to encounter in geographically diverse locations, and how to respect laws concerning privacy. We practiced producing signed field diaries and documenting our fieldwork – the latter would, naturally, take place only if the interviewees consented either to photographing or videotaping.

The questionnaire itself was tested, studied and memorised by heart in Albanian Sign Language – along with the written Albanian text. Moreover, the questionnaire was piloted in Tirana at the ANAD office, where four respondents were interviewed and filmed. After the pilot interviews, some minor changes were made to the questionnaire.

With the team of interviewers we prepared a schedule for travelling to the provinces for each survey team. We set the goals for each week, e.g. how many people in each province would be interviewed, and the duration of each trip. Each team followed the details provided by INSTAT concerning the required number of interviewees. As part of my role, I took responsibility for contacting active members of ANAD, or "local leaders" living in the provinces to inform them about the survey, the date of the interviews, and the contact details of the interviewers.

Conducting the survey

Teams travelled by bus or minibus to all provinces and stayed overnight at hotels where necessary. On arriving, they contacted "the local leader", informed him/her about the survey, and planned the interviews for the following morning. In this way, we were able to interview both members of ANAD and those with no previous link with ANAD. All teams were in mutual contact using WhatsApp, and able to discuss any issues or concerns with me and with each other. We were able to find immediate solutions together for any problems that emerged.

The following morning, the two interviewers met with the local leader, and travelled to the villages to meet the deaf people who were to be interviewed. Some villages were situated near to the base location, but others were very far away. In general, the teams started in the villages that were furthest away, where they could conduct three to four interviews per day. In closer villages, the teams were able to interview between 10 and 25 people over three or four days. In the largest cities and their closest villages, it was even possible to interview 45 people in four days. In remote places where no buses or minibuses were available, the teams used a taxi to reach deaf interviewees. But there were some places too remote even for travel by

Figure 3. *Snapshots from field interviews. Respondents concentrating in the reading test and answering the survey questions signed by the fieldworkers.*

taxi, and to reach these places the leader escorted the survey team on foot for up to three hours in order to reach deaf individuals.

In the evening, the interviewers came back to hotel, and videotaped an entry to the field diary (of which some translated excerpts are reproduced in this report). If any issues arose from the interviews which required clarification, this was resolved via WhatsApp. In some cases the interviewers were not able to fill in the web-questionnaire on site. In those cases, they took notes on a paper questionnaire, and transferred the data to Webropol later that day. I was also able to

receive questions via WhatsApp, and pass on the answers from the Finnish researcher or from INSTAT to our team members in the field. This was an excellent and efficient way of using visual communication, as it is transparent and was understood by all members of our working group.

During the interviews, I was in Tirana leading the work, and the nine interviewers were in different districts around Albania. As mentioned earlier, communication between us took place via a WhatsApp forum that we all shared, and on which every team member could add comments. All teams worked from Monday to Friday and returned to Tirana on Saturday. On Sundays we had regular meetings where we discussed the work that had been done during the previous week. I also shared the updates about the data collected online, which we received from the researcher every week. We worked according to the action plan that we designed by ourselves, from 21 January until 22 February 2015. During this time, we successfully interviewed 434 of the 437 deaf people in our sample quota from all around Albania.

This was the first time that I had coordinated such an extensive survey process. However, the teams were very satisfied with our communication, and with the way that problems were solved. They also felt that their motivation levels were raised when problems arose in the field. The major task, of translating questions into sign language from a questionnaire written in a language that is not known by the interviewers, was of course challenging. But having the questionnaire on the computer, in a written language and in a signed language, made it possible for us to overcome this challenge.

Challenges and lessons learned

Finding an adequate communication mode when interviewing respondents proved to be a real challenge. The interviewers had to test and apply a variety of modes to facilitate communication, including Albanian Sign Language, fingerspelling, gesticulation, pointing and different combinations of all of these modes. Many members of the survey team encountered deaf-blind people for the first time in their lives. Nevertheless, they learned to communicate with them using tactile sign language. It was a wake-up moment for many hearing family members, to realise that deaf individuals who they considered to be "uneducated" are able to self-reflect and have the right to express their own opinion on a variety of issues they had encountered during their lives.

The interviewers realised that they were fully competent and able to carry out the assignment, which did not depend on their literacy skills. They could solve problems using signing as the main communication mode, thus the Albanian language could be left in the background.

The interviewers met deaf people in a variety of living conditions; some were totally isolated, some faced extreme poverty, some – especially deaf women and girls – clearly faced discrimination from their family, and had no access to information or education. This had an emotional impact on the interviewers, who witnessed the hardships that deaf people deal with and have to overcome in their everyday lives in the provinces. This experience was an eye-opener for the interviewers, and it put the barriers and problems of their own lives into perspective. They now have a better understanding of the diversity of situations and living conditions that the deaf population faces around Albania.

3 STATISTICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE SURVEY

Mirela Muça, Emira Galanxhi & Alma Kondi

3.1 Sampling frame and sampling observation units

The units of analysis and the units of observation are the following groups:

1. Persons with hearing disability corresponding to the "Completely unable" in the Population and Housing Census 2011. It is completely impossible that these persons carry out a certain activity. "Completely unable" has been marked only when the person is completely unable to hear.
2. The age of respondents should be 18 years old and above.

The Republic of Albania is divided geographically into 12 Regions (Qarqe). The latter are divided into Districts (Rrethe), which are further divided into Municipalities (Bashkitë) and Communes (Komunat). For statistical purposes, the Albanian territory (the cities and the villages) is divided into enumeration areas (EAs) of the Census. Table 2 below shows the number of enumeration areas, household in each region of our study.

Table 2. Distribution of the EAs, households and individuals with hearing disability by region.

Region	Number of EAs in frame	Number of households who have at least one person with disability	Number of individuals	Percent distribution of individuals
Berat	523	348	386	7.2
Dibër	463	367	243	4.5
Durrës	817	614	444	8.3
Elbasan	1047	928	611	11.4
Fier	1147	809	744	13.9
Gjirokastër	355	203	207	3.9
Korçë	904	555	451	8.4
Kukës	276	282	163	3.0
Lezhë	439	358	286	5.3
Shkodër	761	528	456	8.5
Tirana	2074	1293	905	16.9
Vlorë	701	448	455	8.5
Total	9507	6733	5351	100.0

The list of the sampling frame includes the urban/rural classification for each enumeration area (EA) and it will be used for the selection of primary sampling units (PSU). This list was drafted based on the Population and Housing Census 2011 and contains information available for persons who in the Census 2011 questionnaire have responded to the question No. 35: "Do you have any difficulties in": as completely unable to hear. Table 2 contains information on EAs, households and individuals with hearing disability corresponding to the category "completely unable".

This survey was a three-stage sampling procedure, where during the first stage, the EAs was used as primary sampling units hereinafter referred to as PSU, the second stage involved households and the third stage shall consist in the selection of the individuals to be surveyed. The whole process was based on a random sampling procedure.

The advantages of this three-stage selection procedure are as follows:

1. The selection procedure is simple to implement and reduces potential non-sampling errors in the selection process.
2. It is easy to locate the selected individuals and this method reduces non-sampling errors and non-responses.
3. The interviewers interview only the individuals in the pre-selected households. No replacement of individuals is permitted by the interviewer, preventing survey bias.

The frame also contains, for each EA, the number of households and the number of persons with hearing disabilities. This information for each EA will be used as a measurement of size and selection of the sample.

In order to control coverage errors, which make the sample less representative, the sampling frame must be of an optimum quality during all the stages of selections. In the first stage, the EA (also called PSU) must cover all the areas inhabited by the population under study. The boundaries of the PSU-s are clearly defined and identified in the mapping system applied.

3.2 Stratification

The sampling frame was divided into more or less homogeneous strata to improve the efficiency of the sample design. The level of stratification was used to provide reliable estimates for each of the domains of estimation. The domains of estimation are shown in Table 3.

It should be made clear that the regional urban-rural level strata are not publication strata, but only sampling strata, with a view to improve the effectiveness of the sample design. The only requirement for sampling strata is that a minimum of two EAs should be selected within each stratum.

3.3 Sample Size

The sample size for a particular survey is determined by the accuracy required for the survey estimates for each domain, as well as by resources and operational constraints. The accuracy of the survey results depends on both the sampling error, which can be measured through variance estimation, and the non-sampling error from all other sources, such as response and other measurement errors, coding and data entry errors. The sampling error is inversely proportional to the square root of the sample size. On the other hand, the non-sampling error may actually increase with the sample size, since it is more difficult to control the quality of a larger operation. It is therefore important that the overall sample size is manageable for quality and operational control purposes. The sample size also depends on cost considerations and logistical issues related to the organisation of the teams of enumerators and the workload for data collection. From our calculations, the sample size is 437 individuals with severe disability.

When multi-stage sampling is used, the design effect mostly measures the impact of the level of clustering on the sampling efficiency. The design effect depends on the number of sample individuals selected in each stratum. The sample size for a particular prefecture urban and rural

Table 3. Domains of estimations (region).

Domains	Region
1	Berat
2	Dibër
3	Durrës
4	Elbasan
5	Fier
6	Gjirokastër
7	Korçë
8	Kukës
9	Lezhë
10	Shkodër
11	Tirana
12	Vlorë

Table 4. Sample size by region.

Region	Sample size by region
Berat	30
Dibër	28
Durrës	58
Elbasan	36
Fier	76
Gjirokastër	11
Korçë	37
Kukës	25
Lezhë	17
Shkodër	23
Tirana	72
Vlorë	24
Total	437

stratum was allocated proportionally to the number of persons with severe disability in each stratum. Table 4 shows the number of individuals for each prefecture stratum based on the sample size described above.

3.4 Sample Selection Procedures

The sample selection procedures for the survey are based on a stratified two-stage sample design. At the first sampling stage the PSUs/EAs are selected systematically (PPS-Probability Proportional to Size) within each stratum (region, urban/rural) based on the size of the number of emigrants.

Prior to the first sampling stage, the sampling frame of each EA within each stratum was specified geographically in order to provide such an implicit stratification for the sample to be geographically representative within each region.

We used SAS software to select the sample EAs systematically with PPS within each stratum at the first sampling stage. This program generated an output file that includes the first stage probability of selection for each EA.

The second stage of selection are the households listed from the selected EAs. Table 5 shows the average number of households per EA and the average number of persons per household, by region and urban/rural strata, based on Census 2011. At national level, the average number of households per EA is 61. The urban EAs include an average of 77 households, while the rural EAs include an average of 48 households. However, the households are more disperse in the rural EAs, therefore, they generally cover a larger area compared to the urban EAs. The average number of persons per household is 3.8 at national level; the average household size is 3.6 persons in urban stratum and 4.1 in rural stratum.

Table 5. Average number of households per EA and average number of persons per household, by region and urban/rural strata, based on Albania Census 2011.

Region	Total		Urban		Rural	
	Average number of households per EA	Average number of persons per household	Average number of households per EA	Average number of persons per household	Average number of households per EA	Average number of persons per household
Berat	58	3.7	84	3.4	45	4
Dibër	56	4.6	87	4.1	49	4.8
Durrës	64	3.9	66	3.8	57	4.2
Elbasan	60	4	84	3.6	49	4.3
Fier	58	3.8	78	3.5	48	4
Gjirokastër	42	3.4	77	3.3	28	3.4
Korçë	53	3.6	82	3.3	42	3.9
Kukës	54	5	86	4.5	44	5.2
Lezhë	62	4.1	72	4	53	4.3
Shkodër	61	3.9	82	3.6	50	4.1
Tirana	76	3.7	84	3.6	60	4.2
Vlorë	53	3.4	58	3.4	45	3.4
Albania	61	3.8	77	3.6	48	4.1

The persons listed in the Census for each selected sampling household during the second stage will be used as a basis for the selection of individuals. Persons with hearing disabilities categorised as "Completely unable", who therefore are completely unable to perform the activity concerned and that are over 18 years old, constitute the target group for our field survey.

3.5 Estimation Process

Proper weighting of the survey data is important to guarantee the representativeness of the survey data and to prevent bias caused by non-response. All analysis based on survey data must properly apply the sampling weights to guarantee the validity of the survey findings, especially for a complex survey. In a complex survey, every individual has a specific chance (known as inclusion probability) of being selected in the sample. His/her answers must be properly weighted (basically, by the reciprocal of his or her inclusion probability) if the sample is to be representative. For example, if a particular individual was selected in the sample with a probability of 0.001, then he/she represents 1,000 similar individuals in the base population. Therefore, his/her answers to all of the questions must be multiplied by 1,000 to be representative. If another particular individual is selected with a probability of 0.002, then he/she represents 500 similar

individuals in the base population, and therefore will receive a weight of 500. Representativeness means being able to expand the sample to the base population. Since the samples are selected independently in each study domain, they are representative for their corresponding domains, if properly weighted. If each individual sample is representative for its domain, then the overall sample for the country as a whole is representative for the country. Therefore, the Hearing Disability sample survey is representative for the country as a whole. Sampling weights are required to ensure the actual representativeness of the sample at national level (see Appendix 3 for more detail).

3.6 Demographic Background

3.6.1 Measuring disability

Measuring disability has proved to be very difficult, because disability is not a readily identifiable attribute such as gender or age, but a complex, dynamic interaction between a person's health condition and the physical and social environment. The questions about disability in the population census have been commonly used in applied disability research: measures of impairment, functional limitation measures, and activity limitation measures. Impairment measures of disability focus on the presence of impairment intrinsic to the individual. For example, individuals may be queried about impairments that might include blindness, deafness, mental retardation, speech impairment and stuttering, complete or partial paralysis. These measures were widely used in the past. More recently, measures of functional limitations focus on limitations experienced with particular bodily functions such as seeing, walking, hearing, speaking, climbing stairs, lifting and carrying, irrespective of whether the individual has an impairment or not. Finally, activity limitation measures focus on limitations in activities of daily living such as bathing or dressing. Activity limitations may also include participation limitation in major life activities such as going out of the home, work or housework for people of working age, and school or play for children.

The Washington Group (WG) General Measure on Disability

In the report *Profile of the disabled population in Albania* (Ferré, Galanxhi & Dhono, 2015) the second disability measure, i.e. functional limitations, was used. The Washington Group (WG) General Measure on Disability identifies people who are at greater risk than the general population of experiencing restrictions in performing tasks (such as activities of daily living) or participating in roles (such as working). Measurements intended to identify this "at risk" population represent the most basic end of the spectrum of activities (i.e. functional activities such as walking, remembering, seeing, hearing). This "at risk" group includes persons with limitations in basic activities, people who may or may not also experience limitations in more complex activities and/or restrictions in participation depending in some instances on whether or not they use assistive devices, have a supportive environment, or have plentiful resources.

The Washington Group has developed a question set for use by national censuses for gathering information about limitations in basic activity functioning among national populations. The questions were designed to provide comparable data cross-nationally

for populations living in a great variety of cultures with varying economic resources. The objective is to identify persons with similar types and levels of limitations in basic activity functioning regardless of nationality or culture. It is not designed to identify every person with a disability within every community, neither should it be considered a substitute for populations evaluated across a wider range of domains that would be possible in other forms of data collection or in administrative data.

