



**2018**



**LGBTI  
ALBANIANS  
RESPOND:  
POLITICS &  
REPRESENTATION**

WITH SUPPORT FROM:

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



ISBN	978-0-9980397-0-1
Researcher and Author	Blendi Çeka, University of Tirana
Contributors	Arbër Kodra, Open Mind Spectrum Albania (OMSA) Luis Abolafia-Anguita, LGBTQ Victory Institute CV Viverito, LGBTQ Victory Institute
Reviewer	Logan Graves, LGBTQ Victory Institute
Designer	Kamela Kondili

*The content of this material may be reproduced in whole or in part in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, photocopied or other means, provided the source is cited, that the use is non-commercial and does not place additional restrictions on the material.*

*The ideas and opinions expressed in this book are the sole responsibility of the authors and those persons interviewed and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of Open Mind Spectrum Albania or the LGBTQ Victory Institute. This research and its printing are made possible with the financial support of the Council of Europe.*

## Table of Contents

1. Introduction	4
1.1. Overall objective and research questions	5
2. Methodology	6
3. Milestones of LGBTI rights in Albania	10
4. Main findings	12
4.1. Party positioning in relation to LGBTI issues	12
4.2. Access of vulnerable groups within political parties	16
4.3. LGBTI party members and candidates	18
4.4. The LGBTI community as voters	23
4.5. Concerns of the LGBTI community	24
4.5.1 LGBTI rights part of the political agenda	25
4.5.2 Contacts and interaction with LGBTI organizations in Albania	25
4.6. The gap between politics and reality	26
5. Perspectives from the LGBTI community	29
6. Conclusions	39
7. Recommendations	44
Annex 1: Semi-structured interview guide: Political Parties	48
Annex 2: Semi-structured interview guide: LGBTI activists	49
Annex 3: LGBTI community questionnaire	50
Bibliography	58

## I. Introduction

OMSA and Victory Institute have commissioned this research on political participation and representation of LGBTI people in Albania. It aims to identify the existing reality and suggest entry points to improve and facilitate the participation and representation of LGBTI people in politics. This research, along with previous research conducted by different actors in the region, will contribute to gaining a better understanding of LGBTI political representation by taking into consideration the perspective of Albanian political parties, institutional representatives, and LGBTI organizations.

Both organizations which have commissioned this research have long and consolidated experience on the promotion and protection of LGBTI rights.

**Open Mind Spectrum Albania (OMSA)** is a nonprofit organization that seeks to support the promotion, legal implementation, and protection of human rights in Albania. OMSA aspires to help build a society where every individual, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity, race, age, social status, marital status, physical disability, or ethnicity, enjoys full rights and freedoms and is ensured social services, health care, education opportunities, and legal assistance. In order to achieve its mission, OMSA conducts trainings and works to increase the visibility of the LGBT community. For example, OMSA has held trainings with families that are struggling with various LGBT issues which focused on providing useful resources to participants and providing educational and psychological assistance. OMSA also engages in advocacy strategies with government agencies, health care institutions, and schools to understand and properly respond to the needs of the LGBT community in Albania.

**The LGBTQ Victory Institute (Victory Institute)** is a U.S. non-profit organization that was founded in 1993 with the mission of increasing the number of openly lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) people in public office and to provide programming, service, and other support to help ensure their success. Victory Institute works to achieve full equality for LGBTQ people by building, supporting, and advancing a diverse network of LGBTQ public leaders. Globally, Victory Institute partners with local organizations to train international LGBTQ leaders, collaborates with political parties for greater inclusion of LGBTQ people, raises public awareness around democratic governance, and conducts research on LGBTQ political participation in countries outside of the United States. These are the four pillars of their international work.

## **1.1. Overall objective and research questions**

The overall purpose of the research paper is to identify the opportunities to increase the political participation of LGBTI people in Albania.

The specific objectives of the research are:

1. Identify trends in the progress, challenges, and best practices of political participation of the LGBTI population in Albania.
2. Identify opportunities to increase the number of LGBTI people that are part of the political parties' structures.
3. Identify the voting behavior of LGBTI people in Albania.
4. Identify whether a political party or a candidate's support for LGBTI equality negatively affects their support from voters.

