



ALBANIA

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Six trans women reported to NGO, Aleanca LGBT this year that they were evicted by their landlords for being trans. Ten trans women reported they are living in a motel because no one would rent them an apartment.

ASYLUM

Seventeen LGBT Albanians sought asylum abroad this year.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Civil society, including NGO Pro LGBT, documented a growing number of hate speech incidents in the media this year, most targeting trans people. Media outlets failed to moderate discussions or take down hateful content. Responding to this trend, Pro LGBT held trainings for journalists, which will continue in 2020. Several positive articles were published afterwards.

Hate speech by political leaders and public figures also increased. In October, MP Kujtim Gjuzi (Conservative Party) publicly threatened LGBT people on a prime time political show on RTV Ora. The host also made negative statements. Both cases were reported to the Council of Complaints at the Albanian Media Authority, which issued a warning, but did not impose a fine on the channel.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Aleanca LGBTI documented a vast number of hate crimes cases against LGBT people this year, including sexual (65 cases), physical (152), and psychological violence (232). Victims reported only 34 cases to the authorities, due to fear of coming out, a lack of trust in institutions, or previous negative experience. The authorities only took measures in one case.

On 12 November, a homeless trans woman who participated in the Dyke March, was brutally attacked by five men. The President of Albania condemned such “cowardly acts” and asked for the perpetrators to be brought to justice. Following civil society pressure, the municipality provided housing to Anxhela.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In April, PINK Embassy and CRCA Albania made a submission to Parliament calling for a ban on medically unnecessary and non-consensual surgeries on intersex infants. The proposal was not adopted.

As part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Albania noted a recommendation to ban surgeries on intersex children.

EDUCATION

Bullying and discrimination remained widespread, with no policies protecting LGBTI students.

A high school student in Vlora was repeatedly harassed, kicked, beaten and strangled by his peers after coming out. The school placed the student in the cleaner’s room during recess, allegedly to protect him. The school did not report the violence to the police. In the end, the student dropped out of school.

The Ministry of Education refused to provide the contacts of school psychologists to Streha LGBT, who wanted to hold a training for them on LGBTI issues.

ENLARGEMENT

At the October EU Summit, EU leaders failed to make a final decision as to whether accession talks should resume with Albania. LGBTI organisations are concerned, as EU accession would grant more human rights safeguards for the community.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

As part of its third UPR review in May, Albania received 14 recommendations on LGBTI issues and accepted nine (see more under Family).

The law against discrimination is currently being revised. LGBTI organisations made a submission to the Commissioner against Discrimination (CPD) on the necessary changes, regarding the burden of proof and the importance of raising awareness. The law is hoped to be amended in 2020.

PINK Embassy and CRCA Albania followed up on over 30 cases this year, including discrimination in education, housing, employment, and others. Aleanca LGBTI documented 232 discrimination and violence cases.

On IDAHOT, 17 May, PINK Embassy and Human Rights House called on the government to publicly apologise to LGBT people who were persecuted during communism.

FAMILY

Albania noted five UPR recommendations on the legal recognition of same-sex partnership and the necessary amendments of the Family Code.



FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

PINK Embassy, Human Rights House and CRCA Albania organised the 10th Diversity Festival and 4th Tirana Pride this May.

On 18 May, Aleanca LGBTI, Pro LGBTI and Streha LGBT organised Tirana Pride, which brought together roughly 300 supporters.

“This was the best pride ever for me - there were so many young people from the community showing their pride and need for freedom, as well as raising their voices. It was great to be surrounded by such a young and new energy - young people are tired of being forced to live in closets - they want to be free.” - Xheni Karaj, Aleanca LGBT to Exit

Some embassies and the Ombudsperson attended. Public figures joined a video campaign in support.

The city of Tirana set up a rainbow installation to support the march and IDAHOT. Tirana's mayor and former Minister of Social Welfare, Erion Veliaj, publicly expressed his support - an unexpected move, given his lack of support previously.

The LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey (ERA) held its annual conference between 7 and 9 November in Tirana. As part of the event, Aleanca LGBTI organised the country's first Dyke March on 8 November.

HEALTH

In cooperation with the Ministry of Health and doctors, NGO Tirana Legal Aid Society (TLAS) started working on a draft medical protocol this year, in an attempt to put an end to non-consensual and medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex children. TLAS organised a roundtable on 12 December, bringing together Ministry representatives, doctors, the CPD and the Ombudsman.

Aleanca LGBTI provided HIV/AIDS counselling and free testing to 250 LGBTI people. The lack of antiretroviral medication remained an issue this year.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Civil Right Defenders published a report on human rights defenders in Albania, finding that LGBTIQ activists are most vulnerable to hate speech and threats.

Aleanca's office was attacked in June. The police investigation was successful.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The 2013 draft LGR law continued to be stalled this year. Albania noted a UPR recommendation on the adoption.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

COC Netherlands, Aleanca and Pro LGBT held a training of trainers for 40 police officers at the Police Academy and concluded that more training is needed outside Tirana, where hate crimes are most common.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The LGBT Shelter Streha continued to struggle financially, with just 20 per cent of its expenses covered by the State. A fundraiser gala was held on 14 May to keep it running.

The implementation of the 2018 Law on social housing, which includes LGBT people, was lacking this year.

The National Child Helpline (ALO 116) established a new 24-hour helpline for LGBTI youth, responding to a clearly documented need. PINK Embassy trained its staff and volunteers. The helpline dealt with over 130 cases this year.

Aleanca LGBTI, Pro LGBT and COC Netherlands trained the staff of the Tirana, Kukes, Lezha and Vlora municipalities, and supported them in drafting LGBT rights action plans.