

# The Professional Alternative

The Professional Alternative over the years >>>



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**NË DOBI TË GRUAS SHQIPTARE  
USEFUL TO ALBANIAN WOMEN**

## CREATIVE WAYS TO REDUCE POVERTY



### “USEFUL TO ALBANIAN WOMEN”

... with an activity already stretching over a 17 year period is renowned for the services that it has managed to offer to the most marginalized of women.

The Professional Alternative, which until 2004 was known as FER-ILASSES, is one of UAW's most successful ventures, and has not only enabled 1500 youths from Tirana and the surrounding areas to integrate through education and employment, but it has also influenced the lawmaking process, as well as the strategies applied by the Albanian

Government and local authorities.

As a result of it's impact and the lobbying process, PA has succeeded in offering equivalent high standard activities in towns such as Elbasan and Burrel.

PA has always aimed at providing for the most marginalized youth, from those doing street labor, to others coming from utterly disadvantaged backgrounds.

Through all those years PA has contributed in shaping up a contemporary model of integration that stems from professional achievement, as well as other means of social integration.

Being one of the most ambitious programs ever laid out by UAW, PA has always strived to seek other means of raising the quality of service, besides professional training.

In parallel to the ever-increasing capabilities of the center, and run by a qualified staff, PA has continuously lobbied in order to tackle the issues confronting this target group. As a result of the direct involvement and support of two foreign agencies; HEKS(Switzerland) and EED(Germany), this program remains successful and competitive to this day, thus having a direct impact in the lives of not only the needy, but in relation to their families, their living conditions, and UAW's local partners as well.

Sevim Arbana, President of UAW

### History

“The Professional Alternative” was founded on early 1997 as a result of the cooperation between “Triangle”; a French humanitarian agency, and UAW. It was initially financed by “Phare” program until November 1998, and then by HEKS(Switzerland), EED(Germany), and ICCO(The Netherlands) until June 2007. Since then the center has been by HEKS and EED. Besides the support by the foreign organizations mentioned the center attempts to guarantee its own financial future, thus generating income from the services it offers and contributes to 8.77% of the total budget. 160 students graduate from “The Professional Alternative” annually.

## What does “The Professional Alternative” stand for ?



“The Professional Alternative” is a center for social and professional integration dedicated to street children and teens in need.

The target group benefitting free of charge from this center belongs to the 15 - 20 age group and besides the economic hardship, the other main selection criteria is the previous completion of compulsory education.

### This program aims to achieve:

- Integration through professional training.
- Basic knowledge of computers and English language.
- Daily psycho-social, economic, and health watch.

Intervention areas >>>

**1997-2004:** AP carries out its activities at various rented premises.

**2004-present:** AP operates from its own premises, financed by EED(Germany).



### Tirana district:

The urban, suburban, and rural areas.

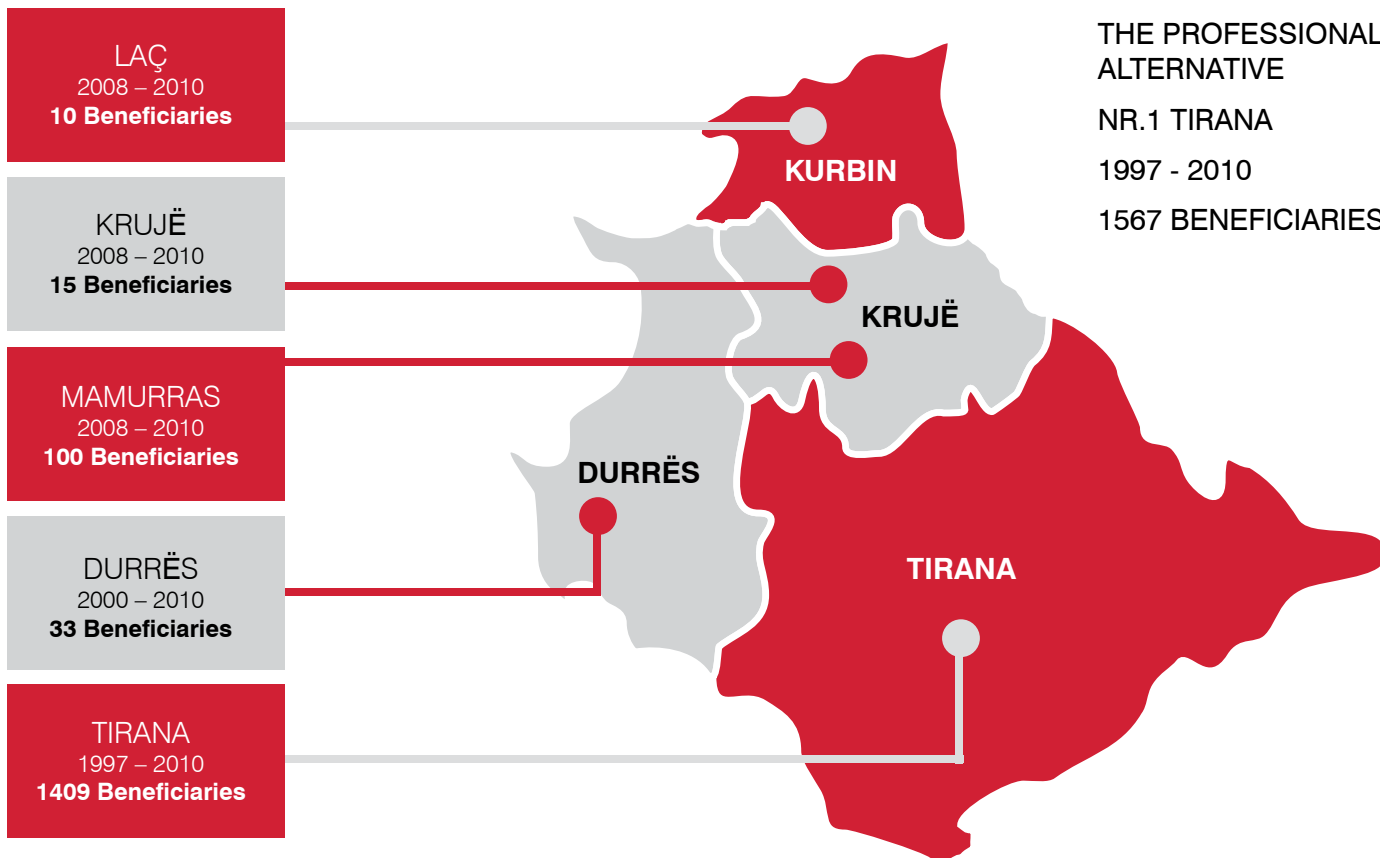
### Durres district:

Rural areas in Durres and Kruje.

### Lezha District:

Rural and urban areas in Lac and Mamurras

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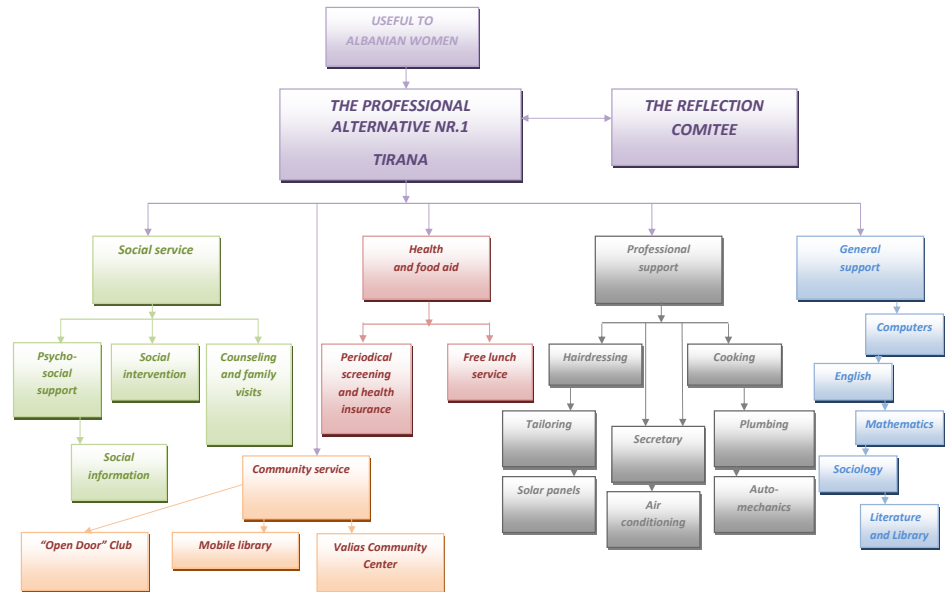


The Professional Alternative functions as a UAW program, but it is however decentralized in terms of the activities it carries out or the staff that it employs. PA is able to increase its activities according to the strategies and policies of UAW and closely cooperates with our international partners as well as the Albanian Government run institutions and according to their guidelines, therefore establishing bridges of partnership with the local and central authorities.

In hierarchical terms The Professional Alternative and The Reflective Committee are both positioned below UAW.

## What is The Reflection Committee?

It consists of representatives from various national, international, legal, and civil institutions, and elaborates on intervention and policies aimed at the same part of the population making up PA's target group.



## CREATIVE WAYS TO REDUCE POVERTY

### PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION

1568 children suffering hardship, or working children have so far attended professional training courses free of charge. Each session lasts six months, and beside the subjects which are directly related to their degree they are also given additional knowledge in: **Social Intervention, English, and Computers.**



#### Professional training classes in:

- Hairdressing
- Cooking
- Estetick
- Plumbing
- Reception
- Solar panels
- Tailoring
- Air conditioning
- Auto-mechanics

### The general training:

The professional program is tightly knitted with another general schedule (computers, English, social support) that enables the target group to benefit further.