## 2. Methodology

The majority of the research relied on qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews. The informants for the interviews were gained through snowball sampling. In this method, the researcher solicited potential informants through the informants already gained. Specifically related to objective 3 of this research, quantitative methods were used in the form of an electronic survey which was posted online and advertised via social media networks and email list servers.

The methodology for this research included the following:

- Desk research and literature review
- Semi-structured interviews with relevant Albanian LGBTI leaders
- Semi-structured interviews with key political parties' representatives
- Semi-structured interviews with representatives of central and local institutions
- Semi-structured interviews with representatives from local and national NGOs and international organizations operating in Albania
- Survey of LGBTI people to understand their voting behavior

### Desk research and literature review

The Albanian political system, party system, political parties' programs, election systems, and national surveys on electoral behavior in Albania were part of the initial desk research. This work aimed to identify the framework and opportunities for LGBTI participation and representation in politics. This desk research combined the evolution of these indicators over the last two decades with external and internal forces which have the power to influence them. Special attention was paid to the electoral system and laws, used for the national and local elections, in order to identify technical and political obstacles and opportunities for LGBTI representation.

A broad array of literature was consulted on the situation of LGBTI rights in Albania and within the nearby region. Legal developments on the advancement of LGBTI rights and protections, institutional involvement, action plans, policy papers, resolutions approved by the parliaments, and EU and Council of Europe criteria, initiatives, and recommendations were reviewed in order to understand progress over time. Other research from Albania, the Balkans region, and beyond related to LGBTI representation, participation, and public perceptions

of LGBTI issues was also examined to identify topics of interest, comparable issues, and positive practices<sup>1</sup>.

## Semi-structured interviews

These interviews were conducted with different groups of people, including political actors and people who have contributed directly to the promotion of the rights of the LGBTI community in Albania. The semi-structured interviews aimed not only to explore the existing reality of LGBTI participation and representation in politics, but also to assess and identify the potential mechanisms in order to increase both indicators.

## The interviewed groups are as follows:

- 1. Representatives of political parties.** Three to four representatives from each of the three main parties in Albania were interviewed [Socialist Party (SP), Democratic Party (DP), and Social Movement for Integration (SMI)]. Interviews were also conducted with one representative of each of the following smaller parties LIBRA, and the Republican Party (RP)<sup>2</sup>.
- 2. Representatives of LGBTI organizations and other LGBTI activists.** Leaders of the four LGBTI organizations in Albania are included in this group. The purpose of conducting semi-structured interviews with this group was to gain their perspective on the main research questions. These representatives were also asked about their suggestions for improving the situation of LGBTI participation and representation in politics<sup>3</sup>
- 3. Representatives of the constitutional, central, and local institutions who are responsible for the implementation of policies aimed at the protection and promotion of LGBTI rights in Albania.** These interviews were focused on the engagement of constitutional, central, or local institutions related to the protection, support, and promotion of LGBTI community rights in Albania. Representatives were also asked about the challenges they face in their work regarding interaction with other institutions and their assessment of the LGBTI community's political engagement.

<sup>1</sup>Please refer to bibliography at the end of this research.

<sup>2</sup>The semi-structured interview guide for political party representatives is provided in Annex 1 of this study.

<sup>3</sup>The semi-structured interview guide for LGBTI representatives is provided in Annex 2 of this study.

#### **4. Civil society activists and representatives of international organizations that have supported LGBTI rights.** Representatives from these groups were interviewed to gain a perspective on the evolution of LGBTI community rights in Albania. Each of the respondents was asked about the contribution of the organization they represent, and in the case of activists, of their own personal contribution.

The selection of interviewees was, in most cases, deliberate, based on several criteria: a) political profile, b) contribution to LGBTI rights, c) direct institutional responsibilities, d) level of information and knowledge about the evolution of the discourse on the LGBTI population's rights in Albania.

Some of the interviewees were selected based on the recommendations of those who were previously interviewed, considering the interests and focus of the study (i.e. the snowball effect of the sample selection).

The interviews were conducted from April 2017 to February 2018, which includes the period before and after the parliamentary elections of June 2017. Interviews were conducted on the premises where the selected persons work or are engaged. All interviews were transcribed and analyzed by the author of the study.

