The LGBTI community in Albania celebrated several encouraging advances in 2015. The collaborative spirit generated by the extensive 2015-2020 action plan discussions with various ministries gave LGBTI activists a confidence boost. The parliament also passed a resolution in support of LGBTI rights which noted the positive developments that have been made, including the peaceful Pride in Tirana. However, despite these public events, general awareness of the LGBTI community remains low. Opinion polls revealed that LGBTI people continue to be harassed and a majority of the electorate stated they wouldn’t support political parties whose manifestos included issues related to LGBTI equality.
Asylum
- During 2015, all the national LGBTI NGOs received requests for assistance from LGBTI people within the country who planned to seek asylum in EU member states. NGOs reported that young people in particular expressed a wish to leave as a result of widespread discrimination and a lack of support.

Bias-motivated speech
- An opinion poll carried out by the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI, see Public opinion) revealed that 76% of the LGBTI people surveyed in Albania had been verbally harassed or abused because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Bias-motivated violence
- An opinion poll carried out by the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI, see Public opinion) revealed that 32% of the LGBTI people surveyed in Albania had suffered physical violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Education
- In April, for the first time in its history, the Ministry of Education signed a cooperation agreement with LGBTIQ NGO PINK Embassy/LGBT Pro Albania. This agreement allows the NGO to hold lectures, presentations and other awareness-raising activities in high schools. A study on homophobic discrimination and bullying will also be conducted as part of the agreement. The study results will be made public in early 2016.

Enlargement
- Albania was awarded candidate status by the European Union in 2014. In its annual report on progress made towards EU accession, published in November, the European Commission noted while human rights laws are broadly in line with European standards, implementation of existing laws is insufficient. Despite events such as Pride walks and International Day against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia (IDAHOT), overall public awareness of LGBTI people remains low. The Commission also noted provisions that discriminate against trans and intersex people should be removed from legislation.

Equality and non-discrimination
- On 7 May, the parliament passed a resolution entitled “On Protection of Rights and Freedoms of persons belonging to the LGBT community in Albania”. The document details a number of legal and policy reforms that the government should take to improve the lives of LGBT people. Among its recommendations were the adoption of a national LGBT action plan, diversity training for teachers and greater support for the Ombudsman and civil society organisations. 75 members of parliament voted in favour of the resolution, two voted against it and one abstained.
- As part of its five-year monitoring cycle, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published a report on Albania in June. ECRI requested that national authorities start gathering systematic data on attitudes towards LGBT people and the discrimination that they suffer. It noted that sexual orientation and gender identity did not feature among the persecution grounds of the new asylum law. To combat hate crime, ECRI recommended that the police build stronger links with NGOs and the LGBT community. The report also called for the introduction of legal gender recognition measures and the establishment of an inter-ministerial working group to monitor how effective national action plan anti-discrimination projects are.
- An opinion poll carried out by the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI, see Public opinion) revealed that 65% of the LGBTI people surveyed in Albania had been personally discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

- The Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MSWY) held a consultative meeting to provide input for the upcoming action plan for non-discrimination of LGBTI people. The meeting took place in July with international and national experts, LGBTI NGOs, relevant government ministries and equality bodies all attending. The MSWY circulated the final draft in October. The government is expected to approve the 2015-2020 action plan in early 2016.
Family

- LGBTIQ NGO Pink Embassy/LGBT Pro Albania wrote to Minister for Justice Ylli Manjani (Socialist Movement for Integration, LSI) in November, calling for the recognition of same-sex couples. Along with Human Rights House Albania and Open Mind Spectrum Albania, they asked the government to amend articles 163 and 164 of the Family Code to allow for gender neutral cohabitation and to recognise the rights of same-sex couples in relation to property, inheritance and health/social insurance. The Ministry of Justice and the MYSW sent recommendations to parliament. The Family Code was not altered in 2015; the justice reforms are expected to take place in 2016.

Freedom of assembly

- Tirana’s second ever Pride took place in June. No major incidents were reported.
- For the first time, LGBTIQ organisation Pink Embassy/LGBT Pro Albania organised five Festivals of Diversity in five different cities: Shkodra, Durres, Elbasan, Korca and Vlora.
- An opinion poll carried out by the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI, see Public opinion) revealed that 76% of the LGBTI people surveyed in Albania felt that Pride parades have improved the position of the LGBTI community in society.

Public opinion

- From June – August, the National Democratic Institute, the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Gay and Lesbian Victory Institute and Civil Rights Defenders carried out opinion polls in the Western Balkans on attitudes towards LGBTI people. The survey combined the results of online questionnaires, focus groups with LGBTI people and face-to-face interviews with the general public. In Albania, 42% of the general public said that they would try to help their son or daughter find a cure if they found out that their child was not heterosexual. 58% said they would not vote for a political party that championed the rights of LGBTI people.