For the reasons of simplicity, brevity and comparability, the choice was made to identify limitations in six domains of basic activity functioning that are found universally, which are most closely associated with social exclusion, and which occur most frequently. The information that results from the use of these questions is expected to (i) represent the majority, but not all persons with limitation in basic activity functioning in any one nation; (ii) represent the most commonly occurring limitations in basic activity functioning within any country; and (iii) capture persons with similar problems across countries.

Data

The analytical work on profiling people with a disability, and especially with hearing problems, is performed using the 2011 Census, the Washington Group (WG) General Measure on Disability, and this survey conducted by ANAD.

3.6.2 Structure of the total population and of deaf people

The Population and Housing Census of 2011 shows that the resident Albanian population decreased by 8.8% since the previous 2001 Census in 2001, and by 12.0% percent since the 1989 Census. This decrease in population size is mainly due to emigration, a trend that has continued from 1990 onward. The number of births decreased considerably, from 82,000 in 1990, to 53,000 in 2001, to 36,000 in 2013, a reduction of 32%. From 2001, the Total Fertility Rate has steadily decreased. In 2001, the TFR was above the substitution level, at 2.31 children for each woman of reproductive age. The number of deaths is relatively stable at around 20,000 per year. The decrease in natural growth is attributed mainly to the decrease in the number of births.

Whereas the declining birth and death rates in fertility and mortality are part of longer-term trends spanning several decades, international migration has only occurred since the early 1990s. According calculations using indirect methods, emigration during the period 2001-2011 (between the two latest Censuses) was estimated to be around 480,000 people. Referring to the indirect estimation for the number of emigrants (the emigration pyramid 2001-2011), men are still more likely to emigrate than women, but gender differences have decreased considerably if we compare the data from the two periods between the last three Censuses (1989-2001 and 2001-2011). This phenomenon reflects the reunion of families during the second decade of the transition period in Albania.

This phenomenon in the Albanian population is reflected in the population pyramid (Figure 4). The base of the pyramid shows the decrease in the number of births and in fertility rate. The gap in the pyramid reflects the emigration of mainly young adults. Below are shown the population pyramids of the Albanian population, and of deaf Albanians.

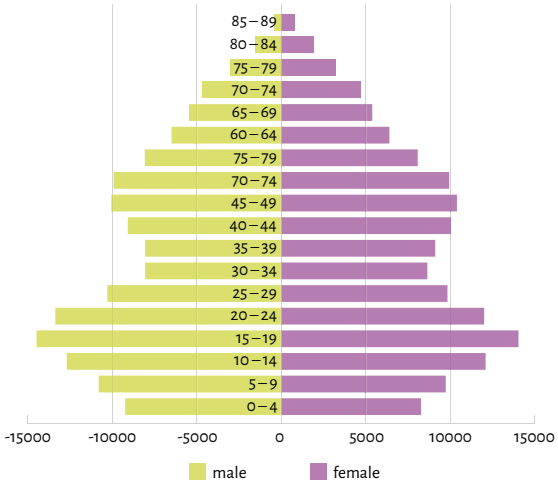

Figure 4. Distribution of the Albanian population by gender and age, Census 2011.

The Census does not contain information about migrants with a disability in general, or with hearing problems in particular. For the purpose of this study, we presume that the number of deaf people who have emigrated is very low.

As we can see from the pyramid of persons who have declared that they have "Strong difficulties" hearing or do not hear at all, the prevalence of deafness is very much linked to age, with older age cohorts being more affected by this difficulty.[6]

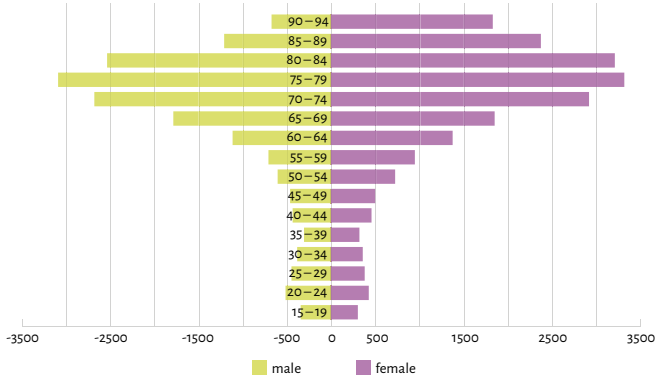

Figure 5. The resident population 15 years old and above by sex, age and hearing disability degree, Census 2011.

However, the survey gives different results. This is linked with the ANAD network (the list of the people in the sample). Another aspect that can be explained is the very different distribution of deaf people in the sample group, compared to the Census, which covered the entire deaf population. From the pyramid showing the deaf people who have interviewed for the survey, it can be seen that most belong to the age group 45-49 years.[7]

6 This could be explained by the fact that in all populations approximately one-third of people over 65 years of age are affected by disabling hearing loss (WHO 2012). (Ed.)

7 One hypothetical explanation for the unusual number of representatives for this age cohort could be an epidemic or pandemic of *rubella*, *measles*, *meningitis* or even *cytomegalovirus* (cf. Cohen, Durstenfeld & Roehm 2014) that might have affected the Albanian population immediately before or during the year 1969. As Cohen et al. 2014 note, prior to the development of widespread vaccination, measles could infect more than 90% of susceptible children in epidemics. For instance, measles was thought to be the cause of severe to profound hearing loss in between 4% and 9% of deaf patients prior to the implementation of effective vaccination programmes (Suboti, 1976). However, this epidemical hypothesis remains unproven for the moment. The researchers of this survey had no access to information on public health or epidemics in Albania in the 1960s. Nevertheless, this possibility should not be overlooked but verified in future research, since 61% of the respondents declare to have become deaf due to illness or injury (only 2% reported being deaf because of maternal illness during pregnancy). A similar case was highlighted by the Oregon Public Health Division (2013): in 1941 an Australian ophthalmologist noticed an unusually high number of infants with cataracts in his practice. He suspected rubella but only after several years of inattention and scepticism did epidemiologists and teratologists confirm the congenital rubella syndrome (CRS) triad of congenital cataracts, heart disease and deafness (Reef & Plotkin 2013). (Ed.)

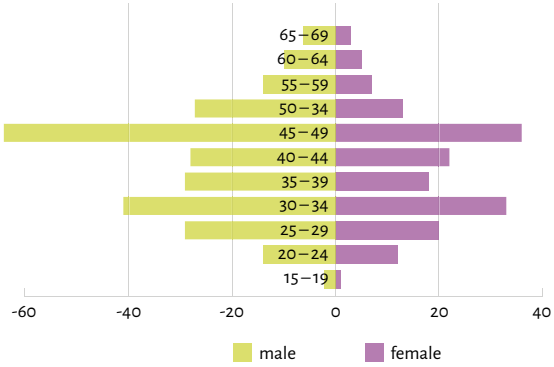

Figure 6. Population distribution by gender and age, for deaf people included in the survey.

This difference becomes clearer when comparing the mean age of the total population and disabled persons according to the Census with that of the deaf population according to the survey (Table 6).

Table 6. Mean age of the total population, disabled people, and deaf people included in the survey.

	Mean age
Total population	35,5
Disabled people	62,2
Deaf people in the survey	40,5

The mean age of deaf people from the survey is 40.5 years compared with 62.2 years for the Census.

Marital status

More than half of the adult deaf persons identified in the Population and Housing Census 2011 and in this survey are married. However, in the 2011 Census married deaf persons comprise 54.5% of the population, while in the survey they comprise 67.3%. Figure 7 shows big difference in the number of widows: in the 2011 Census this group comprises 33.8%, while in the survey it only comprises 1.3%.[8] The differences in demographic characteristics call for another study to acquire more in-depth information.

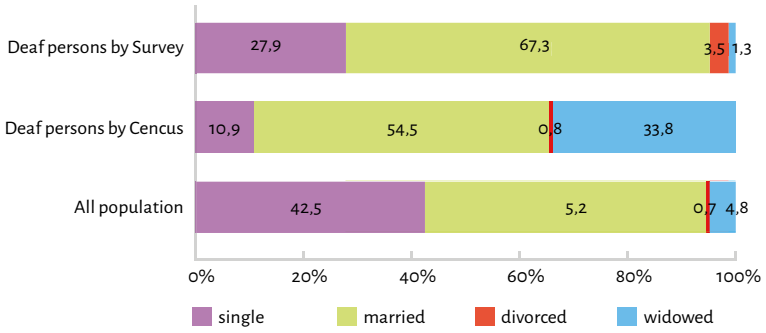

Figure 7. Deaf persons by marital status.

8 As noted earlier, according to WHO (2012) one-third of persons over 65 years suffer from disabling hearing loss. These differences in marital status, again, may be explained by the fact that figures obtained from the national census contain a greater number of people who have lost their hearing later in life. For this reason it would be natural to encounter more widows in this cohort than in the sample group of this survey, where the mean age is 20 years younger (cf. Table 7). (Ed.)

Excerpts from Signed Field Reports

Translated from Albanian Sign Language to English

20–25 January 2015

We conducted the interviews at ANAD. We worked in three groups in three offices. The interviews were conducted in the following way: two members of our staff conducted the interview with the deaf person, one typed on the computer and the other led the questioning. We divided the work into three groups so as to finish as soon as possible. In total, 65 people were interviewed, including males and females of different ages. 63 people from Tirana were interviewed and two young people who had arrived by chance from Durres and Lushnja. – I'm sure that the deaf community will soon realise the importance of the interviews, which will lead to improvements in their lives in the future.

Valmira Avdullaj

29 January 2015

Klisman Ibrahimi and I went to Shkodra to conduct interviews with deaf people. We interviewed two, a boy and a girl. The first interview was conducted with the boy by Klisman and me. We could not interview the girl because her husband did not agree. We asked Ilirjana Jupa to conduct the interview.

Eduard Ajas

30– 31 January 2015

Ilirjana Jupa and I went to Lezha to conduct the interviews. We interviewed 10 deaf people, seven men and three women. Three of them lived in the city, the other seven in villages. In order to go to the villages and conduct the interviews, we were driven by car by a deaf person to whom we paid fuel costs. Two of the people we planned to interview had moved to live in Tirana. Another person had left for Italy. There was another older person, whom we went to meet twice, but the house was closed and we could not meet him. In general the interviews went well, but there were some problems. For example, when we went to interview one girl, her parents were worried about who would care for their daughter after their death. They require assistance from the state to care for her.

In Lezha we faced other obstacles. A girl who we wanted to interview asked for permission from her husband, who worked in Italy, but he did not allow her to be interviewed. We respected this, and left. In another family in Lezha, with two deaf people, we tried to explain to their father about the scope of the interview. If we had not had all of the information with us, it would have been difficult to explain.

In another case there was a deaf person married to a hearing woman. A brother, able to hear, asked why an association was conducting the interviews, when the state was not assisting deaf people at all. It all seemed pointless to him. We told him about the role of the association, and the task it had in assisting the community of deaf people, and defending their rights. We explained why the interviews were being conducted, which was to learn about the needs of deaf people and to forward that information to the state in order to improve their lives. He still did not agree, and we told him that it was up to deaf people themselves to decide whether to take part in the interview or not. I asked him not to discriminate against his brother. At that moment, their father arrived, and he agreed that the interview could take place.

Eduard Ajas

Reporting of interviews dated 1 February 2015 in the north, in the remote village of Shkodra.

I went with Klisman Ibrahimi to conduct interviews with deaf people. In the morning we headed from the centre of Shkodra to a remote village called Hani i Hotit, close to the border with Montenegro. We were not able to meet with an older deaf person, and so we were accompanied by another person who knew the area very well. On 1 February we went to Hani i Hotit. The trip was long and we walked to get there. In the house where we went, we found a deaf person, and an old couple.

Their interview was difficult because they did not know sign language, and they knew very few letters from the manual alphabet. Most of the time, they communicated visually. They thought that we were there to help them with food or a pension. They did not understand us 100%, although we tried our best. In the next house we met a deaf, illiterate girl and it

seemed that she had some mental problems. She stayed very quiet and had never enjoyed anything in her life, and neither worked nor received a pension after a certain age. Her parents were elderly. Their home was next to the couple who had been interviewed previously. We interviewed the girl's parents and they were worried about what would happen to their girl after their death. They thought that it would be better to send the girl into an asylum to be with other people because, in addition to being deaf, the girl also suffered from mental disorders. The girl seemed to be a good and calm person. The problem was how she would live in the future, when her parents were no longer alive. The state should do something to assist her.

Valmira Ardullaj

6 February 2015

Irena Oruçaj and I worked together in interviewing deaf people. We interviewed five people and we conducted the first interview in a village near Fier. At the beginning we interviewed a deaf woman, her deaf husband and her deaf-blind brother. I was surprised that the girl did not want to be interviewed, but we respected her choice. There were two other deaf-blind people we could not interview. We decided to do it another time, but we did interview the woman. We interviewed F. and A., both deaf, but we encountered some difficulties in communication since A. suffered from some mental disorders. Thus, we communicated with him through gestures, because that was the only way he had communicated all his life. He had worked as a shoemaker, but had never been able to communicate with his family. However, the interview was successfully conducted, which I was pleased about. In the center of Fier we interviewed two other people, a man and his wife K. The interview was conducted successfully. We interviewed five people, but we could not interview the two deaf-blind brothers.

Denis Plloça

7 – 8 February 2015

I will make a report about the interview process in the district of Fier on 7-8 February 2015. Denis Plloça and I went to Patos and Libofsha, along with a deaf person who was helping us to find the addresses of the deaf people. We interviewed 10 people, five men and five women. During the interviews we encountered some problems:

An interview with two deaf-blind brothers. Our coordinator Florjan Rojba insisted that we tried to conduct this interview despite their condition. I asked for the permission of the family to interview the brothers, as well as the wife of one of them, who was deaf but not blind. The couple had an adult daughter who was able to hear. At first, the family did not approve of the interview, stating that they did not want it to be publicised in the media. We explained that we were ANAD representatives, and that the interviews were made in collaboration with INSTAT and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, and that all the information would be confidential. After they agreed, we conducted the interview. Communication was difficult because they were blind but I, with my long experience, managed to communicate with them using fingerspelling on the palm, and tactile signing. Then the deaf wife told us about their difficult situation. She was looking for a job, and had asked for help from the state for her husband and her brother-in-law. They stayed at home as it was impossible for them to work. The situation was very difficult. Their house was old and its roof was leaking. They had not received any assistance from the state for their living condition.

We conducted the other interview in a remote area of Libofsha, where we interviewed a married couple. They had three boys and the youngest (eight years old) was blind. They had asked for assistance from the state due to their situation. In Fier and Patos, the deaf people did not have any serious problems. We kept records of everything they told us.

Eduard Ajas

8 February 2015

Jetmir Dekovi and I went to conduct interviews in the village of Levan, Fier. We interviewed six people in total, two women and four men. The first girl we interviewed had attended the Institute for Deaf Students. At the beginning she was shy and did not communicate freely with us. She used only gestures because she knew neither fingerspelling nor signs. It was very difficult for us, and we had to return a few times to the same questions. We also asked her mother to assist us with communication. The other girl we interviewed had never been to the Institute and knew neither the manual alphabet nor any signs. We communicated through gestures, which was very difficult for her. The other interviewee was a boy who had attended the Institute for Deaf Students, but still the interview was conducted through gestures and mouthing Albanian words. Communication with him was very difficult, and we had to return a few times to the same questions. Because of this it took a long time to conduct this interview. These were all the interviews that we conducted.

