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| Contribution from National Authority on Electronic Certification and Cybersecurity (NAECCS) of Albania | |
| IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ITU GLOBAL PROJECT ON CHILD ONLINE PROTECTION IN ALBANIA | |
| **Purpose:** The National Authority on Electronic Certification and Cybersecurity (NAECCS) of Albania raised its hand to become the first pilot country worldwide for the ITU Global Project on Child Online Protection. The project’s roll-out started in September 2021 and is planned to last until end of 2023. The project has been tailored to answer the gaps identified at the country level around capacity building and policy support. And the purpose of this contribution is to update on the achievements as well on the on-going initiatives.  Within this context, ITU is supporting NAECCS in rolling out the ITU Child Online Protection Guidelines and related materials at the national level through a series of training, workshops, knowledge, products development, and awareness-raising campaigns targeting all relevant stakeholders, providing them with recommendations, concrete guidance, and building their capacities. It also aims at enhancing cooperation and coordination among national stakeholders across sectors.  This project has contributed to achieving the policy objective regarding Child Online Protection defined in the National Cyber Security Strategy, by raising awareness, improving reporting mechanisms, enhancing capacity, and promoting responsible behavior online. The COP piloting project has yielded positive results in Albania. Within 18 months, the initiative has reached more than 7 regions and 12 spots in Albania, where there have been trained approximately 320 parents and educators, 250 secondary school students, +50 representatives of the industry sector and +40 policymakers; In social media, this initiative has reached more than 4500 unique online users.  COP guidelines' checklists will be an integral part of the revised action plan, which associates the "National Cyber Security Strategy". This approach leverages the comprehensive nature of the ITU's guidelines and the associated checklists to enhance the national cybersecurity strategy's effectiveness. By incorporating the checklists, which are designed to guide policymakers and industry stakeholders in implementing practical measures, the strategy becomes more robust and adaptive, addressing specific requirements related to child online protection.  This approach demonstrates also a proactive stance, ensuring that child online protection is not relegated to a separate domain but is woven into the very fabric of the cybersecurity initiatives of the Government of Albania. The integration of checklists into the action plan facilitates a structured and measurable approach to implementing COP measures, enhancing accountability and allowing for periodic evaluations of progress.  A significant stride towards the comprehensive alignment of the national framework with the Child Online Protection (COP) Guidelines is also the strategic integration of child online protection policies within the broader context of cybersecurity governance. Recognizing the interconnectedness of online safety and cybersecurity, the National Authority for Electronic Certification and Cyber Security has undertaken the crucial initiative of incorporating child online protection measures into a dedicated strategic document for "Cybersecurity Governance." This document, among others, identifies the steps for interaction and the coordination needs between different stakeholders.  This strategic approach holds the potential to streamline efforts, facilitate cooperation, and synergize resources across various sectors involved in ensuring online safety for children. By weaving child online protection policies into the fabric of cybersecurity governance, the Government of Albania is signalling its commitment to addressing the evolving threat landscape comprehensively. Moreover, this strategic document will serve as a blueprint for coordinating efforts among government agencies, law enforcement, educational institutions, technology providers, and other stakeholders, fostering a cohesive response to the multifaceted challenges posed by the digital environment.  In conclusion, the alignment of the national framework for the protection of children on the internet with the Child Online Protection Guidelines and associated checklists is a dynamic process that reflects the commitment of policymakers, industry, and other stakeholders to safeguarding the online experiences of children. The strategic integration of child online protection policies within the broader context of cybersecurity governance signifies a forward-looking approach that recognizes the interconnected nature of online safety and cybersecurity. Furthermore, the inclusion of COP guidelines' checklists within the revised action plan of the "National Cyber Security Strategy" demonstrates a proactive and measured approach to implementation.  Through these efforts, the Government of Albania asserts its dedication to creating a secure, inclusive, and protective digital environment for its youngest users, ensuring that they can navigate the digital landscape with confidence and resilience.  **Action required by the Council**  Following the successful implementation of such a Project, the NAECCS remains committed to creating a safer online ecosystem for children, together with partners and in collaboration with ITU.  In this regard, NAECCS is committed to leveraging ITU’s expertise to launch and implement “The Albanian Cyber First Aid Map”. This initiative will advance our cybersecurity resilience in national level, in terms of capacity building and awareness raising through implementing best practices in the cyber ecosystem.  The Albanian Cyber First Aid Map aims to bolster cybersecurity efforts in the national level in general and to raise child online protection in particular. The objectives include:   1. Identifying trained personnel: the map will pinpoint schools, communities, police stations, child online protection units, cities, where there have been organized capacity building and awareness raising events. This initiative ensures that communities have access to immediate assistance and guidance in the event of a cyber incident. 2. Empowering Child Protection Units and Police Officers: by indicating the Child Protection Units and Police Stations with staff trained in cyber security, the map will play a vital role in safeguarding vulnerable sections of society, mainly children and youth. The map will also provide quick access to professionals with expertise in addressing cyber threats and crimes against minors, which will be a significant step towards a safer online ecosystem for children and youth.   NAECCS remains open to further discussions and collaboration to propel this initiative forward.  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **References**  To fully promote the initiative and the results, NAECCS has developed a dedicated webpage in the official website, which presents all the events, products and promotional materials developed under the project implementation.  [ITU Pilot Project - AKCESK](https://cesk.gov.al/itu-pilot-project/) | |

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