



Kosovo¹



Public acceptance of the rights of LGBTI people remained low in Kosovo. Even among parents of LGBTI people, a sizable proportion told an opinion poll that they would try to ‘cure’ their child if they were lesbian or gay. The increased work of national LGBTI NGOs led to greater exposure for some LGBTI activists, which resulted in online attacks. A human rights activist was added to an international protection programme for human rights defenders and the European Commission criticised the authorities’ investigation of hate crime and the lack of progress made by the LGBTI Advisory and Coordination Group. On an altogether more positive note, the legal framework was improved with the approval of new laws on anti-discrimination and gender equality. A government ministry also supported public IDAHOT events for the first time.

¹ Included in this Review as a separate jurisdiction following UNSCR 1244/1999

Bias-motivated speech

- An opinion poll carried out by the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI, see **Public opinion**) revealed that 81% of the LGBTI people surveyed in Kosovo had been verbally harassed or abused because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.
- An LGBTI activist received a death threat after he posted a statement on the situation of LGBTI people on social media during the visit of US Special Envoy Randy Berry in November. The case was reported to the police and was pending at the end of 2015.

Bias-motivated violence

- An opinion poll carried out by the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI, see **Public opinion**) revealed that 29% of the LGBTI people surveyed in Kosovo had suffered physical violence because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Enlargement

- Kosovo has been a potential candidate to join the European Union since 2008. In its annual report on progress made towards EU accession, published in November, the European Commission pointed out that political leaders needed to do more to promote tolerance. The report stated that current awareness-raising activities such as training for judges, police officials, teachers and journalists needed to continue. The Commission was concerned that investigations of reported hate crime remain poor and that the Advisory and Coordination Group on the rights of the LGBTI community has not yet produced any tangible results.

Equality and non-discrimination

- In March, the European Parliament passed a motion for a resolution on the European integration process for Kosovo. The final text approved by MEPs called on the Kosovo authorities to consult with civil society more frequently and emphasises the need to protect LGBTI rights activists from threats and attacks.
- On 26 May, the 2004 anti-discrimination law was replaced by the new Law on the Protection from Discrimination. The law was approved by parliament

in May and entered into force in July. The Act establishes a general framework for prevention and combatting discrimination based on a number of grounds, including gender identity and sexual orientation. It prohibits any discrimination in direct or indirect form.

- On 28 May, a new Law on Gender Equality was adopted, replacing the 2004 version. It includes an updated definition of gender identity, protecting “the gender-related identity, appearance or other gender-related characteristics of a person (whether by way of medical intervention or not), with or without regard to the person’s designated sex at birth”. It was published in the Official Gazette on 26 June.
- A discrimination complaint against a municipality official was submitted to the Human Rights Unit in the Pristina municipality in May. The complainant stated that he had been discriminated against on the grounds of sexual orientation when he requested permission to organise a march and concert for IDAHOT. The complainant had not received any official update on the case by the end of the year.
- On 15 July, LGBT NGO Center for Social Group Development (CSGD) organised an information session about LGBTI issues with civil society groups in the four northern municipalities (these areas are not fully integrated in the Kosovo system and have majority ethnic Serb populations). It was the first time that LGBTI issues were publicly raised in this part of Kosovo.
- An opinion poll carried out by the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI, see **Public opinion**) revealed that 67% of the LGBTI people surveyed in Kosovo had been personally discriminated against because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

Freedom of assembly

- The Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports supported the 2015 IDAHOT celebrations; this was the first time that a ministry had supported a public LGBTI event. The IDAHOT events were also adequately protected by police, according to local LGBT NGOs.

- An opinion poll carried out by the US-based National Democratic Institute (NDI, see **Public opinion**) revealed that 71% of the LGBTI people surveyed in Kosovo felt that Pride marches have improved the position of the LGBTI community in society.

Human rights defenders

- Rajmonda Sylbije, executive director of CEL Kosova, became the first activist from Kosovo to be added to Civil Rights Defenders' Natalia Project. It provides security training and monitors the position and safety of human rights defenders using a GPS bracelet alarm.

Participation in public, cultural and political life

- On 17 March, LGBT NGO CSGD organised the 'LGBTI in Politics' conference, the first public event of its kind to discuss including LGBTI issues in the political agenda. It was attended by representatives of the Self Determination party (VV; centre-left) and the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK; centre-right).

Public opinion

- From June to 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 Kosovo, 41% 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. 60% said they would not vote for a political party that championed the rights of LGBTI people.