Irena Oruçaj

On February 11th 2015

Eduard Ajas and I went to Gjirokastra. We were accompanied by a person from the local deaf community, who had all the necessary contacts. During the day we interviewed 10 deaf people, five men and five women. Meanwhile, we tried to interview two other deaf people, but they did not come.

One of the interviewees, born in Albania, had moved together with his family to Greece, where he grew up and completed his studies. Now he had returned to Gjirokastra and became successful in his career. It was not possible to communicate with him in Albanian, but he could communicate with gestures. We were lucky to meet him. Eduard led the interview, while I was taking notes. He did not know the language or any Albanian signs, only the written Greek language. He knew neither International Sign nor written English. Eduard communicated with him only with gestures. He was informed for the first time about the situation of deaf people, that there were other deaf people; that there was a school, an association, etc. Because of the lack of information from the media, he expressed a desire and a need to have more information.

Valmira Ardullaj

12 February 2015

Denis Plloça and I went to Lushnja to conduct the interviews. We interviewed eight deaf people, two women and six men. The interview with the first girl was very successful. We communicated through fingerspelling, which she learned at school. She understood all the questions, which was very positive. The second interview was conducted with a woman who communicated only through fingerspelling. She also understood all the questions.

Of the six men interviewed, two were older. The interview with the first and second person was conducted mostly with fingerspelling and with only a few signs. The first of the other younger men, even though he had graduated from school, had difficulties understanding us. We were forced to use all possible communication methods: hand alphabet, signs, and gestures. We used a variety of synonyms, and shaped figures in the air to form examples of concepts, to facilitate communication. The interview with him was rather difficult.

The second person who we interviewed did not understand the signs well, although the interview was successful. The interview with the third person was very good; he understood the questions because he had a very good understanding of the signs. The interview with the fourth person was conducted using the manual alphabet, because this was all he knew.

Irena Oruçaj

13 February 2015

This is a report about the interviews conducted on 13 February 2015. Irena Oruçaj and I were in Lushnja to conduct the interviews. We interviewed ten deaf people in total, of whom eight were men and two were women. The interviews were conducted as follows:

Communication with the first deaf person was not difficult, and so the interview was very successful. Of the other three people who we interviewed, two were a couple and these interviews went very well. The third person was the brother of the husband we had interviewed previously, a deaf person who was also disabled. He had problems with his fingers and for this reason, despite all our efforts, the interview was difficult to conduct. His brother assisted us with a lot of information about him. In terms of education, his brother told us that he had attended the Deaf Institute, but teachers expelled him because of his disability, thus discriminating against him. Missing school education, his intellectual level was very low. Each of the three people lived in separate houses close to each other.

The interview with the deaf couple was difficult. Communication with the deaf husband was even more difficult, but his wife – who had attended school – facilitated the communication between us. The interview with his wife went very well. The interview with his brother was not easy because he did not understand many signs. He left school as he felt bad and returned home. He grew up in the custody of his brother. Both deaf brothers were illiterate and, as we said above, only the woman had attended school.

We interviewed another deaf person, but communication with him was almost impossible. We tried with all communication methods, and in the end his father assisted so that his son could understand the questions and we could obtain the answers. For conducting this interview we are very grateful to his father because it would have been impossible to do it without his assistance.

Denis Plloça

18 February 2015

Ilirjana Jupa and I were accompanied by a person who was familiar with the Tropoja area. We conducted five interviews with deaf people. Three of them were men and two were women. The difficulties we faced were as follows:

In one house there was nobody home, whereas in the other house we waited for a while, but the man never came. The person who accompanied us said that there were more deaf people there, but he did not know where they lived. Communication with the five interviewees was different and difficult. It

took us a long time to conduct the interviews because several people communicated with gestures, and we had to mimic with our hands and provide a lot of examples. I would also mention the following points:

One married couple had no home, and were living without legal permission in an old house from the Communist era. They even had children there.

They told us that they watch the news on Albanian Public Television, but they did not understand the news so well because sign language was used, and they only understand fingerspelling.

Jetmir Dekovi

February 19th 2015

Erkid Hatia and I conducted interviews in Pogradeç and villages in the vicinity. We interviewed eight people in total, four men and four women. During the interviews we noticed that the deaf people were in a bad economic situation. Communication with them was difficult because they did not know sign language. Another problem was working overtime, and the long distances between one place and another. In the morning we went to a village, where we interviewed two people, S. and his wife. S. had attended school, whereas his wife had not. She was from the city. The interview went well in general and the only problem they had was unemployment.

On the second day the person who was assisting us told us that there was another deaf person called M. We went to meet him. M. was illiterate and lived in a bad economic situation. His parents were divorced. They had two children, one who was able to hear, and M. (who was the oldest) received an economic assistance [pension] of ALL 10,000. His mother was unemployed and did not get any pension. They lived in a rented house.

Before, M. had worked in Greece and now he was back in Albania. He told us about the history of his family. Erkid and I listened to him very carefully. M. was illiterate and communicated with gestures. While conducting the interview, M's mother got excited and started to cry. We stopped the interview for a moment and went to comfort her. She told us that they had economic problems, and did not have money to buy food. Erkid and I went to a shop and bought some food. She became calmer and thanked us. We then continued the interview. They had big problems because they had to pay the rent, and the energy bill, and in the end there was not enough money to buy food. All these things had to be covered with only one pension.

Klisman Ibrahimi

21 February 2015

This report concerns interviews in the city of Fier. Irena Oruçaj and I interviewed three deaf people, two men and one woman. We also had an interview with a deaf couple. First we interviewed the husband, and it went well. He had attended the Institute for Deaf Students. We communicated with him using the manual alphabet, but he had forgotten much of it due to lack of interaction with other people, so we had to work a little bit more to complete the entire questionnaire.

When we asked the deaf wife why she had not attended the Institute for Deaf Students, she did not know how to respond. She did not have any information about this because she was illiterate, and tried to communicate by mouthing words. She understood just a little bit from the gestures. Her lack of education was a problem during the interview because she did not have any information. The other person interviewed was a man from Levan, also illiterate. He had attended the Institute for Deaf Students but had dropped out.

Communication with him was difficult and was conducted through mouthing and gestures as he did not know the manual alphabet either. Because of his physical problems and lack of concentration, communication with him was even more difficult. He had also problems with his eyes because of his age. A hearing person assisted us so we could fill the questionnaire with the responses required. However, the interview went well.

Denis Mloça

4 SURVEY RESULTS

Päivi Rainò & Liisa Martikainen

4.1 Demographic background of the respondents

According to the statistical analysis conducted by INSTAT, the estimated stratum based number of individuals to be interviewed was set to 437 persons, with a defined geographical distribution (Tables 4, 7). Since the interviewers were not able to reach all persons in the sample group, the total number of interviewees (434) was slightly less than the target that was set. The differences between the sample proposed by INSTAT and the effective sample size, i.e. persons interviewed in each prefecture, is shown in Table 7. Interviewees' age cohorts and their distribution by prefecture is given in Table 8.

Table 7. The interviewed sample group compared to the size of the sample group proposed by INSTAT.

	People interviewed in the sample group		Sample size proposed by INSTAT	
Region	**N**	**%**	**N**	**%**
Berat	38	9	30	7
Dibër	8	2	28	5
Durrës	32	7	58	8
Elbasan	50	12	36	11
Fier	73	17	76	14
Gjirokastër	14	3	11	4
Korçë	48	11	37	8
Kukës	15	3	25	3
Lezhë	13	3	17	5
Shkodër	36	9	23	9
Tiranë	66	15	72	17
Vlorë	41	9	24	9
Total	434	100	437	100

Table 8. Distribution of the interviewees by age and residential area.

Region/Age	–20	21–30	31–40	41–50	51–60	61–	Total
Berat	0	5	8	17	6	2	38
Dibër	0	0	2	5	1	0	8
Durrës	1	14	5	11	1	0	32
Elbasan	2	12	7	18	9	2	50
Fier	2	18	17	25	10	1	73
Gjirokastër	1	1	4	3	2	3	14
Korçë	0	9	17	16	5	1	48
Kukës	0	4	2	8	1	0	15
Lezhë	0	3	3	6	1	0	13
Shkodër	1	5	5	16	5	4	36
Tiranë	7	21	17	12	8	1	66
Vlorë	1	9	8	19	4	0	41

As with the 2010 Kosovo survey (Kosovar Association of the Deaf & Finnish Association of the Deaf 2010, 8–9), the majority of respondents in the Albanian sample group are male (61 %) and a little less than half (39 %) are female. There is some discrepancy with the 2011 Census, according to which there would be approximately 5% more women with complete hearing loss than men. In this respect the ratio between male and female participants in the sample is not in line with the demographic distribution found in the 2011 Census. This could, in part, be explained by the fact that the fieldworkers were not always allowed to interview deaf girls or women. (See also the excerpts from fieldwork reports.) However, as Census statistics show (INSTAT 2012, 47; 90), the differences in number between women and men are greatest in the oldest age cohorts, where women are in majority and one third of the population has age-related hearing loss.

As with the 2011 Census, participants in this survey were asked to describe themselves using common language definitions 'deaf—hard of hearing—deafened in later age' or 'I can hear but I cannot speak' (question 7, see questionnaire in the Appendix 1). Due to the fact that the participants were recruited mostly among the membership of ANAD (n=305), most of respondents defined themselves as belonging to the category 'deaf' (n=412); only 18 people described themselves as 'hard of hearing'. No one classified themselves as 'late-deafened'. However, four (4) people described themselves as "able to hear but not to speak", presumably having *dysphasia*.

Since members of ANAD rely on visual communication and sign language, this explains why the sample does not contain the part of the population that has lost hearing ability later in life. Late-deafened people have acquired spoken (i.e. Albanian) language as their mother tongue in early childhood and followed a normal educational path. Thus they do not identify themselves as part of a language minority, which is defined by the acquired mother tongue.

Demographic research studies on deafness (especially regarding children) normally report other disabilities that accompany hearing impairment and deafness. According to Fortnum and Davis (1997) the incidence can be as high as 39%. In a recent literature review conducted in Great Britain (National Deaf Children's Society, 2010) it is reported that around 20% of deaf children have some form of additional special educational need. However, in this survey only 9% of 427 persons responding to questions 12–13 declared an additional disability: three (3) had motoric problems, six (6) were vision-impaired; 12 declared a intellectual disability; and 20 respondents answered as having other undetermined problems.[9]

When the respondents in this survey were asked "Are any of your family members hard of hearing or deaf" (question 10), just over half (56 %) declared living with a deaf or hard of hearing spouse. Table 9 shows other family members who are deaf or hard of hearing. However, the categories are partially overlapping; e.g. one person can have two deaf parents, deaf siblings and/or deaf children. Moreover, 51 interviewees (also) had other deaf relatives (cousins, aunts, uncles; question 11) not covered in Table 9.

In the survey, respondents were asked about the etiology of hearing impairment (question 9.). Only 5% of respondents declared hereditary deafness as the cause, which is in line with other research findings. According to the study by Mitchell & Karchmer (2004), hereditary deafness can be expected to occur among 5 to 8% of the deaf population. Most of the respondents (67%) had become deaf due to an injury, an illness or a maternal illness during pregnancy. 16% declared other reasons, and 15 %did not know the etiology of their deafness. Only two people had become deaf/hard of hearing gradually.

Table 9. Deaf or hard of hearing members in the family of the respondents.

Deaf (hard of hearing in brackets) members in the family	Deaf respondents	Hard of hearing respondents
Parents	12 (+1)	-
Spouse	237 (+6)	7
Siblings	71 (+6)	2
Children	19 (+2)	-
Grandparents	3 (+1)	-
Parents-in-law	-	-

Most of the interviewees (67%) of the whole sample group (N=434) were married, mostly to another deaf person (86%). 3% of the respondents were divorced and 1% were widowed. Half of the total 170 female respondents were housewives, not working outside their homes. Most of the married respondents (93%) had also children, and 72% had more than one. One quarter (26%) were single, 1% of the sample was engaged. Only 4% of re-

9 There is a striking difference when this information obtained from the deaf respondents themselves is compared to the data provided by National Census 2011 (Appendix 2, Tables I– IV):60 % of those who were 15 years and over; 'not able to hear and communicate' were declared 'not able to see' and 62 % had 'intellectual problems' . – The discussion regarding potential source of bias causing these differences is, however, beyond the scope of this study.

spondents lived alone. Nearly half of the interviewees lived with parents (49%); 18% lived with siblings; 62% lived with a spouse and children and 12% lived with parents-in-law. (The sum of percentages is more than 100% because these categories are not mutually exclusive; e.g. one person can live with his/her parents and with his/her siblings.).

4.2 Education

Of the total sample group of 434 respondents, 431 responded to questions 34–45 regarding education. 83% (n=358) had attended primary and secondary school for the deaf, of whom 319 also finished school. The 2011 Census (INSTAT 2012, 15) shows that 56% of the disabled population aged 15 and older had completed basic education, 3% had completed tertiary and post-graduate education, while 24% had never attended school. The educational attainment in the target group of this survey is thus considerably higher than in the study on the disabled population in general, but also compared to the Albanian population with hearing difficulties, where only half of the children are attending schools (Ferré, Galanxhi & Dhono 2015, 19–20). Compared to the statistics presented in Appendix 2 (Tables V–VIII), where the data collected regarding education in the 2011 Census is cross tabulated with those aged 15 and older who are completely unable to hear and communicate, the educational level of deaf people is surprisingly high: 60% of those 3,015 people never attended school. (The discussion regarding potential sources of bias causing these differences is, however, beyond the scope of this study.)

All but one (1) of those respondents who were enrolled in a deaf school (n= 363) attended the school in Tirana. Seven (7) had also received education in a school for hearing children (six people for up to four years, and one for eight years). 14 people had solely attended a school for hearing pupils (seven respondents for between seven and nine years, and six respondents for between three and five years; one response is missing). Others had left school earlier, giving the following reasons: 22 reported being bullied; five could not afford to pay the school fees; two were not satisfied with the quality of teaching; three moved to another country; and 18 cited other reasons). The sum is more than the total number of those who did not finish school because these categories are not mutually exclusive; e.g. one person could have left the school for more than one reason.

The variety of communication modes used in the deaf school are shown in Table 10. Besides spoken language, teaching was conducted using fingerspelling (Albanian language transliterated using a manual alphabet), accompanied with gestures. Only four respondents claim to have received education in sign language. When respondents were asked to evaluate the communicative skills of the teachers, 97% claimed that teachers had ‘poor’ skills, and only 3% said that communication was understandable (‘average’); no respondent was able to give a positive evaluation (‘good’).

Table 10. Communication modes used in the deaf school.

Communication modes	Frequency (n=363) *)
Gestures	332
Fingerspelling	232
Speaking	128
Writing	5
Albanian Sign Language	4
Other	2

*) The sum of frequencies is higher than the number of respondents since several methods can be used in the same classroom.

In the sample group, 16 respondents attended high school; 13 of them claim to have encountered great difficulties while studying (three had some difficulties). 14 respondents reported that this was due to their poor reading and writing skills. If sign language interpreters had been available, 11 out of 16 respondents would have preferred interpreting. Three respondents went on to receive higher education after high school, one in art school and two (without specification of the field) in other countries, Italy and Greece.

4.2.1 Education and literacy

In order to get a diagnostic impression of the linguistic competence of deaf respondents in written Albanian, a short test was introduced during the survey. A story containing seven phrases was presented (see below) along with nine drawings (see survey question 33, Appendix 1).

