



# KOSOVO

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Following the establishment of the new government, Emilia Rexhepi was elected Third Deputy Prime Minister for Minority and Human Rights Issues. As Rexhepi is an opponent of marriage equality, civil society condemned her appointment.

During the first three months of 2021, LGBTI NGO Center for Social Group Development (CSGD) in cooperation with the Office of Good Governance held informational sessions with human rights and gender equality officials within the Ministries and Municipalities of Kosovo. The officials were informed about the rights and needs of LGBTI individuals.

The implementation of the National Action Plan (2019-2022) continued to be flawed.

## FAMILY

The 2020 draft Civil Code was a great disappointment for civil society, for failing to provide any kind of legal recognition to diverse families. Local civil society organisations have been advocating for an inclusive law for years.

In March, the new government was formed and was immediately urged by LGBTI organisations to respect and protect LGBTI people's human rights.

As the new government came into power, the draft Civil Code was submitted for revision. CSGD and Centre for Equality and Liberty (CEL) continued to advocate for the inclusion of marriage equality in the new draft. The Ministry of Justice held several meetings with civil society and pledged to hear out their concerns.

In the summer, civil society learned that the new draft law fails to recognise same-sex couples in any way. Civil society harshly criticised the move and called on the EU Office in Kosovo to monitor the process and hold the government to account.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

CSGD held a youth camp that was organised in the first quarter of the year and brought together the participants for a street activity to mark IDAHOBIT (May 17). The activity included street graffiti showing same-sex love. With the support of the Office of Good Governance,

the Government Building was lit up with rainbow lights again, and several state institutions and embassies raised the rainbow flag. Several political and public figures participated in CEL's IDAHOBIT video to show solidarity with the LGBTIQ+ community and raise awareness in the public, reaching tens of thousands of social media.

CSGD, CEL, and other human rights organisations jointly organised Pride again this year. Kosovo Pride Week took place between 28 June - 1 July in Prishtina. It featured various events, including movie nights, exhibitions, discussions, and a conference with a focus on marriage equality. The conference was joined by Prishtina's mayor, who expressed his support for the LGBTI community.

## HEALTH

Border lockdowns due to COVID-19 continued to severely impact trans people's access to gender-affirming healthcare abroad, as Kosovo does not offer any trans healthcare services.

The number of LGBTI individuals seeking psychological support continued to be very high. Civil society organisations continued to provide mental health support.

## HOUSING

The construction of the shelter for LGBTI people was delayed this year and postponed to 2022, due to the municipal elections and a new mayor taking the mayoral seat. The shelter was allocated funding by the municipality of Prishtina in 2020, to accommodate LGBTI people who are survivors of domestic violence or became homeless due to family rejection.

In the meantime, CEL provided temporary emergency housing to LGBTI persons who were victims of domestic violence.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Lend Mustafa, a well-known LGBT activist was physically assaulted and received death threats in the spring. The police started an investigation, however, to date, the perpetrator has not been identified.

The report "Community (self)organising of transgender movement in Western Balkans region" features a chapter on the state of the trans movement in Kosovo.



## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The Ministry of Internal Affairs established a Working Group this year, which will work on several issues regarding the Law on Civil Registry, including legal gender recognition. The Working Group, which includes CSGD and CEL as members, has held two meetings and a workshop in October, to prepare a concept note for the necessary amendments to the Law on Civil Registry. CSGD and CEL advocated for name change and legal gender recognition to be solely based on self-determination, i.e. not include any limitations in terms of age, marital status, medical status, or similar; and not require mandatory medical treatments, diagnosis, sterilisation, or divorce. CSGD and CEL also advocated for alternative gender marker options to be included and offered. The concept note, which includes all of civil society's points, was approved by the government on 29 December.

*\* Included in this Review as a separate jurisdiction following UNSCR 1244/1999*



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