All the interviewees have given their approval to use the information received from them only within the scope of the study. Citations of the respondents' answers are labeled by the categories listed above to which they belong. The initials of the persons are not used in order to maintain confidentiality.

#### **Online LGBTI community survey**

An important component of this study was the survey for members of the LGBTI community. Given the lack of statistics, the difficulty of identifying and selecting the sample, and contacting people and obtaining agreement, the survey was conducted online. The online survey was sent as a personalized link to LGBTI community members who are part of LGBTI online forums as well as disseminated widely through various forms of social media. The survey contained questions typical of international election studies<sup>4</sup>, as well as more specific questions related to the LGBTI community<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>4</sup><http://www.cses.org/>

<sup>5</sup>The survey used with LGBTI online members is provided in Annex 3 of this study.



The total number of people that participated in the survey was 69, with three different promotional waves organized for distributing the survey to increase the number of respondents. Based on the methodology, sample selection, and the small number of respondents, it is impossible to generalize the findings of the LGBTI community survey in Albania. All the survey findings refer only to respondents who have completed the online survey.

The survey was conducted throughout the period of November 2017 - February 2018. Interpretation of the findings was conducted through the SPSS program.

### 3. Milestones of LGBTI rights in Albania

- The Constitution of 1991 provided fundamental rights and freedoms including civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. On 20 January 1995, after international pressure from the Council of Europe and ILGA, the Albanian Parliament decriminalized consensual same-sex sexual relations. The Constitution of 1998 enhanced the protection of human rights with a special clause on anti-discrimination, including gender as a prohibited ground for discrimination.
- The Law of Protection against Discrimination, approved in 2010, prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. Albanian LGBTI citizens benefit from the protection of two equality bodies, the People's Advocate (PA) and the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination (CPD), both providing independent assistance to LGBTI persons who are victims of human rights violations or discrimination. They have issued reports on the situation with regards to the rights of LGBTI people. These reports provide evidence of human rights violations and discrimination against LGBTI people.
- By 2010, important LGBTI-related developments occurred, such as the founding of four new organizations for LGBTI people: Alliance LGBT, PINK Embassy, Pro-LGBT, and OMSA, all of which are working to advance the cause of human rights for LGBTI people today. The first 'International Day against Homophobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT)' took place in 2008 with support from Children Human Rights Center Albania (CRCA), Human Rights Group, and the Albanian Helsinki Committee. In 2010 PINK Embassy held the first 'Festival of Diversity' and since then this event has been organized annually around May 17th. Festive demonstrations have been organized by other LGBTI organizations such as the Bike (P)Ride which took place in 2012, to celebrate IDAHOT.
- In December 2014, two LGBTINGOs, Alliance LGBT and LGBTPro, opened a shelter (STREHA) for LGBTI individuals who are victims of domestic violence.
- The main central institution for the protection of the human rights and the right to non-discrimination of LGBTI people is the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY). The responsibilities of this Ministry have

a potential large impact on the rights of LGBTI people in areas such as: employment, social welfare services, social inclusion, equal opportunities, and protection from discrimination. MoSWY coordinates its work with other central government institutions, equality bodies, and civil society. MoSWY has developed two National Action Plans on LGBTI rights, for 2012-2014 and 2016-2020. The first plan paved the way towards institutional cooperation between MoSWY, national human rights institutions (NHRIs), and other institutions and LGBTI organizations. The second plan was initiated in October 2016 with the creation of the National Implementation and Coordination Group (NICG). The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) has begun training teachers on anti-discrimination but has not taken any other practical steps to address discrimination against LGBTI students and inclusion of their rights in the curriculum.