The text that was introduced to interviewees was as follows:
Once upon a time there was a crow that lived on the edge of the forest, near a meadow where a flock of sheep was grazing. One morning the crow was sitting on the branch of a pine tree and gazing upward to the sky. It saw an eagle gliding in the sky. Suddenly the eagle swooped and attacked the middle of the flock. The eagle grabbed a lamb and flew away. The crow decided to do the same. The crow flew down towards the flock.

After reading the respondents were asked to choose three drawings out of nine and place them on the table (or in the web questionnaire) in an order that would follow the storyline. Of all respondents, 38% (164/434) answered immediately that they were illiterate in Albanian language and did not want to try answering to this survey question. Of those 270 respondents who wanted to continue the task (62% of the sample group) only seven (7; i.e. 3 % of the subgroup) were able to select pictures that were somehow connected to the storyline and put them in an acceptable order. However, **not one** respondent was able to choose the preferred order reflecting exactly the timeline of the story.

Over one-third (105) of those who participated in the reading test chose the wrong pictures completely (pictures that were not semantically connected to the story). These persons can also be considered illiterate, alongside those who refused to participate in this test. When respondents were asked for their impressions of their own language

skills when producing written Albanian (question 32: “Is it easy to write Albanian?”), 380 of 432 people (88%) responding to this question claimed that they are totally unable to write Albanian (two responses were missing). These figures can be compared to the 2011 Census (INSTAT 2012, 12), where the illiteracy rate for the non-disabled population aged 10 years and over is 2.8%. This means that the proportion of illiterate deaf adults is extremely high. It is still high when compared to the hearing disabled population at large, where according to Ferré, Galanxhi & Dhono (2015, 21) an average of one in five people are illiterate.

The research group aimed to use methodological triangulation, and wanted to gather information on different aspects of the reading and writing skills, because it is often said that illiteracy is a common phenomenon among deaf Albanian citizens. We asked several questions that dealt with reading and writing tasks connected to their everyday life (see questions 28–32, Appendix 1). These focus on how written messages are understood, and whether they need any help to write a message if it is to be read by outsiders (i.e. not friends or family members, who are familiar with the problem of illiteracy). We also asked how easy the respondents find it to write Albanian in general (question 32).

Question 30 ("Do hearing people understand you when you send them a text message?") was answered by 251 out of 327 respondents. Of this subgroup, 76% claimed that hearing people do not understand their messages at all, while 7% reported that their messages were somewhat understandable. Only two interviewees claimed that their written messages were understood by outsiders. 16% of the group (n=52) were unable to answer this question.

Of the whole sample group, 89% (N=434) answered that they do not understand written messages sent to them at all (question 29: "Do you understand text messages sent to you by hearing people?"); 11% declared that they have difficulties. Only one (1) person claimed to be able to understand text messages very well. When these results are compared with the reading test, using cross tabulation, one can verify that most respondents have an accurate understanding of their own Albanian language skills. On average 87% of the subgroup that chose the wrong drawings in the reading test stated that they do not understand written messages of “hearing outsiders” and that they do not understand subtitled programmes on television (the correlation is significant: r=.985, p<.000). Additionally, when respondents write messages to people who are not members of their own family, the outsiders are unable to understand them. There is a very significant correlation between respondents’ own (negatively perceived) writing skills and their claim that their messages in written Albanian are not understood by other people (r=.795; p<.000).

Furthermore, we also analysed the survey data by comparing language skills in Albanian with the educational background of the participants. Table 11 shows that neither attending a school for the deaf nor a mainstream school prepares deaf people to understand written Albanian. Basic education does not offer them adequate skills to write Albanian language (Tables 12 & 13) despite the fact that, besides gesticulating, the most common method for conveying educational content in the deaf school (including the grammar of the Albanian language) is the fingerspelling of Albanian words.

Table 11. Educational background and understanding written texts.

Educational background	Do you understand text messages sent by hearing people?					
	Understand very well		Understand with difficulties		Do not understand at all	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Deaf school	1	1	31	11	251	89
School for hearing children	1	14	-	0	6	86
Respondents attending both a school for deaf children and for hearing children	-	0	3	43	4	57

Table 12. Writing skills as evaluated by respondents themselves, cross tabulated with educational background.

Educational background	Is it easy to write Albanian language?					
	It is easy		I have some difficulties		Do not know at all	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Deaf school	1	1	48	13	308	86
School for hearing children	1	7	-	0	13	93
Respondents attending both a school for deaf children and for hearing children	-	0	4	57	3	43

Table 13. Writing skills of respondents as evaluated by outsiders (according to respondents themselves), cross tabulated with educational background.

Educational background	Do hearing people understand messages sent by you?							
	Understand very well		Understand with difficulties		Do not understand at all		Do not know	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Deaf school	1	1	20	7	217	77	43	15
School for hearing children	1	14	-	0	6	86	-	0
Respondents attending both a school for deaf children and for hearing children	-	0	2	29	5	71	-	0

4.2.2 Education and employment

In this survey we wanted to analyse the connection between educational background and the employment rate of deaf people (Table 14). Based on the results of chi-square analysis for these indicators, it can be stated that the following factors are statistically related (x^2 (2) = 6,091; p<.048): those who attended a deaf school and graduated from a deaf school were statistically more likely to be employed than those who did not finish schooling or who attended schools for hearing children.

Table 14. Employment and educational background.

		Employment			
		full-time	**part-time**	**not in paid work *)**	**Total**
Graduated from deaf school	NO	13	13	88	114
		11 %	11 %	77 %	~100 %
	YES	69	39	212	320
		22 %	12 %	66 %	100 %
Total		82	52	300	434
		19 %	12 %	69 %	100 %

*) The category 'not in paid work' includes both unemployed people and housewives.

4.3 Employment

In the survey there were four questions regarding participation in the labour market (Nos. 14–17 in the questionnaire). In order to maximise clarity, the time span for these questions was restricted to one month preceding the moment of the survey (i.e. 20th December 2014–21st February 2015, depending on the moment of the survey). During that time span, 300 respondents were not in paid work, not even for one hour, and 201 of them were *de facto* unemployed.

Of the 300 respondents who were not in paid work, one third were out of the labour-market: 92 were housewives (representing approximately half of the 170 women participating in this survey). Four (4) respondents were studying, and six (6) gave other reasons for not being able to work. (Information is missing for two respondents.)

While the unemployment rate was 61% among those persons who were able to participate in the labour market (n=249), 39% were employed – either full-time (77 respondents) or part-time (52 respondents). Table 15 also shows those not actively participating in the labour market (a total of 102 respondents – students, housewives, and people aged 65 years or older).

Table 15. Employment in the target group (December 2014–February 2015).

Status of employment	**Frequency**	**Percentage of the sample**	**Percentage of those able to work**
In full-time work	77	18	23
In part-time work	52	12	16
Unemployed	201	47	61
Total	**330**	**76**	**100**
Students, housewives and elderly respondents	102	24	
Overall total	**432 *)**	**100**	

*) Missing two persons.

Table 16 shows the distribution of employed respondents according to the type of work they do. The number of respondents for the question 16 is somewhat higher than the number of employed people given in Table 15, since responses were also given by those who had not been in paid work during the month prior to completing the questionnaire.

The number of respondents in the category "other" is considerably larger than for the occupations mentioned in the question, which were chosen to represent those occupations that the members of the deaf community are often considered to have. Additional information was then requested from the fieldworkers by Florjan Rojba. According to his personal communication (18 March 2016) this class included the following occupations: *plumber, barista, café owner, dishwasher, street-seller, motorbike messenger, kindergarten caretaker, janitor, metal recycler, cloth sellers (in a flea market).* – Many of these people were self-employed, and some were also employing other people in their own enterprise (e.g. café owners and the owner of a car maintenance shop).

Table 16. Status of employment in different fields of work (n=134).

Field of work	Status of employment		Total
	Full-time	Part-time	
Farming	2	3	5
Building	2	7	9
Carpentry	4	3	7
Jewellery	2	0	2
Tailoring	16	6	22
Auto Mechanics	0	2	2
Shoe Repairing	14	3	17
Hairdressing	4	1	5
Printing	3	0	3
Cleaning	3	0	3
Car Washing	1	1	2
Decoration	0	1	1
Other	31	25	56

Figures regarding the employment level in the deaf community are most interesting when compared to those of the disabled population in general. According to the survey by Ferré, Galanxhi & Dhono (2015, 22) the employment rate among the non-disabled population (aged 15–64) is 36%; 49% of citizens are out of the labour force and 15% are unemployed. Within the same age range, for all disabled people, 81% are out of labour force, and 8% are unemployed. However, people with visual, hearing and mobility impairments are more likely to be employed than people with other difficulties.

Ferré, Galanxhi & Dhono (2015, 22) also found that in the cohort of citizens between ages 25–64 **with** a hearing disability, 82% were out of the labour force, 13% were employed, and 5% were unemployed.[10] It is true that our study suggests that deaf citizens are more integrated in the labour market than those in the cohort of disabled people: **within** the cohort of 330 deaf people who participate in the labour market, 23% are employed full-time and 16% part-time. (See also the next chapter, where connections between employment and language skills are presented.)

Unfortunately this survey study does not provide data regarding levels of income, since its target was to focus mostly on education and linguistic accessibility. When conducting the survey, fieldworkers encountered desperate poverty and hunger among deaf people who were unemployed and living in remote prefectures (see Excerpts from Signed Field Reports, pp. 29-32). In fact, data collected for this study show statistically significant differences in employment rates for people living in different geographical areas (men: $X^2(46)=63.48$, $p<.045$; women: $X^2(40)=74.45$, $p<.001$). According to our data, it seems that deaf people who live in Berat, Durrës and Tirana have a better chance of finding work than inhabitants of Shkodër and Vlorë. In addition, in Berat and Tirana, there is a slightly higher chance that women will be employed. However, there are no statistically significant gender differences with regards to employment among persons who are active in the labour market. This can be seen in Table 17 (where, for reasons of statistics and privacy, districts with fewer than nine respondents have been excluded).

10 The numbers are somewhat different when looking at data collected from the 2011 Census: 3% of the population aged 15 years or older who are unable to hear and communicate are in work, while 96% are inactive. Cf. Appendix 2, Tables IX–X. Discussion regarding the reasons for these differences is, however, beyond the scope of this study.

Table 17. Area of residence and occupational status at the time of the interview (for both sexes). Areas represented by fewer than nine respondents are not shown.

	Occupational status December-February 2015 *)			
	Full-time work	Part-time work	Unemployed	Total
Berat	10	4	9	23
	44 %	17 %	39 %	100 %
Durrës	9	4	11	24
	38 %	17 %	46 %	100 %
Elbasan	2	6	21	29
	7 %	21 %	72 %	100 %
Fier	5	6	30	41
	12 %	15 %	72 %	100 %
Korçë	4	4	7	15
	27 %	27 %	47 %	100 %
Lushnje	2	5	12	19
	11 %	26 %	63 %	100 %
Pogradec	1	1	17	19
	5 %	5 %	90 %	100 %
Shkodër	3	6	19	28
	11 %	21 %	68 %	100 %
Tiranë	26	7	9	42
	62 %	17 %	21 %	100 %
Vlorë	6	2	18	26
	23 %	8 %	69 %	100 %

*) These data include only people active in the labour market; housewives, students and persons aged 65 years and older are excluded.

4.4 Linguistic environment and knowledge of Albanian Sign Language

According to Mitchell & Karchmer (2004), one can expect to find hereditary deafness in 5–8% of deaf population. This means that approximately 95% of deaf people are born to hearing parents. In line with Mitchell & Karchmer's estimate, 96% of all participants (N=434) in this survey had hearing parents (cf. section 4.1). This also means that these parents are highly unlikely to have no previous experience of how to communicate successfully with their deaf child. In fact, the problems that arise in communication between hearing parents and deaf children have been a central focus of research from the very beginning of studies and research related to deafness, and continue to predominate continue to predominate (see e.g. Argillander 1999 [1762, 1771], Itard 1801 to Lane 1984; Sacks 1989; Marschark & Hauser 2012).

In this survey, however, we were not able to study several aspects of linguistic and literacy development in the deaf population. The aim was to describe concretely the linguistic environment of deaf people today. This was done by asking respondents how they communicate with hearing members of their families (question 22), how they communicate

with other hearing people (question 23), whether it is easy for to understand hearing people and vice versa (questions 24–25) and whether any help is needed in tasks such as going to the bank, and if so, who they ask for help (question 26).

We also asked interviewees whether they have any access to professional sign language interpreters (question 27). For most deaf people in Albania this is a hypothetical question, since the only sign language interpreter course – at a basic level – took place in Tirana from 2007–9. Two of those who finished the course are currently working at ANAD; four work occasionally as interpreters, mostly in contact with ANAD. Nevertheless, 18 people declared that they have sometimes used a professional interpreter. (Respondents were not asked for details, but these instances could have been events organised by the public sector or by ANAD; or in court, where ANAD tries to provide a sign language interpreter).

According to interviewees, the language they use at home is some form of spoken or written Albanian that can be produced using the manual alphabet to visualise single words. This result is quite surprising, since 88% of the respondents are illiterate in written Albanian (see section 4.2). In fact, when answering question 22, they declare relying mostly on gesticulation (such gestures are not the conventionalised signs of Albanian Sign Language) to communicate with family members (Table 18). Only nine respondents were able to use Albanian Sign Language with hearing members of their family. Four people declared that they did not communicate at all with other family members.

Table 18. Communication with hearing family members.

Means of communication	No. of respondents
Spoken Albanian	185
Written Albanian	21
Gestures	401
Fingerspelling	149
Albanian Sign Language	7
I do not communicate with my family members	4

When communicating with people outside their families, interviewees mostly use non-linguistic gesticulation and pointing, or try to utter Albanian words (Table 19). However, 375 of 423 of those who responded to question 23 (whether they are understood by hearing people or not) claimed that people outside their family do not comprehend them at all; 48 felt that they are understood in some way. No one considered communication with outsiders to be fully successful. On the other hand, 405 (94%) of those 429 interviewees who evaluated the comprehensibility of speech directed towards them (question 25) declared that they are completely unable to follow spoken messages, while 6% (n=24) claimed that spoken messages are cumbersome. None of the respondents considered communication between themselves and hearing people to be easily accessible.

Table 19. Responses to the question "How do you communicate with other hearing people (not family members)?" (Respondents were asked to choose all applicable options.)

Means of communication	No. of respondents
Spoken Albanian	116
Written Albanian	53
Use of images and drawings	7
Pointing, gesticulating	369
Albanian Sign Language	1
Sign Language Interpreter	1
Asking assistance of a relative or a friend	187
"I do not know how to communicate with them"	32

Due to well-known difficulties in communication and lack of interpreter services, respondents were also asked to say who they turn to if they need help when running errands, for example when going to the bank. Most respondents asked their parents, siblings, adult children and/or spouse to help with communication, but some also said that non-specified "other" people helped (Figure 8).[11] When cross-tabulating these results, we determined that, for example, 12 respondents report being married to a non-deaf or hard of hearing person, and six (6) to a deaf person who would help when conversing with hearing people. There were also 12 respondents who said that their adult deaf children would help them when running errands with hearing people.