### The educational practice:

When the classes on professional subjects conclude, another monthly period of practical sessions commences at the premises of various business entities previously contracted by the center.



### Additional subjects for further and complete professional integration:

- English
- Mathematics
- Computers



## CREATIVE WAYS TO REDUCE POVERTY

**Social and psychological support**, individual and group therapy.

**Social intervention related** to hygiene, social education, drugs, alcohol, violence, sexual awareness, family involvement, motivation, gender issues, discrimination, human rights and civic obligations, etc.

### SOCIAL INTEGRATION



**Social and cultural activities** such as, group work, awareness campaigns, etc.

**Peer to peer education** in: hygiene, social issues, drugs, alcohol, violence, sexual awareness, family involvement, motivation, gender issues, discrimination, etc.



**Cultural activities:** Related to history, culture, art, literature, books, music, exhibitions, etc.

Apart from services that are directly aimed towards its beneficiaries, the center offers mobile services serving the community that they represent. Those services usually consist of mobile libraries, informational and educational meetings, psychological counseling, courses to help eradicate illiteracy, as well as other awareness campaigns related to a variety of social phenomenon.



### **Medical checks and support for the beneficiaries**

- General medical examination during the initial selective phases.
- Detailed medical examination during classes.
- Periodical weekly examination for the entire length of the six month training session.

**Medical insurance** for the beneficiaries

**Meetings with the community they represent,** and awareness campaign aimed at those who consider abandoning the compulsory education.



## CREATIVE WAYS TO REDUCE POVERTY



### **Graduation**

At the end of this phase the beneficiaries are certified according to the rules underlined in UAW's license that permits such services, and accept their diplomas that are also accredited by the Albanian Government.



### **Employment**

One of the main objectives that will also facilitate the full integration of the beneficiaries, is their employment.



### **“Credit tools”**

On top of this, at the end of their professional training the young graduates are equipped with a set of tools respective to their profession as a loan that will help lift them off the ground, and they are only obliged to return only 40% of their cost. This will hopefully aid to their entrepreneurial endeavors, and the family-run businesses that will help change the very face of the community they live in.

### **Lunch service**

A significant part of the services offered by the center is the free medical and lunch service.

**VOICES FROM “THE ALTERNATIVE”**

Working with youngsters and presenting them with alternative education is a challenge and an important objective for the recipients, their community, and the society as a whole.

The age issues, obstacles to learning, individual potential, and the outcome of social training always vary in size, and accompany us and each youngster benefitting in our center

**Our ALTERNATIVES justify the GOAL..**



**Mario ALLKURTI**

It has been two years since I graduated from the cuisine course at the PA, and not only have I succeeded in finding employment, but I have worked for some of the best known restaurants in Tirana ever since. I currently manage the whole kitchen of a highly regarded restaurant at a village near the outskirts. The course has not only helped me, but it has opened up a bright path filled with opportunity, independence, and endless possibilities for me and my family.

**Nikolin’s Parent**

PA has enabled my son gain the profession he always fancied and he is considering setting up a modest shop near the house. I express my sincere gratitude towards the center, its staff, and all those who have enabled others to attend the socio-professional training course. Their mission must truly be greeted and cheered upon...



**Achieving professional integration through employment and self-employment.**

95% receiving diplomas accredited by the Albanian Government; 100% attending the training schedule; 80% succeeding in finding employment.

**Achieving social and cultural integration.**

Establishing trust and respect among the beneficiaries, their families, and their entire community. Increasing the level of self-respect, motivation, positivity, entrepreneurial spirit, and recognition by the society. Minimizing violence, drug abuse, crime, and social rejection among those who benefit.

25%-30% of the beneficiaries attend higher education.

**Achieving community awareness**

For the duration of the program the community exhibits signs of:

- Change in attitude regarding the importance of education
- Increasing social initiative
- Health improvement
- Social cohesion
- Cultural growth

Address:  
Rr. "Meleq Gosnishti"  
Nr.149  
Blloku i Vilave  
Selite 2, Tirane  
Tel: +355 4 22 33 522  
Tel: +355 4 22 33 755

Our Most Profound Gratitude

### **THANK YOU**

What has been achieved over the last years have given plenty of recognition to The Professional Alternative not only in Tirana, but around the country too.

Special thanks to the main donors:

**HEKS – Switzerland**

**EED – Germany**

We especially thank our local partners as well:

**The Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs  
The National Service, The Regional Employment  
Offices, The Governmental Social Service, The  
Regional Headquarters for Public and professional  
Education, etc.**



The  
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