- LGBTI organizations have brought the cause of discrimination to the forefront of human rights mechanisms. The Second Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of 2013, presented by the government of Albania, has been accompanied by shadow reports from LGBTI organizations. As a result of these reports, the UN Human Rights Committee's recommendations for Albania included improvements to the current situation of LGBTI people, specifically interventions to combat stereotypes, prejudice, and social stigmatization of LGBTI people.
- In 2015, based on a request by the parliamentary Sub-Committee on Human Rights and on recommendations from the PA (People's Advocate), the Albanian Parliament issued a resolution on the rights of LGBTI people. The resolution required the development of a National Plan of Action for the protection of LGBTI people, based on the recommendations made during Albania's EU accession process, as well as on the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers' recommendation "on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity". The resolution called for the MoES to train teachers on issues relating to discrimination against LGBTI students, and for MoSWY to amend the Labor Code to include anti-discrimination clauses on the grounds of SOGI<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>6</sup>The milestones of LGBTI rights in Albania are taken from the research "Being LGBTI in Albania" UNDP 2017. [http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/democratic\\_governance/being-lgbti-in-eastern-europe--albania-country-report.html](http://www.eurasia.undp.org/content/rbec/en/home/library/democratic_governance/being-lgbti-in-eastern-europe--albania-country-report.html)

## 4. Main findings

The findings of this research are organized according to the list of questions in the semi-structured interviews. They reflect the interview guides and the main topics of discussion and contribute to the addressing of the main research objectives.

The findings address the parties' ideological positions, the access of LGBTI community and persons have to political parties as a group, as members, or as candidates, the LGBTI voting habit from parties' perspectives, the level of information parties have on LGBTI needs and concerns, and the way the existing institutional and policy framework impacts the reality of LGBTI community in Albania.

### 4.1. Party positioning in relation to LGBTI issues

Regarding the positioning of political parties around LGBTI rights, they can be divided into two main groups. This division into two groups, more than ideological, reflects the weight of these parties in the party system (number of seats), their size, and their level of influence and responsibility within decision-making institutions in the country. The first group consists of the main parties in Albania. The parties that have larger electoral and parliamentary weight exhibit **a neutral position (rather positive, but not public)**. Meanwhile, the second party group includes small parties with less electoral weight and representation in parliament/executive institutions, including new parties. These parties have **more open positions against or for** LGBTI rights. This kind of positioning seems to be not merely ideological but also strategic, with the aim of dictating the political agenda, attracting public attention and addressing certain electoral segments that could potentially mobilize around this discourse.

#### **Group #1: Neutral position (positive, but not public)**

Included in this group are significant electoral and parliamentary parties which are present in decision-making institutions. Based on this measuring dimension, the main key parties in the country are: 1. Socialist Party (SP), 2. Democratic Party (DP), and 3. Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI). All three parties meet the requirement of being significant and present in the decision-making institutions in the country, such as Parliament, Government, Presidency, and all other institutions deriving from them. All three parties together in the last 10 years, over three successive general election cycles (2009, 2013, 2017), have

managed to win more than 90% of the votes at the country level and more than 95% of the mandates/seats in the Albanian Parliament.

This kind of “*politically correct*” positioning is characterized by the positive support these parties have given to advancing legislation against discrimination, hate speech, resolutions, and drafting the action plans. On the other hand, referring to their political programs and the public articulation of high-level political leaders regarding the advancement and implementation of LGBTI community rights, the positioning of these political entities is dim, implicit, or indifferent.

This apparently contradictory position is the result of the interaction of two indicators that interact systematically.

**The first indicator** relates to the integration processes of the country in the institutions of the European Union. Albania is currently a candidate country for integration into the European Union and the guarantee of human rights is the part of the criteria that is required to fulfill to open negotiations for full membership.

The improvement of legislation on LGBTI persons has been part of these criteria. The main parties in the country, as part of the decision-making institutions, have direct responsibility in the adoption of the legislation, are part of consultative meetings with representatives of EU institutions, are part of the executive institutions for the implementation of action plans, and are also part of permanent representations in the Council of Europe and periodically report to the European Parliament.

Based on their institutional responsibility and position on LGBTI rights, rationally it seems that they do not want to be portrayed as a hindering factor in the country’s integration processes, or as producing problematic relations with EU or Council of Europe representatives on the one hand, but also resulting in a potential electoral cost.

Additionally, the criteria to be met in the context of human rights (namely the anti-discrimination law, which includes discrimination against persons based on sexual orientation) do not necessarily place parties in a difficult position in relation to the ideologies they represent and their traditional voters.