Assisting persons

Assisting persons when deaf persons are communicating with outsiders

(186/434 answers)

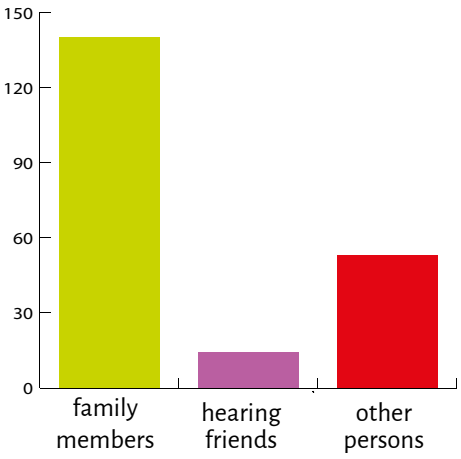

Figure 8. People who help respondents with communication.

11 What is striking in regards to question 26 is that only 186 people from the whole sample group were able to provide an answer. When researchers asked afterwards the fieldworkers how other respondents reacted, or how they might have handled similar situations, the answer was: "If they did not answer this question, it means that they never go to the bank." (Florjan Rojba, personal communication to Päivi Rainò, 25 October 2015). – Unfortunately, this possibility was not taken in consideration when preparing the survey questions and the options for response.

As explained above, when asked about the main means of communication with families and in school, most respondents mentioned speech and fingerspelling accompanied by gesticulation (see section 4.2). Contrary to the traditional socio-cultural history of the deaf population documented in numerous other countries, only a few of the participants in our survey (13 out of 139) who declare knowing Albanian Sign Language have acquired it from deaf peers in school. Before the 1990s, it was practically impossible for Albanian Sign Language to emerge, due to the Communist regime; and the natural process of language homogenisation started only at the turn of the millennium (see the Introduction, and Hoyer 2007). It seems that the situation precluded the possibility either of visual communication in use between deaf relatives being passed on from one generation to another, or of deaf people acquiring sign language from those who already used it. This is confirmed by cross-tabulating those who claim to have inherited deafness (n=23), those with a deaf parent (n=13), and those with deaf sibling(s) or other deaf relatives (n=52), against their answers to the questions "Do you know Albanian Sign Language?" (question 18) and "Where did you learn Albanian Sign Language?" (question 20).[12] For each of these categories, 60–70% of respondents stated that they do not know Albanian Sign Language at all, and only 2–4 people in each category claimed to know it very well.

However, it has to be noted that 68 % (n=295) of all participants of the survey report that they **do not know** Albanian Sign Language (there were no statistical differences between male and female respondents). This is understandable, since the language started its slow process from individual idiolects towards a shared, common sign language only in the beginning of the new millennium (see Hoyer 2007; and section 1.1 (Introduction).

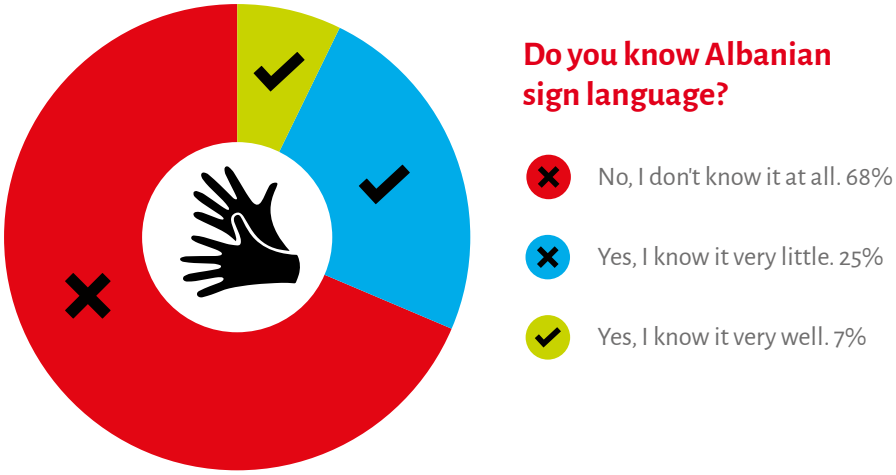

Figure 9. Command of Albanian Sign Language among respondents.

Most of the 139 people who declared that they know Albanian Sign Language learned it after 15 years of age (only 13% acquired AlbSL before); half of these 139 people acquired AlbSL between the ages of 16 and 25 years, and 37% acquired it between 26–48 years of age. Only 32 of all the interviewees stated to have a good command of AlbSL, while 107 declared that they know it a little (Figure 9). Mostly people have learned AlbSL from

12 These categories can be overlapping, i.e. the same person may have declared having deaf parents and deaf siblings. On the other hand, not all of those who have deaf siblings or deaf cousins declare having hereditary deafness in their background.

other deaf people, and through contact with ANAD, but some learned it from other deaf relatives (Figure 10). (This category can also include the spouse: 86% of married interviewees were married to another deaf person; see section 4.1).

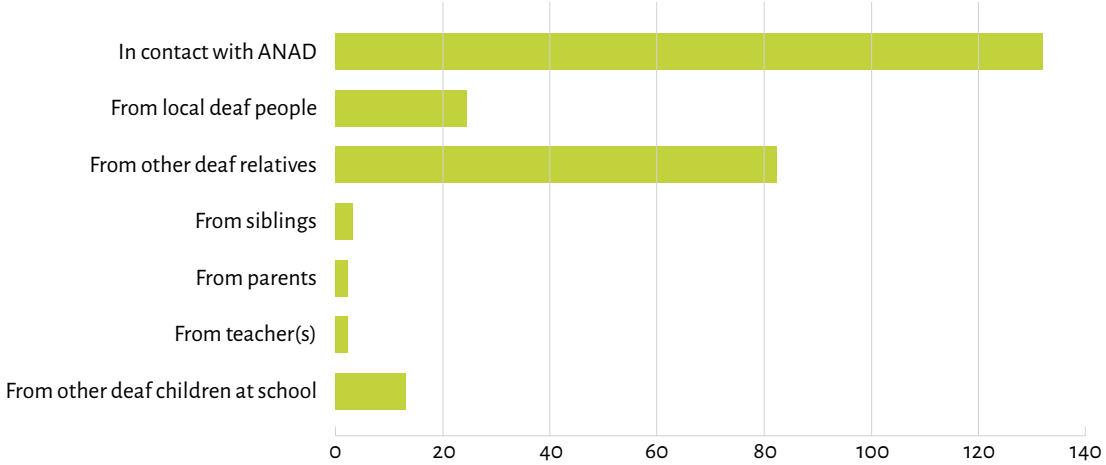

Figure 10. Where did you learn Albanian Sign Language?
(Respondents were allowed to choose more than one option.)

Moreover, there are statistically significant differences between geographical areas, in terms of how well Albanian Sign Language is known (x^2 (46)=142.87, p<.000). Since most people have learned the language through contact with ANAD, areas where AlbSL is better known are presumably also those areas where ANAD is more active. For instance, in the capital city, Tirana, approximately 60% said that they had some command of AlbSL, and in cities such as Durres and Lushnje approximately 40% of respondents (n > 20) had some command. Conversely, in Berat and Pogradec more than 90% of respondents (n > 20) declared that they did not know conventional signing at all.

One of the most interesting findings is the positive correlation between having adequate skills in written Albanian, and having a good command of sign language: those who know AlbSL have better skills in written Albanian than others who do not know AlbSL (r=.471, p<.000). Furthermore, there is a statistically significant relation between command of Albanian Sign Language and employment status (x^2 (4)=31,472, p<.000): people who know AlbSL very well have a better chance of becoming employed than people with weaker knowledge (Table 20).

Two days – in the lives of any of us

Florjan Rojba

Translated from Albanian Sign Language to English

Bekim

Mother wakes Bekim [an invented name] in the morning, because he cannot hear the alarm clock. On his way to where he works, in a shoe factory, he stops by the kiosk to check the newspapers, but he can understand very little: only the sport scores and some familiar words in the headlines. At work, hearing colleagues are talking to each other. Bekim is not able to follow the conversation, and is automatically excluded. Even if he asks what they are talking about, the hearing people cannot include him – they do not know how. They don't know sign language, so they try and fingerspell or use gestures to show the words, but it is very hard for both parties to communicate in this manner. Bekim works without interacting much with others. His hearing colleagues may ask him to join them for a coffee at the end of the day, but Bekim refuses on some pretext. He is not comfortable sitting in the company of others without taking part in the conversation.

Bekim returns home, where his parents ask him, using simple signs, about his day at work. He signs back that it was 'good'. His parents don't know sign language either, so there is really no way for him to share the experience of his working day with them. After lunch, he watches the news on TV, but cannot follow the content. Bekim asks his mother what is being said. She gestures back that it is not important.

In the afternoon, Bekim tells his mother, with commonly used gestures, that he is going to meet a deaf friend in a café. When they meet, they start discussing the news. Bekim says that he did not understand what he saw on TV, and that his mother claimed it was not important. The friend starts to sign eloquently that the news was about a decision made in parliament. He is able to explain the news quite well, because he has a sister who knows sign language.

When a hearing friend arrives at the same table, Bekim introduces him to the other deaf person. But the hearing friend does not stay for long, because he doesn't know sign language and cannot follow the conversation. After a long signed talk with his deaf friend, Bekim returns home.

Elvira

Elvira [an invented name] is actively seeking a job, and is frustrated, because until now she has been rejected everywhere. Employers don't want to hire deaf people because it is difficult to communicate with them. Elvira walks downtown to meet her friend. They sit down for a coffee and start a signed discussion about the news. Elvira explains that she has seen a photo in the newspaper where it looked like somebody had been arrested. Her friend contends that the person was arrested because they stole some money. She just assumes this, because she doesn't know how to read. They decide to ask the waiter, who has learned some basic signs from the deaf clientele. They ask him if he can explain the reason for the arrest. The waiter gesticulates that the suspect is implicated in a mafia shooting, so they both realise that the news was nothing to do with stealing money.

After a long talk with her friend, Elvira returns home for lunch. Her mother asks her what she has been doing, and Elvira responds with gestures and fingerspells words “a friend”, “meet” and “a café”. After lunch she sees a newsflash on TV. Elvira tries to find out more about the news from her mother; she replies that one political party is corrupt and is stealing money, but she cannot elaborate on the topic with any detail. She just puts together the few common signs that she knows: “political party” and “stealing”.

In the evening, she has dinner with her family members – her mother, father and siblings are talking to each other. Elvira sits back and just watches them: they seem to be amused about something but she understands nothing of what is being said.

Table 20. Cross tabulation between sign language skills and employment.

			Employment			
			Full-time	**Part-time**	**Not working**	**Total**
Do you know Albanian SL?	Yes, very well	Respondents (f)	15	1	16	32
		%	47 %	3 %	50 %	100 %
	Yes, a little	Respondents (f)	30	15	63	108
		%	28 %	14 %	58 %	100 %
	Not at all	Respondents (f)	37	36	221	294
		%	13 %	12 %	75 %	100 %
Total		Respondents (f)	82	52	300	434
		%	19 %	12 %	69 %	100 %

In the next section, analysis of data on literacy skills continues, from multiple perspectives. Triangulation is used to check further the validity of the results, the lack of functional literacy, and how this affects access to information.

4.5 Access to information

The final questions in the questionnaire concern awareness about the news on the national TV channel TVSH in Albanian Sign Language, which is broadcasted on weekdays. Of the 434 people interviewed, 375 (86%) responded positively to question 46: "Have you watched signed news on television over the last month?"; only 59 respondents had not seen the news. Using a chi-square analysis with the district where respondents were living and the frequency of following the signed news programme, statistically significant geographical differences between the prefectures emerge ($x^2(23)=51.197$, $p<.001$). For instance, in Gjirokastër, Kuçovë and Bulqizë as many people had seen the news as those who had not. In all other areas the signed news programme was followed by more than 75% of interviewees (75–100%). Interviewees were also asked about how often they watched the signed news (question 47). On average, the news was followed a couple of times a month (82%); only 5% of all respondents followed the news daily.

Respondents were also asked about the different channels that they use when following what happens in Albania and in other parts of the world (question 48): do they watch signed news on TV and on websites where sign language is used, or do they read newspapers and news articles published online? They were able to choose options such as "By watching television" or "I receive news from other people" whether signing or non-signing. Most of the respondents (87%, or 244 out of 280) reported getting information from signed news on TV; 153 people also search for signed news on websites; 120 respondents rely on friends who sign. No one said that they receive information about the news from people who do not know sign language.

Nevertheless, 174 respondents said that they try to decipher the contents of the news by looking at images on television. This demonstrates both the desire to acquire information in any way possible but also shows that deaf people gravitate naturally towards any visual media.

Could subtitling the TV news in Albanian help deaf people to understand more about the content? Several broadcasters in Western countries subtitle their programmes for hearing-impaired viewers, and so we asked deaf interviewees whether subtitles are helpful for deciphering the contens of television programmes. Of the 426 respondents who answered the question 28, 387 (91%) did not understand subtitles at all. Only two (2) people claimed to understand subtitles very well, while 37 understood with some difficulties. The younger generation, however, found subtitled programmes more comprehensible than older people (Table 21); the difference between age groups is statistically significant (x^2 (10)=19.217, p<.038). Grouping respondents to question 48 according to age reveals that younger people follow signed news more than older people. We can also see that deaf youths are more interested in searching for information from all possible channels, besides obtaining information from other signers (Table 22).

Table 21. Age of the respondents and comprehension of subtitles.

		Age groups						Total
		18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-	
Do you understand subtitles in Albanian?	I understand them very well	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
		0 %	0 %	1 %	1 %	0 %	0 %	0 %
	I understand them with difficulty	5	9	7	7	4	0	32
		33 %	9 %	8 %	4 %	8 %	0 %	8 %
	I don't understand them at all	10	88	84	146	48	12	388
		67 %	91 %	91 %	95 %	92 %	100 %	92 %
Total		15	97	92	154	52	12	422
		100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %	100 %

Table 22. Sources of news for respondents according to age groups. Distribution of positive answers are given in percentages. (The selection of multiple options was possible.)

How do you receive the news?	18-20	21-30	31-40	41-50	51-60	61-
By reading newspapers and webnews	33 %	24 %	28 %	25 %	24 %	14 %
From websites using sign language	93 %	58 %	38 %	26 %	9 %	7 %
From people who use sign language	73 %	40 %	28 %	19 %	11 %	7 %
By watching TV	47 %	51 %	39 %	35 %	36 %	21 %

Do respondents who are completely illiterate, and those who read with difficulty, use newspapers as a source of news – as described in the two profiles composed by Florjan Rojba (Two days – in the lives of any of us, p. 48)? By cross-tabulating results from question 33 (the reading task) and question 48, we may conclude that more than one-third of the illiterate respondents still try to gather information from written texts (see Table 23). What is more striking is that 10% of those persons who self-declare as illiterate, also seek information from newspapers (17 of the 163 respondents who did not want to respond to question 33 due to their illiteracy, see section 4.2.1).

Table 23. Success on the reading task compared with getting information from written news texts (cross tabulation of responses to questions 33 and 48).

		Performance of respondents with the reading task (n=112)		
		demonstrated to read with difficulties	demonstrated having no reading skills	Total
Do you read newspapers and written news on the web?	NO	4	69	73
		57 %	66 %	65%
	YES	3	36	39
		43 %	34 %	35 %
Total		7	105	112
		100 %	100 %	100 %

It can be concluded that, for most of the respondents of this survey, signed news is the most accessible and reliable source for gathering information about the news.

