



# Albania

## ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

Between March - December, Aleanca LGBTI and Streha LGBTI supported 117 LGBTI people with 800 food packages. Aleanca's [study](#) on the impact of COVID-19 on LGBTI people found that one in every four LGBTI respondents struggled to cover their basic needs, such as food, medication, clothes and shelter, without their family's support.

## ASYLUM

[Streha's](#) study found that 80% of 200 LGBTI respondents had considered leaving Albania because they faced difficulties as an LGBTI person.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In [June](#), Kujtim Gjuzi, MP and head of the Conservative Party, a small opposition party, criticised Prime Minister Edi Rama on TV saying: "Rama likes to eat men's head scarves. I did not know he was a supporter of the LGBTI group."

Pro-LGBT's study found that there was no representation of any minorities, including LGBTI people on prime time TV in Albania. The study also found that 3% of online articles featured discriminatory or hateful speech about LGBTI people, mostly in the comments section.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The number of discrimination and violence cases significantly increased since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many had to move back or stay with their families, and were exposed to harassment and violence.

Aleanca's survey [to be published], which gathered 276 responses from LGBTI people, found one in two have experienced psychological violence and bullying and one in five have been sexually harassed. The survey documented 33 cases of physical violence and 16 cases of rape. 25 people have been blackmailed because of their sexual orientation or gender identity and 16 fired from their jobs. A mere 7% reported the incidents to the authorities.

In June, LGBTI activist Xheni Karaj was physically attacked while on a beach with her partner. The perpetrator was a doctor who said he should have left "people like you" to die when he had the chance in hospital. Xheni reported the crime to the police. The Prosecutor's Office response was that there was no ground of hate crime and the case was closed.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In May, the order of psychologists [banned](#) conversion therapy aiming to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity. The decision is legally binding and all therapists must be registered with the order. Albania is now the third European country to ban this practice.

In July, the Albanian Ministry of Health released a "Medical Protocol for the Assessment of Children with Atypical Genital Development" as binding guidelines and a practical guide for health professionals. Civil society had been [urging](#) parliament to ban medically unnecessary and nonconsensual surgeries on intersex infants, and Albania received a UPR recommendation on the issue in 2019.

On a positive note, the protocol affirms the right of intersex children to truth about their body, the importance of affirming their dignity, and tackling stigma and discrimination. However, as OII Europe [highlighted](#) with concern, Albania missed the chance to ban harmful practices against intersex children and fully align the protocol with human rights standards. The protocol allows for non-vital interventions to be carried out, including interventions that can be safely deferred or are purely cosmetic. It recognises that intersex children might develop a gender identity different from that assigned to them at birth, but still advises that surgeries are carried out during infancy.

The Tirana Legal Aid Society [welcomed](#) the protocol, saying they are "fully dedicated to advance protection and propose reformations of the legal framework in other crucial areas such as protection from discrimination, legal gender recognition in identity documents and presentation of flexible procedures to change gender markers."

## EDUCATION

According to [Streha's](#) study (see under **Asylum**) 72% of the respondents experienced school bullying due to being LGBTI.

## EMPLOYMENT

Aleanca's COVID-19 [study](#) found that 47% of LGBTI respondents were currently unemployed, with half having lost their jobs during the state of emergency. The striking rate of unemployment might be explained by the marginalisation of LGBTI people in the labour market, even before the pandemic. Trans people have been hardest hit by the pandemic. Sex workers lost their source of income and were unable to cover their basic needs.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In June, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recommended that Albania provide all the adequate funds needed for the implementation of the National Action Plan on LGBTI Persons (2016-2020) (see more under **Family, Health** and **Legal gender recognition**).

On 29 June, PINK Embassy expressed its concern to the Special Parliamentary Commission for Electoral Reform and the Assembly of Albania that the Electoral Code does not include SOGIGESC grounds to protect LGBTI persons running for office from discrimination.

In October, the Parliament amended the anti-discrimination law to include sex characteristics and HIV status as protected grounds.

## FAMILY

ECRI called on Albania to provide legal recognition for same-sex couples, without discrimination (see more under **Equality and non-discrimination, Health** and **Legal gender recognition**).

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ninth Tirana Pride was held online this year.

## HEALTH

ECRI called on Albania to regulate the provision of trans healthcare. (see more under **Equality and non-discrimination, Family** and **Legal gender recognition**). Trans people continued to report a lack of access to basic trans healthcare services.

Due to lockdown measures between March and May, LGBTI people living with HIV were not able to travel to Tirana for medication. Many had to discontinue their treatment.

## HOUSING

Aleanca's study found that one in every four LGBTI respondents struggled to pay rent during the COVID-19 pandemic, with many having to move back to their families and suffering from increased psychological, verbal, or physical violence.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

ECRI urged Albania to put in place a legal gender recognition procedure that is quick, accessible and transparent, and a simple administrative process. (see more under **Equality and non-discrimination, Family, Health** and **Legal gender recognition**).

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Aleanca, Pro LGBTI in collaboration with COC Netherlands, the Helsinki Committee, and the Police Academy worked on including LGBTI issues in the Academy's curriculum this year, and held two training of trainers events.

Several trans people reported being discriminated against or harassed by the police when going out during lockdown periods. Aleanca reported these cases to the Commissioner against Discrimination.

## PUBLIC OPINION AND ATTITUDES

In February, a study by the University of Tirana showed that Albania's political parties are not hostile to LGBTI equality, but lack information on the main issues and are also hesitant to make their supportive stance public. The study focused on the Socialist Party, the Democratic Party, the Socialist Movement for Integration, and other smaller parties.



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