Proposing, drafting, and voting processes on legal initiatives, such as anti-discrimination laws, in Parliament often appear as technical to the public, and do

not receive differentiated media attention. This results in minimal public attention and also allows parties to avoid justification for their political positioning regarding the initiative in question.

**The second indicator** relates to the perceived negative electoral impact on major political parties if they publicly promote legislation and policy implementation that enables the expansion of LGBTI rights and creates a more receptive and non-discriminatory social environment. According to all the representatives of the main political parties, *“the Albanian society is still unwilling to accept the advancement of LGBTI community rights and any party that will publicly support these rights should take into account the potential electoral costs”*.

According to them *“the parties are rational actors that reflect the expectations and needs of society; at the moment they will identify more eligibility in society regarding the implementation of LGBTI rights, the main parties will more publicly display their neutral or positive positioning depending on the ideology they support”*.

The interaction between these two indicators determines **the neutral, slightly positive, and non-public positioning** of these parties.

Although these parties have been placed within this group, the interviews conducted with their representatives show differences within the group itself. These differences are related to their own self-image as a result of a classical ideological expectation. Representatives of the Democratic Party are generally in favor of guaranteeing the rights of the LGBTI community within the framework of non-discrimination, but they are more explicitly opposed to the “advanced” rights such as marriages between same-sex partners and adoption. However, this opposition to “advanced” rights is not public, rather it is part of closed discussions.

“Personally I am in favor of guaranteeing LGBTI rights in the framework of non-discrimination. It is the right of LGBTI organizations to ask more rights. At the same time, I am against any approach that presents the advanced rights of LGBTI (marriage) as a superior value for society, where the latter should support and embrace them massively”.

*Interview with right-party representatives*

The representatives of the other two main parties, which are leftist parties, are

aware that leftist parties are expected to be more open and supportive not only of rights such as non-discrimination, but also of the above-mentioned “advanced” rights. Going beyond expressing their ideological position on LGBTI rights, they also highlight the economic and social development of society.

This position is related to the emancipation of society, the social acceptance of LGBTI persons within society, and potential electoral costs. More than a controversy of the ideological and program character, it is presented as a controversy related to the context in which the subject operates.

Interestingly the youth representatives of the two left-of-center parties indicate that in the left European youth forums, which they are part of, one of the issues discussed and voted on is the LGBTI community’s rights. However, these issues at both the discourse level and within the program are less present than the other issues as a result of precariousness and potential electoral costs. Even in the left-of-center parties, discussion of topics viewed as premature and as an electoral risk are not public.

## **Group #2: Parties with open public positions, for or against LGBTI rights.**

These are smaller parties from the standpoint of electoral and parliamentary representation, or new parties that did not exist before the 2017 parliamentary elections. These parties are more explicit in their attitude for or against LGBTI rights, specifically toward rights such as marriage and adoption. The parties enter the public eye via declarations/issued statements, voting, public discourse, and party programs. This is the case for the Party for Justice, Integration, and Unity (PJIU)<sup>7</sup> and Libra.

PJIU presents itself as a conservative party, with its opposition to any advancement of LGBTI rights that affect the foundation of society, which they define as a family composed of heterosexual parents. Thus, it is publicly and politically against same-sex marriages and adoption.

Libra, unlike any other left-wing party, has a clearer position on LGBTI rights in

<sup>7</sup>PJIU is a parliamentary party since 2009. The number of its MPs in the current parliament is three. In 2013 parliamentary elections, this political entity managed to win 5 mandates. In the recent elections, this political party, even though it managed to win more votes at the country level than in the previous elections, received fewer mandates.

its platform<sup>8</sup>. What unites Libra and PJIU is the opportunity to disclose more “radical” and public attitudes toward LGBTI rights, as a result of smaller institutional responsibilities, but also as an opportunity to dictate the political agenda and address and mobilize social groups.

“Despite the overall problem of the conservative mentality in society, the main problem faced during our interaction with politicians is their “silent consensus” especially expressed by the representatives of the main political parties.

They show a moderate level of support for a number of issues we address but choose to do it as least publicly as possible, because according to them this may have a political cost for their party. So, the new legislation can be introduced as such, but without public standing of the political parties which support it.