WhatsApp Group Messaging

Denis Plloça
Hi team! I would like to ask your opinion about question 34 of the form, which asks if you ever attended preschool education, and when the option "No" is chosen, it goes to question 35 which asks if you ever attended the eight year school education (in the deaf students' school). We had a few replies that we don't know how to categorise. Some of the interviewed persons said that they attended the school for only 2-3 days and then left because they did not like it, they got bored or started to fight with each other and so they returned to their homes. In these cases we don't know how to categorise their replies. I think that the last point is the most appropriate, but I'd like to know your opinion, too.

Valmira Avdullaj
Hi. Jetmir and I came an hour ago together with V., the person who accompanied us. We completed the interviews and in two days we conducted three interviews. Yesterday we met some deaf people who were in sixth and seventh grade in school and were too young to be interviewed. We managed to interview a 23 year old who had attended the school. He faced many communication problems in his family. We have described his problems in the report. V. told us about a deaf person who, while getting older, had also lost his sight. We could interview him because he could communicate using fingerspelling. I was very impressed because it was the first time I had met a deaf-blind person, and it made me happy. I encouraged Denis, too, to enter into communication with them by using fingerspelling and tactile signing. – I forgot to inform you that Denis and Irena were here. We had coffee together, but they left because they had to go on with their work.

Florjan Rojba
Hi! I am crying and I am very shocked because of the difficult life conditions of the deaf-blind people that Edi and Denis told me about. I thank Edi very much, as he enabled communication with these people. This made me very happy. I thank Edi and Denis again for reporting about the difficult conditions of these people. This obliges us to help them to get out of their homes, to come to the Association, to become involved in activities and to give them the rights to a better life. To achieve this objective we must work and lobby harder for them. S. and I became very shocked looking at the interviews. We cried and felt so sorry for them, putting ourselves in their shoes as deaf-blind people. Their life is so difficult. They must feel very lonely, without any activity, you just eat and sleep. That's all. I thank Edi and Denis again. I love you very much.

Denis Plloça
Hi! This is the second time I am communicating with you, and I have information to share. There were cases when, for point 34, some chose the option "No", and for point 35 the option "Yes", while for point 35 the option "I was afraid to go to school because of violence/harassment". So there were cases when people have chosen this option because they felt violated or were afraid to stay even a day at school, or were unable to get used to the school, and left to go back home. I would like to share this with you as an example to show that these are the reasons why they did not attend school, thus being denied the right to education.

Florjan Rojba

Hi to the interviewing team. The topic suggested by Valmira is very important. Please write down every situation faced during the interviews, for example the case mentioned by Valmira about the interviewee who had never attended school. There are other cases where parents are worried about who is going to take care of their children when they are not alive anymore. You must sum up all of these cases in the report, to be used as examples to the responsible institutions about the difficult situations of deaf people and the measures that have to be undertaken by the institutions to improve their situations, because deaf people have communication difficulties and are unable to lead an independent life. This is one of the concerns raised by the parents. I wish you success in your work and goodbye!

Erkid Hatia

Hi to the interviewing team! Yesterday we completed five interviews, while today we interviewed four women and four men, eight people in total. That makes 13 deaf people in two days. We are satisfied with the work done so far. We got very tired in the villages far away in Korça because it was very cold. Our companion told us that tomorrow we will go to Maliq where we can interview five or six deaf people. We were very happy to hear this. I hope to conduct 10 interviews tomorrow. I also hope to conduct 36 interviews in total. Hugs and kisses.

Valmira Avdullaj

This is the second video. The interviews with the deaf-blind people were very important. It has been a big success to interview them among this huge number of deaf people. Despite the communication difficulties and the double workload as they were both blind and deaf, we tried several times to establish basic communication, by going to a café in order to create a warm atmosphere and establish a relationship between us. Meeting deaf-blind people and communication with them was thrilling. For the first time these persons were at the centre of attention, since they are used to staying isolated inside their houses. Communication and interviews with them should be considered a success for us. When Denis comes, he might give more details and information regarding his work. I thank you for the positive comments concerning the video. Meanwhile here at the café we are waiting for I's wife, for her interview. Good bye!

Denis Plloça

Hi! I have a question for you. We faced the issue during the interviews and it is related to question number 26 in questionnaire which is "When you go to the bank..." From the three people interviewed in relation to this question, they stated that they go to the bank alone. We asked for the reason why they went alone. They replied that their fathers were ready to assist them, but they were afraid that their fathers would steal their pension. That was the reason they preferred to go alone. We asked how they communicated at the bank and they stated that they communicated via the form. In these conditions I don't know how to categorise the reply on the questionnaire. Maybe the last point is most appropriate, "other people". Thus the question is whether to put it in this category or not.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Florjan Rojba & Inkeri Lahtinen

The purpose of this survey study was to obtain information on deaf adults in Albania, in light of the articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) concerning deaf people and sign language. The study has looked at the opportunities that deaf adults have for human interaction in everyday life, the status of signed and written languages in their lives, and their access to information and interpreting services. It has also examined how teaching methods in the special school for deaf children affect the linguistic abilities of deaf people to meet the requirements of society at large.

Based on the results of the survey, it can be stated as an overall conclusion that Albania's deaf population does not enjoy the same opportunities as their hearing peers with regard to independent living, the right to education and further studies, access to employment according to potential, and access to information.

The following paragraphs first look shortly at the legal framework in terms of CRPD implementation, and then reflect on the current situation in each survey area. Finally, recommendations are presented for actions that focus on crucial phases in the lives of deaf people. The recommendations form a framework and a road map that can be used in further collaboration between relevant stakeholders and ANAD as the key actor representing the target group.

5.1 General remarks

After ratification of the CRPD in 2013, the Albanian ministries and responsible institutions have actively worked on analysing and revising the current legislation, and have gradually included representative disability organisations more in the process as experts. This is commendable, and collaboration is expected to develop into even more structured dialogue in the long-term planning and preparation of initiatives. The ratification of the Optional Protocol is still underway. This can be seen as a sign that Albania takes seriously the task of amending and aligning its legislation to ensure compliance with the CRPD before ratifying Optional Protocol.

Sign language was officially recognised in Albania in 2014, when the language was given legal status, but the formulation does not define Albanian Sign Language as minority language. The *Law on Pre-University Education System*[13] in 2012 guarantees students the right to communicate in sign language. However, the formulation is vague, and the article has not been enforced. The legal setting for persons with disabilities

13 Law No. 69/2012, Article 63 http://www.crca.al/albanian-legislation/national-laws

was revised in July 2014, when Albania adopted the framework *Law on Inclusion of and Access for People with Disabilities*[14]. In December 2014 four by-laws were adopted under the framework law, one of them defining the role of the inter-ministerial Council of Disability which is in charge of monitoring the implementation, and disability organisations are represented in the council.

The by-law *Definition of Measures to Eliminate Barriers to Communication and Infrastructure in the Provision of Public Services for People with Disability*, following article 11 of the framework law, specifies deaf people for the first time as a group in need of accessibility measures and services (paragraphs 1.2a and 1.3c). In its special rules No. 12–18, the by-law stipulates measures for sign language interpreting services, sign language teaching in education, interpreter training, publication of sign language dictionaries and offering regular news transmissions both with subtitles and in sign language on the national television channel.

The National Action Plan for Persons with Disabilities (2016–2020) was drafted in collaboration with the Albanian disability community, and completed in April 2016. At the time of writing this report, the Action Plan is waiting for adoption by the Council of Ministers. In the Action Plan there are concrete measures with indicators for training deaf sign language instructors and class assistants and, at later stage, for training sign language interpreters.

In the next section, concrete recommendations are set out at the level of implementation for how the responsibilities stated in the CRPD articles regarding deaf people and sign language can be further realised. The implementation of these recommendations will require solid commitment from several government ministries and for inter-ministerial collaboration, as well as collaboration with the Albanian National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) as the expert and representative body of the deaf community and its needs. In addition to amending the legislative framework, the relevant initiatives need be granted the required budgetary resources and implementation ensured over electoral mandate periods.

5.2 Recommendations

There is a need to accelerate the paradigm shift from the medical model of deafness as a medical condition, to the social model of deafness. One important step towards this goal is to give Albanian Sign Language the status of a minority language. Once the deaf population is regarded not only as a disability group, but also as a linguistic minority, responsible parties will have better tools with which to address linguistic and other barriers that deaf people face – barriers that are clearly evidenced by this survey report.

14 Law No. 93/2014 http://www.sherbimisocial.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/ligj_nr_93_dt_24_7_2014.pdf

5.2.1 Early detection and intervention

The survey results presented in Chapter 4 show that deaf children have little communication in their families. This is also clear from the sketches of deaf people's daily lives by Florjan Rojba (Two days – in the lives of any of us, p. 48), and in many of the signed field reports. The majority of deaf children are born into hearing families, and deaf children – unlike members of other, spoken language minorities – cannot acquire sign language naturally in the families in which they grow up. Parents cannot communicate with deaf children except with gestures and rudimentary home signs. As children are not exposed to sign language during the early years, they are not able to acquire language properly. **Deaf children may reach school-going age without any real language**, and this affects their development and learning opportunities gravely.[15]

At present, deaf children of pre-school age in Albania do not have access to the signing environment necessary to support their linguistic rights and development, and thus their situation does not comply with Albanian legislation; the *Law on Protection of the Rights of the Child* (2010)[16], (Article 5, 'General Principles', Chapter 2) stipulates "Equality and non-discrimination irrespective of the child's or his/her parents' - - language, disability or other status." Article 30, 'Children with disabilities' (Chapter 3) states: "- - special care is designed for [the] disabled child to ensure his/her effective participation - - by **adequately developing his/her individual capacities to achieve social, cultural and spiritual integration to the maximum extent possible**" (editors' emphasis). In addition, while deaf children are not legally recognised as belonging to a linguistic or ethnic minority, their situation can be compared to those of children of ethnic minorities who, according to Article 31 of the above-mentioned law, are "entitled to full and free expression of his/her cultural and language heritage".

Article 23 of the CRPD ('Respect for Home and the Family') require state parties to ensure that children with disabilities have equal rights with respect to family life. Parents of deaf children need be provided with timely and comprehensive information, services and support for their child-rearing responsibilities, ensuring strong parent-child relationships, including accessible and inclusive community support. Article 30 of the CRPD ('Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport') specifies this more clearly in Paragraph 4, where it is stated that: "Persons with disabilities shall be entitled, on an equal basis with others, to recognition and support of their specific cultural and linguistic identity, including sign languages and deaf culture".

The World Federation of the Deaf (WFD) is currently preparing an official Statement on the Linguistic Rights of Deaf Children.[17] The draft presents exhaustive research literature showing that early acquisition of sign language is essential for overall language development, and that early acquisition of sign language provides support for deaf children's competence in the national language(s). Early exposure to sign language and multilingualism, combined with strong family support for sign languages, best

15 It was not within the scope of this survey to study additional disabilities experienced by deaf adult. However, one can expect that a lack of normal language development increases the prevalence of additional disabilities such as cognitive and learning difficulties.

16 Law No 10347/2010 http://www.crca.al/albanian-legislation/national-laws

17 Correspondence with the WFD secretariat 8 June 2016.

prepares children for their future effective participation in society. The WFD strongly encourages governments to implement programmes to support the teaching of sign language to family members and carers of deaf children, in co-operation with deaf communities and deaf sign language teachers.

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is presently drafting guidelines for simplified reporting procedures for periodic reporting. In line with the draft statement on the Linguistic Rights of Deaf Children, the WFD has requested that the CRPD Committee include questions about measures (including budgetary measures) to ensure that sign languages can be learned, including free early sign language learning for deaf children and their families. The revised guidelines for periodic reporting are projected to be in use by 2017.

Proposed actions once a child is diagnosed deaf are as follows:

- The parents are offered information on deafness, sign language and deaf culture. There is a strong emphasis on the learning potential of their child despite hearing loss, the crucial role of language development, and the support and educational paths available.
- Information is offered with contact details for where parents can turn for support with their deaf child: municipal health care centres and social welfare offices, and especially medical commissions for assessing and defining the disability of the child. Parents need to be given counselling, information brochures and contact details for ANAD. Associations of parents of disabled children, and especially parents of deaf children, are important for parental peer support, but such organisations have not yet been formed in Albania.
- Employees in the health and social care network who encounter the parents of deaf children need be offered training and information both on how to counsel parents in the above mentioned topics, and on where to direct parents for more information.
- A deaf child needs exposure to a signing environment to maximise his/her development and learning potential. Parents need be encouraged to contact local deaf adults so that the child can see native signing and fulfil his/her natural need for interaction. Here ANAD and its local network can assist both in finding suitable deaf adult language models and in facilitating the meetings.

In the longer-term, once sign language training resources are available:

- Parents and families need to be granted access to free courses for learning sign language to facilitate communication with their deaf child. This can be implemented once enough deaf sign language instructors have received training (see sections regarding education below).

All actions connected to the above mentioned services should be free of cost for parents to ensure as low a threshold as possible. Initial investment will lead to future savings, as there will be less need for investment in special needs education and therapy.

5.2.2 Basic education

The CRPD obliges state parties to enable persons with disabilities to full and equal participation in education by facilitating the learning of sign language and the promotion of the linguistic identity of the deaf community (Article 24.3 b). Deaf people

must receive education in the most appropriate languages, modes and means of communication for the individual, and in environments which maximise academic and social development (Article 24.3 c). State parties shall employ and train teachers who are qualified in sign language (Article 24.4). Reasonable accommodation must be provided to deaf people for them to be able to access further education on equal basis with others (Article 24.5).

The most significant finding of this survey is that **97% of deaf adult persons are functionally illiterate**. Illiteracy among deaf adults is almost five times higher than for other disability groups (20%), and 35 times higher than the non-disabled population (2.8%). This finding is even more striking because the majority of illiterate deaf people (74%) in the survey target group have completed basic education considering that the cause for illiteracy in the other two groups – disabled and non-disabled – can be explained for most parts by non-participation in education.

The core underlying problem can be traced to the weak communication and interaction between pupils and their teachers due to lack of a mutually intelligible language. This emerged in the survey when deaf adults were asked about the mode of communication used by their teachers, and is confirmed by a recent study conducted in the Institute of Deaf Students in Tiranal[18]. The school survey explains the weak learning outcomes of deaf pupils in the school, which in turn explains the low literacy level of deaf adults who graduated from the Institute, many of whom were interviewed in the population survey.

According to the results of both surveys, the current education system for deaf learners does not comply with Albanian legislation nor with CRPD articles regarding education. The poor quality of education at the basic level means that further education – higher secondary or high school – is not currently an option for the vast majority of deaf people.

In order to change the current situation, the language of instruction used in basic education needs to change to sign language. Sign language enables deaf students to learn the written form of spoken languages (the bilingual education method). This calls for training of deaf sign language instructors who can train hearing teachers to become fluent in Albanian Sign Language and, in the long-term, for the training of deaf school teachers. Moreover, deaf students have the right to study sign language as their 'mother tongue' or first language, which requires the training of specialised deaf sign language instructors/teachers. To optimise learning and communication between (hearing) school teachers and their deaf pupils, there is a need for trained deaf classroom assistants who are fluent in Albanian Sign Language. They can operate as linguistic role models for deaf students, as well as providing regular support.

18 The Vice Minister of Education and Sports (MoES) established in 2015 a working group comprised of MoES, ANAD, the Institute of Educational Development (IZHA), the Institute of Deaf Students, the Tirana Education Directorate and the University of Tirana to study the situation of deaf education and to prepare recommendations for improvements. The study of the signing skills of teachers at the Institute of Deaf Students, and of students' learning outcomes in written Albanian and mathematics, was conducted by the Institute of Educational Development (IZHA) and ANAD in February 2016. As a summary, only 30% of 31 teachers understood the test video in Albanian Sign Language, and only 3% (1 of 31) were able to produce Albanian Sign Language. Deaf students scored, on average, 'satisfactory' in the Albanian reading test. However, the Institute of Deaf Students teaches on average only half (35–60%) of the Albanian language national curriculum. Due to the weakened curriculum, the test results of deaf students scored with the same scale as in mainstream education must be regarded as much lower. The final report was submitted to the Vice Minister of MoES in April 2016, including short- and long-term recommendations.

Proposed actions to create an optimal learning environment and opportunities for deaf students:

- There is an urgent need to train native language users as instructors of sign language, so that there is capacity to teach sign language to hearing teachers and educators of deaf children as a second/foreign language.
- Teachers and educators of deaf children need to learn sign language as a second/foreign language. Language competence should be a condition for working with deaf children.
- Sign language training for hearing teachers and educators should be organised as additional in-service training.
- Sign language training for teachers who aim to specialise in deaf education needs be organised as pre-service training.
- Training needs to be established for deaf people to become classroom assistants, and employment opportunities granted for deaf classroom assistants in classes where majority of children cannot communicate by any other means than signed/visual communication.
- Deaf children need to be offered the opportunity to learn Albanian Sign Language as their 'mother tongue'/first language, in the same way that 'Albanian' is a school subject.
- Deaf sign language instructors need be trained as subject teachers for Albanian Sign Language as the 'mother tongue'/first language of deaf children, in the same way that 'Albanian' is a school subject.
- The costs of transport from home to school must be made affordable for parents and guardians of deaf children, so that this does not form an obstacle for their education.
- There are no structurally-gathered data on the learning outcomes of deaf and hard of hearing children who are included in mainstream education at basic level. In order to gain a comprehensive view of the situation of deaf education in Albania, it is necessary to conduct a study on the mainstream education of deaf children as well.

In the longer-term, once sign language skills have developed sufficiently:

- Hearing teachers and educators need to be offered training in (deaf) bilingual teaching methods as in-service training.
- Teachers aiming to specialise in deaf education need to be offered training in (deaf) bilingual teaching methods as pre-service training.

Part of these recommendations are included in the final (unpublished) report of the Working Group on Development of Deaf Education (see footnote 18) submitted to the Ministry of Education and Sport in April 2016.

5.2.3 Higher secondary, high school and tertiary education

At present there are no education opportunities in sign language for deaf students after the 9th grade. Due to their low literacy levels and without access to sign language interpreters, there is practically no attainment for deaf students at higher secondary or high school. Deaf people are *de facto* excluded from further education. This automatically blocks opportunities to any tertiary education for deaf people as well. It is clear that,

in this regard, deaf students are not in an equal position to their hearing peers, and this is in direct contradiction to the *Law on Pre-University Education* and Article 24 of the CRPD, discussed earlier.

Proposed actions:

- Establish a higher secondary and/or high school for deaf students with vocational training opportunities in a wider range of professions than are currently offered in basic education (i.e. carpentry, shoe making, dress making). The options should cater better for deaf students' abilities, interests and future labour market needs.
- Include additional Albanian language classes in the curriculum of higher secondary and/or high schools for deaf students, to ensure their low proficiency in Albanian can be improved during vocational training.
- Provide sign language interpreting in each class until hearing teachers become fluent in sign language and/or deaf people are trained as teachers.
- Train sign language interpreters for educational settings to be provided free of charge for all deaf students in further education, and in mainstream higher secondary and tertiary education.

5.2.4 Employment

For deaf people in the survey sample, there is a higher employment rate than for other disability groups, or for the group defined as completely unable to hear in the general population (2011 Census). However, deaf people who are employed or self-employed generally had unskilled, low-paying, non-academic jobs. This is understandable, given that their educational path currently ends at ninth grade and that the Institute of Deaf Students provides orientation for only three occupations: carpentry and shoe making for boys, and dressmaking for girls.

The legislation prohibits all discrimination in working life based on disability, in line with Article 27 of the CRPD ('Work life and Employment'). Moreover, Article 15 of the *Law on Promotion of Employment of Persons with Disabilities*[19] declares that out of 25 employees, one should be a person with disability. However, the enforcement is weak and the sanctions for failing to fulfil the quota are not compelling. Although the employment of disabled persons is actively supported by various employment promotion programmes, they seem to bear little fruit, and this is especially pronounced regarding disabled women.[20]

In the long term, provided that the recommendations listed in previous sections are implemented, deaf people should be equally capable of applying for further education and finding employment in professions and occupations to which they aspire, and which better meet the labour market needs. However, in the short term, although most deaf adults are physically able to work, major obstacles to their employment include linguistic barriers, exacerbated by the high level of illiteracy found by this study, and their in-

19 Law No. 7995/1995, amended 1999, 2002, and 2006) www.kerkojpune.gov.al/wp.../02/ligji_i_nxitjes_se_punesimit.pdf

20 Final report on Employment Promotion Programmes In Albania 2008 – 2014, RisiAlbania, December 2014 http://www.kerkojpune.gov.al/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/EPP-FINAL-REPORT.pdf

ability to participate in networks where information about job opportunities tend to circulate. Since the education system has failed deaf people during their school years, adult literacy training programmes should be offered free of charge as gateway training for enhancing employment opportunities. Also informing of employment programmes and other promotions need be advertised in sign language. On entering into an employment programme, training for employment, or for the work place, the opportunity to use a sign language interpreter should be offered automatically.

Proposed actions:

- Offer Albanian language training for deaf adults as a second language.
- Organise additional training for teachers who are experienced in teaching Albanian to foreigners, who can specialise in teaching Albanian as a second language to deaf adults. Specialisation requires additional basic training, among other topics, in sign language and deaf culture.
- Inform deaf adults about employment promotion programmes in sign language via national television broadcasts and relevant public service websites.
- Provide free sign language interpreting for deaf adults who attend any employment promotion programme, additional training, or on-the-job training.
- Provide a free interpreting service for employers and deaf employees on a needs basis.
- Organise or facilitate self-employment training (business planning, administration and accounting etc.) with sign language interpreters, with visits from deaf entrepreneurs as counsellors and role models.

5.2.5 Access to information and interpreter services

Deaf people have no access to professional sign language interpreting. In practice, there is no access to interpreting at all. There are only six sign language interpreters in Albania, of whom two are engaged full-time at ANAD and the remaining four are employed full-time by other work. Thus these four interpreters can only be booked for after office hours and mostly in the vicinity of the capital, Tirana. However, they are rarely used for private interpreting because deaf people cannot afford to pay for their services. In cases when deaf people absolutely need somebody to assist them in communication with hearing people, they mostly use family members.

The national television channel TVSH transmits one 5–15 minute session of signed news at 13:00 on weekdays. ANAD members report that the timing of this session, in the middle of the day, is not convenient for students, farmers, or other employed deaf people. Moreover, the size of the deaf in-vision signer in the corner of the screen is reported by deaf people to be too small for them to follow the signing easily. There are no other programs available in sign language.

Deaf people have no means of requesting help in sign language in emergency situations, and cannot call for the police, ambulance or fire brigade. Neither can they receive public warnings, alarms or notices of emergency situations.

The deaf population is unable to access everyday information through spoken or written

forms of mass media, such as television, radio, newspapers and the internet. This gravely restricts opportunities to keep oneself updated on events in society or in the world at large. Compared to illiterate hearing people, and ethnic or other linguistic minorities, opportunities are restricted even more, since deaf people are also excluded from information shared within the family.

The purpose of Article 2b of the Albanian *Law on Protection from Discrimination*[21] is that every person has the right to equality of opportunities and has the possibility to exercise their rights, enjoy freedoms and take part in public life. In light of the report findings, it is unclear how deaf people can exercise rights they are unaware of, or have no means of attaining knowledge about.

According to Article 9 of the CRPD ('Accessibility'), state parties must eliminate all barriers to accessibility to information, communication and other services (Paragraph 1b), and provide professional sign language interpreters (Paragraph 2e). More specifically, in Article 21 ('Freedom of expression and opinion, and access to information'), state parties are obligated to provide information intended for the general public in accessible formats in a timely manner and without additional cost, regardless who is providing the service (private or public). This means that legislative and other measures need be adopted to guarantee access to printed or electronic information and communication and other services, including information and emergency services, for sign language users.

Deaf people are entitled to exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas in sign language on an equal basis with others, as defined in Article 2 of the CRPD. CRPD Articles 21b and 21e specifically urge the acceptance, facilitation and promotion of the use of sign languages. Article 30 ('Participation in cultural life, recreation, leisure and sport'), stipulates that deaf people have the right to enjoy access to television programs, films, theatre and other cultural activities in accessible formats (Paragraph 1b) and that deaf people must be given the opportunity to develop and utilise their creative, artistic and intellectual potential (Paragraph 2), not only for their own benefit, but also for the enrichment of society.

Proposed actions:

- Organise the training of professional hearing and deaf interpreters, first at vocational education and training (VET) level, then at university level.
- Set quality standards for professional interpreting at various levels.
- Set up an interpreter service centre that can cater for interpreting needs in Albania, and study the options for distance interpreting (for deaf people who live in remote areas).
- Organise opportunities for deaf people to make contact and communicate with emergency response centres via text messages and/or video call using emergency interpreter.
- Offer deaf people free interpreting services in public, educational and private settings, on a needs basis.
- Ensure that all public transmissions of warnings, urgent notifications and emergency situations (natural disasters, terrorism etc.) have sign language interpretation.

21 Law No. 10221/2010 http://www.legislationline.org/topics/country/47/topic/84

- Organise access in sign language to information on the webpages of municipal and central level public institutions and services.
- Enlarge the provision of signed television news to cover all days of the week and lengthen the duration to ensure better coverage of all topics; change the time of broadcasts to late afternoon or early evening, or alternatively broadcast the signed news twice a day; enlarge the size of the in-vision signer on the screen for better visibility.
- Launch the production of more television programmes in sign language, especially magazine type programmes that process current affairs from various angles.
- Begin gradually subtitling all news and informative programmes in the Albanian language, and later expand subtitling to other programme types as well (entertainment, films in the Albanian language etc.).
- Study the potential of mobile information services such as guided tours of museums in sign language.

5.2.6 On social protection

Due to time limitations, this survey did not examine the economic situation or income formulation of respondents. However, based on the experience of ANAD members and the testimonies of respondents recorded in the field reports, it can be concluded that the deaf population is not treated equally in regard to disability assessment criteria and the payment of benefits (pensions). Deafness is not considered to be a disabling condition that affects a person's ability to work, because linguistic barriers are not taken into account in any way. Deaf people are caught in an impasse; on one hand they are assessed as (physically) able to work, and thus not eligible for disability benefit, but on the other hand they face rejection in the labour market due to their (communication) disability, which is exacerbated by low literacy levels. Denied the status and benefits of other disability groups (e.g. those with visual or mobility impairments), deaf people have fallen through gaps in social protection schemes. The unequal treatment of deaf people has led into a situation where they have to be diagnosed as having an additional mental "deficit" in order to fulfil the criteria for a disability pension[22].

The new framework law on Inclusion and Accessibility is expected to reform the disability assessment system. Article 10.3 states that the assessment of disability and support/assistance needs will be based on World Health Organisation (WHO) International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Heath (ICF; WHO 2015b). The use of ICF will change the focus from diagnosis confirmation into a comprehensive view, assessing also the social aspects and integration ability associated with disability. For this to work successfully, there is a need to include the necessary expertise in the multidisciplinary assessment commissions, to evaluate the situation of deaf people and the barriers that they face to linguistic accessibility and social inclusion.

22 In addition to testimonies by ANAD members, incidents of voluntary additional diagnosis has been reported in the UNDP report Review of the Disability Assessment System in Albania (2014, 54).

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DEAF PEOPLE IN ALBANIA

Identification

1. Please could you tell us what is your...
Indicate with an X, if the respondent does not know the answer.

Name * _____
Father's name _____
Mother's name _____
Surname * _____
Date of Birth (DD.MM.YYYY) _____
Identity number (NID) _____

2. District Code (City/Village) of the place where you now live (at the time of the interview):

○ 01 Berat	○ 07 Elbasan	○ 13 Kolonjë	○ 19 Lezhë	○ 25 Mirditë	○ 31 Skrapar
○ 02 Bulqizë	○ 08 Fier	○ 14 Korçë	○ 20 Librazhd	○ 26 Peqin	○ 32 Shkodër
○ 03 Delvinë	○ 09 Gramsh	○ 15 Krujë	○ 21 Lushnje	○ 27 Përmet	○ 33 Tepelenë
○ 04 Devoll	○ 10 Gjirokastër	○ 16 Kuçovë	○ 22 Malësi e Madhe	○ 28 Pogradec	○ 34 Tiranë
○ 05 Dibër	○ 11 Has	○ 17 Kukës	○ 23 Mallakastër	○ 29 Pukë	○ 35 Tropojë
○ 06 Durrës	○ 12 Kavajë	○ 18 Kurbin	○ 24 Mat	○ 30 Sarandë	○ 36 Vlorë

3. What is your gender?
○ Male ○ Female

4. What is your marital status?
○ Single ○ Engaged ○ Married ○ Divorced ○ Widowed

5. Do you have children?
○ No ○ Yes, 2 ○ Yes, 4
○ Yes, 1 ○ Yes, 3 ○ I have more than 4 children. How many? _____

6. With whom do you live now?
(Choose all that apply.)
□ Alone □ With siblings □ With spouse and children □ With spouse
□ With parents □ With grandparent(s) □ With parents-in-law

Questions about hearing loss/deafness

7. How would you describe yourself?
○ Deaf ○ Hard of hearing ○ Late-Deafened ○ I can hear but I cannot speak

8. At what age did you become deaf/hard of hearing?
○ I was born with no hearing ○ Before starting school ○ After 15 years of age
○ Before the age of two ○ Between 6-15 years of age ○ I don't know

9. How did you become deaf/hard of hearing?
(Choose all that apply.)
□ Trhough injury/illness □ Other reason
□ My mother was ill during pregnancy □ I do not know
□ My parents/siblings are deaf/we have hereditary deafness in our family
□ I became deaf/hard of hearing gradually

10. Are any of your family members hard of hearing or deaf?
(Choose all that apply.)

	Hard of hearing	Deaf
Parent/parents	□ -	□ .
Spouse	□ -	□ -
Sibling(s)	□ -	□ -
Child/children	□ -	□ -
Grandparent(s)	□ -	□ -
Parents-in-law	□ -	□ -

11. Do you have other relatives (cousins, aunts, uncles) who are deaf?
○ Yes ○ No

12. Do you have any additional disability?
○ Yes ○ No ○ I do not know ○ I do not want to answer

13. What is your additional disability?
(Choose all that apply.)
○ Blind ○ Intellectual disability or mental disability ○ Other
○ Vision-impaired ○ Physical disability ○ Do not want to answer

Questions about your profession

14. During the last month - have you worked for at least for one hour?

○ Yes, in a full-time (permanent) job ○ Yes, on a part-time basis ○ No, I did not work, not even for one hour

15. If you didn't work, can you explain why?

○ I'm unemployed ○ I'm a student ○ I'm a housewife ○ Other

16. In which field do you work?

Choose one:

○ Farming	○ Jewellery Industry	○ Bakery	○ Electrician
○ Welding	○ Tailoring	○ Hairdressing	○ Car Washing
○ Building	○ Auto Mechanic	○ Printing	○ Decoration
○ Carpentry	○ Shoe Repairs	○ Cleaning	○ Other

17. For whom do you work?

○ I work in the state sector ○ I work in a family business ○ Other
○ I work in the private sector ○ I'm self-employed

Questions about communication

18. Do you know Albanian Sign Language?

○ Yes, I know it well ○ Yes, I know it a little ○ No, I don't know it all

19. At what age did you learn Albanian sign language?

At the age of (years): _____

20. Where did you learn Albanian sign language?

(Choose all that apply.)

□ From other deaf children at school □ From siblings □ In contact with ANAD
□ From a teacher/teachers □ From other deaf relatives
□ From parents □ From local deaf people

21. Do you know other sign languages?

○ No ○ Yes. Which one? _____

22. How do you communicate <u>now</u> with hearing members of your family? By...

(Choose all that apply.)

□ speaking Albanian □ using gestures □ using sign language
□ writing in Albanian □ fingerspelling □ I don't communicate with my family members

23. How do you communicate <u>now</u> with other hearing people (not family members)? I use...

(Choose all that apply.)

□ spoken Albanian □ pointing and gesticulating □ I ask a relative or a friend to assist me
□ written Albanian □ sign language □ I don't know how to communicate with them
□ pictures, drawings □ a sign language interpreter

24. Do <u>other hearing people</u> (not family members) understand you when you communicate with them?

○ Yes, they understand me very well ○ They don't understand me so well ○ They don't understand me at all

25. Is it easy <u>for you to understand</u> hearing people when they speak?

○ Yes, it is easy ○ No, it is not so easy ○ I'm completely unable to understand

26. Who assists you when you communicate with hearing people - for instance when you go to a bank?

(Choose all that apply.)

□ My own parents □ My siblings □ My hearing friends
□ My young children □ My spouse □ Teachers from the school for the deaf
□ My adult children □ My hard of hearing friends □ Other people

27. Do you have access to <u>professional</u> sign language interpreters? (NOT family members or friends)

○ Always ○ Sometimes ○ Never

28. When you watch a film on television, do you understand the Albanian language subtitles?

○ Yes, I understand them very well ○ Yes, I understand them with some difficulties ○ No, I don't understand them at all

29. Do you understand text messages sent to you by hearing people?

○ Yes, I understand the messages very well ○ Yes, I understand the messages with some difficulties ○ No, I don't understand them at all

30. Do hearing people understand you when you send them a text message?

○ Yes, they understand my message very well ○ No, they don't understand my message at all
○ Yes, they understand my message with some difficulties ○ I do not know

31. When you write a message to a hearing person, do you need help from another person?

○ Yes, I always need help ○ Yes, I sometimes need help ○ No, I do not need any help

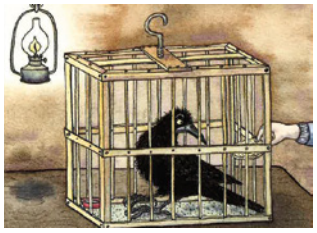
32. Is it easy for you to write in the Albanian language?

○ Yes, it is easy ○ I have some difficulties ○ I cannot write Albanian at all

33. Please read this text. Which pictures does it relate to? Choose only three (3).

Put (draw) these pictures in the same order as they occur in the text.

Once upon a time there was a crow that lived on the edge of the forest, near a meadow where a flock of sheep was grazing. One morning, the crow was sitting on a branch of a pine tree and gazing upwards to the sky. It saw an eagle gliding through the sky. Suddenly, the eagle dived into the middle of the flock. The eagle grabbed a lamb and flew away. The crow decided to do the same. The crow flew down towards the flock.

1			
2			
3			

○ I don't know

Questions about your education

34. Did you go to preschool?

(In Sign Language = Class Zero)

○ Yes ○ No

35. Did you go to tetëvjeçare (school for the deaf)?

(Primary school + secondary school)
(Choose all that apply.)

□ Yes
□ Yes, but I also attended a school for the hearing. For how many years did you attend the school for the hearing? (___ years)
_____
□ No, I only attended the school for the hearing. For how many years did you attend the school for the hearing? (___ years)
_____
□ No, my parents did not have money to pay school fees
□ No, my parents did not know about the existence of the school for the deaf
□ No, the school was too far from home
□ No, my parents did not want to send me to boarding school
□ No, another reason

36. Did you finish tetëvjeçare (school for the deaf)?

(Choose all that apply.)

□ Yes
□ No, my family could not afford the expenses
□ No, my parents were not satisfied with the quality of teaching
□ No, I was afraid to go to school because of violence/bullying
□ No, my family moved to in another city in Albania
□ No, my family moved to another country
□ No, for another reason

37. For how many years did you attend tetëvjeçare (school for the deaf)?

○ 1 year ○ 2 years ○ 3 years ○ 4 years ○ 5 years ○ 6 years ○ 7 years ○ 8 years

38. Which school for the deaf did you attend?

(Choose all that apply.)

□ School for the deaf in Tirana
□ School for the deaf in Greece
□ School for the deaf in Italy
□ School for the deaf in Kosovo
□ School for the deaf in Macedonia

39. What was (were) the mode(s) of communication used for teaching at *tetëvjeçare*?
(Choose all that apply.)
○ Spoken language ○ Written language ○ Gestures ○ Fingerspelling ○ Sign language ○ Other

40. Do you think that teachers' communication skills when using signs were...
○ Excellent ○ Average ○ Poor

41. Did you go to high school?
○ Yes ○ No

42. What was the mode of communication used for education at high school?
(Choose all that apply.)
○ Speaking ○ Gestures ○ Writing ○ Sign language ○ Other

43. Did you have difficulties with education at high school?
○ No, I had no difficulties ○ Yes, a little ○ Yes, a lot

44. What kind of difficulties did you have?
(Choose all that apply.)
○ Lack of sign language interpreters ○ My reading skills were poor ○ My writing skills were poor ○ Other

45. Did you receive any higher education after high school?
○ Yes. (Where?) _____ ○ No

Questions regarding sign language news on television

46. Have you watched signed news on television during the last month?
○ Yes ○ No

47. How often do you watch the news in sign language?
○ Every day ○ A couple of times a week ○ A couple of times a month

48. How do you receive news from Albania and around the world?
○ By watching news on television in sign language
○ By reading newspapers and reading news on the web
○ From web sites that use sign language
○ From people that use sign language
○ By watching television
○ From other people (not using sign language)

Thank you for your participation!

Additional statistics on the hearing impaired population, based on the 2011 Census in Albania. *Alma Kondi*, INSTAT 2016.

Table I. Number of people aged 15 years and older who are 'not able to hear' and 'not able to communicate', according to region.

Region	Number of people
Berat	213
Dibër	154
Durrës	249
Elbasan	357
Fier	408
Gjirokastër	118
Korçë	209
Kukës	93
Lezhë	181
Shkodër	246
Tirana	511
Vlorë	276
Total	3 015

Table II. Number of people aged 15 years and older who are 'not able to hear' and 'not able to see' and 'not able to communicate', according to region.

Region	Number of people
Berat	116
Dibër	73
Durrës	132
Elbasan	216
Fier	295
Gjirokastër	71
Korçë	101
Kukës	62
Lezhë	112
Shkodër	125
Tirana	311
Vlorë	201
Total	1 815

Table III. Number of people aged 15 years and older who are 'not able to hear' and 'not able to see' and who have 'intellectual problems', according to region.

Region	Number of people
Berat	125
Dibër	78
Durrës	137
Elbasan	220
Fier	304
Gjirokastër	74
Korçë	108
Kukës	62
Lezhë	116
Shkodër	126
Tirana	309
Vlorë	201
Total	1 860

Table IV. Number of people aged 15 years and older who are 'not able to hear' and 'not able to see' and who have a 'mobility problem', according to region.

Region	Number of people
Berat	126
Dibër	79
Durrës	139
Elbasan	216
Fier	309
Gjirokastër	75
Korçë	106
Kukës	62
Lezhë	114
Shkodër	134
Tirana	322

Vlorë	208
Total	1890

Table V. Number of people aged 15 years and older; 'not able to hear' and 'not able to communicate' by level of educational attainment.

Level of educational attainment	Number of people aged 15+
Never attended school	1826
Without diploma	74
Primary	491
Lower Secondary	464
Upper Secondary	135
First stage of tertiary education	25
Total	3 015

Table VI. Number of people aged 15 years and older who are 'not able to hear' and 'not able to see' and 'not able to communicate' according to level of educational attainment.

Level of educational attainment	Number of people aged 15+
Never attended school	1051
Without diploma	56
Primary	364
Lower Secondary	222
Upper Secondary	100
First stage of tertiary education	22
Total	1 815

Table VII. Number of people aged 15 years and older who are 'not able to hear' and 'not able to see' and with 'intellectual problems', according to level of educational attainment.

Level of educational attainment	Number of people aged 15+
Never attended school	1069
Without diploma	57
Primary	380
Lower Secondary	227
Upper Secondary	105
First stage of tertiary education	22
Total	1 860

Table VIII. Number of people aged 15 years and older who are 'not able to hear' and 'not able to see' and who have 'mobility problems', according to level of educational attainment.

Level of educational attainment	Number of people aged 15+
Never attended school	1078
Without diploma	57
Primary	391
Lower Secondary	231
Upper Secondary	109
First stage of tertiary education	24
Total	1 890

Table IX. Number of people aged 15 years and older who are 'not able to hear' and 'not able to communicate', according to work status.

Work Status	Number of people aged 15+
Employed	84
Unemployed	46
Inactive	2 885
Total	3 015

Table X. Number of people aged 15 years and older who are 'not able to hear' and 'not able to see' and 'not able to communicate', according to work status.

Work Status	Number of people aged 15+
Employed	30
Unemployed	22
Inactive	1 763
Total	1 815

A. Notation

h = Stratum, 12 Prefecture in Albania
i = Sample EA (Enumeration Area), i = 1 , … , n_h
j = Sample HH (Household), j = 1 to 8.
k = Sample persons k=1.

n_h = Number of sample EAs within the stratum h.
mhi = Number of sample HHs within the stratum h.
mhij = Number of sample person's in the HH in the i-th EA in the stratum h.
M_h = Number of total HHs in the frame(Census 2011) within the stratum h.
M_{hi} = Number of total HHs in the frame(Census 2011) in the i-th EA in the stratum h.
M_{hij} = Number of total person's in the HH in the i-th EA in the stratum h.

B. Probabilities of Selection

Sampling probabilities are important survey parameters that are the basis of the sampling weight calculations. The sampling probabilities will be calculated separately for each sampling stage and for each PSU.

1. The probability of selection of the i-th EA within the socioeconomic stratum h.
Let nh be the number of PSUs selected in stratum h, Mhi the number of households according to the sampling frame in the i-th PSU, and Mh the total number of households in the stratum. The probability of selecting the ith PSU in sample is calculated as follows:

(1) $$p_1 = n_h \frac{M_{hi}}{M_h}$$

2. The probability of selection of the j-th household given the inclusion of the i-th EA.
Let Mhi be the number of households listed in the household listing operation in cluster i in stratum h, let mhi be the number of households selected in the PSU. The second stage selection probability for each household in the PSU is calculated as follows:

(2) $$p_1 = n_h \frac{M_{hi}}{M_h}$$

3. The probability of selection of the k-th person's given the inclusion of the i-th EA and j-th household.
Let Mhij be the number of person listed in the household listing operation in cluster i in stratum h, let mhij be the number of returnee selected in the household, PSU. The second stage selection probability for each household in the PSU is calculated as follows:

(3) $$p_2 = \frac{m_{hi}}{M_{hi}}$$

4. The overall selection probability of each household in PSU i of stratum h is therefore the product of the three stages selection probabilities:

(4) $$p_1 * p_2 * p_3 = n_h \frac{M_{hi}}{M_h} * \frac{m_{hi}}{M_{hi}} * \frac{m_{hij}}{M_{hij}} = n_h \frac{m_{hi}}{M_h} * \frac{m_{hij}}{M_{hij}}$$

C. Basic Weighting Factors

The basic weighting factor for each person's is equal to the reciprocal of the probability selection of the person. The weighting factor takes into account the probabilities of selection in each one of the stages of selection, as was explained in the previous section.

The basic weighting factor is constant within each EA, but it varies somewhat from EA to EA within the stratum, depending upon the differences in the number of HH-s and returnee's in the frame. This difference is due to the adjustment discussed before to compensate for the deficiencies in the 2011 census frame.

The initial or basic weighting factor is equal to the reciprocal of the probability of selection. It is given by:

(5) $$w_{dhij} = \frac{1}{p_1 * p_2 * p_3} = \frac{1}{n_h \frac{m_{hi}}{M_h} * \frac{m_{hij}}{M_{hij}}} = \frac{1}{n_h} * \frac{M_h * M_{hij}}{m_{hi} * m_{hij}}$$

D. Adjustments to the Basic Weighting Factors

The basic or initial weighting factor mentioned in the previous section represents the probability selection of the person's based on information from the October 2011 census frame. When certain situations occur, it will be necessary to adjust the basic or initial weighting factor.

The adjustments to the basic weighting factors is one type: the non-response adjustment (one factor), F1hi is defined in the following section. These will be multiplied by the basic weighting factors in the applicable cases.

The final weighting factor (that is, after the adjustments take place) is given by:

(5) $$w^*_{dhij} = w_{dhij} * F_{1hi}$$

Note that w*dij will not necessarily be constant within the i-th EA in all cases.

E. Non-response Adjustments

The use of the basic weighting factor only presupposes the existence of all complete interviews. In most cases, this is true. If there were some cases that some interview were not answer, we would have to adjust the weights of the units that did provide information in order to compensate for the loss of valid idividuals. This adjustment will take place at the prefecture level, where a certain level of homogeneity among HH-s can be assumed in terms of the socioeconomic variables of interest.

TABLES

FIGURES

Deaf People in Albania 2015 - A Survey Study

The purpose of this survey study "Deaf people in Albania 2015" is to obtain information on deaf adults in Albania; their opportunities for human interaction in everyday life and their access to information, education and employment – in light of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) articles concerning deaf people and sign language. Applying participatory and collaborative methods of modern disability research, deaf people were involved in all aspects and stages of the survey process from planning to the dissemination of the results. Nine deaf interviewers from the Albanian National Association of the Deaf (ANAD) conducted the survey in the beginning of 2015 through interviews with 434 deaf people in sign language.

This is the first time in the world that a statistic demographic survey has been conducted by deaf people in sign language in this scale.

The research team members would like to express their gratitude to all deaf people and interpreters who have contributed to this survey: the fieldwork team members who travelled around Albania; deaf district leaders and contact people who assisted in finding deaf interviewees, guiding the team sometimes to the most remote locations; all respondents who participated in the interviews along with their family members and relatives who gave support with communication. It is your input that has made this multimodal and multilingual survey possible.

– Florjan Rojba
ANAD General Coordinator

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