Also there are smaller political parties’ representatives (especially conservative parties) who are strongly opposing the LGBTI issue as a threat to society and family as a basic unit of it”.

*Interview conducted with a representative of LGBTI organization*

## 4.2. Access of vulnerable groups within political parties

Two of the main parties in Albania were created in 1990 and 1991 and from the standpoint of organization; they reflect not only the context of their creation but also the political and social developments in Albania over the past 28 years. Their organization has elements of cadre, masses, catch-all parties but also of cartel parties. The model of their organization served as an example for the later-established parties, making similar to each other. The main difference is reflected in the party’s significance or whether its electoral backbone is centered or scattered all over the country.

The organizational model of political parties in Albania does not include branches, i.e. organizational structures for minority/marginalized groups. Within political parties, the only social groups that have a special organizational status are **young people** and **women**. Other groups based on identity, interest, or minority status can be an integral part of the parties, but without having a particular organizational status within them. The interests of these groups are

<sup>8</sup>Libra is a new party, created in 2016. It participated in the 2017 parliamentary elections, competing as a leftist party. In these elections, Libra did not manage to secure any MPs in the Albanian Parliament.



reflected within political party programs.

However, political parties consult with these groups when it comes to certain programmatic issues, drafting of laws, and election campaigns.

Most political party respondents found it unjustified to separately organize these groups within the party in the form of special branches, forums, or structures. This not only applies to the LGBTI community, but to other groups that are considered marginalized as well. Respondents believed that the interests of these groups could be expressed through the party's platform without the need for identity- or issue-based structures within the party.

On the other hand, all political party representatives interviewed stated that individuals that belong to vulnerable social groups are part and will be part of the membership of these parties and have all the potential space to compete within their structures and develop a political career, regardless of their identity, based on political and professional skills. Most of the political party respondents do not support the idea of promotion within the party based on identity, gender, and minority status, or the use of "positive discrimination" mechanisms to promote them.

By this logic, LGBTI persons can also become members; make a career, elect or be elected based on their personal skills and contributions, but not as a result of being LGBTI.

It is interesting to mention that, although women and youth forums have been part of political entities since their establishment, affirmative action practices through political party quotas or political decision-making related to representation, emerged less than ten years ago. Although, according to the electoral code today, there are gender-based quotas<sup>9</sup> for MP lists and municipal councils, most of the main political party representative respondents (who were mostly women) are more in favor of a political career based on skills and individual contributions rather than the affirmative action mechanisms such as quotas.

Interviewees also evaluated that within their political parties there are members and elected officials in local government and parliament that are part of different identity/marginalized groups, but that their success is attributed to their personal skills, not their identity characteristics. In this context, they think

<sup>9</sup><http://www.cec.org.al/sq-al/kodi-zgjedhor>

almost unanimously that they perceive identity-based party structures to be not only premature, but unjustified.

Young people within our party have their individual approach/attitude to LGBTI persons. Of course, we have had discussions about the different perspectives within us. I personally agree that LGBTI rights should be clearly stated as integral part of Human Rights section of our party program. While I am not in favor of representing them within our party as a community, having separate branches or forums, or represented with special quotas in the framework of the positive discrimination on the candidate list for MPs.

*Interview with left-party political representative*

### 4.3. LGBTI party members and candidates

All political party representatives interviewed do not know anyone within their political party - in the capacity of members, bureaucrats, elected persons within parties, or candidates for municipal councils and parliamentary elections - who are openly LGBTI. They also believed that there are, potentially, LGBTI people at all levels of organization and representation of parties, but the respondents themselves were unaware.

Most of them think that sexual orientation is a personal choice and it is important that nobody within the party be discriminated against as a result of this choice.

“I do not see any difference between someone who is heterosexual or homosexual, is everyone’s private choice”.

*Interview with left-party political representative*

Respondents believed that people might not come out due to the difficulty they

<sup>10</sup>Garcia, A. (2013, April 1). Albania is Europe’s most homophobic country according to a new survey. The Gaily Grind. retrieved from <http://www.thegailygrind.com/2013/04/01/albania-is-europes-most-homophobic-country-according-to-a-new-survey/>

<sup>11</sup>“If someone is part of a political party and comes out, the costs lie on the person and not on the political party.” Interview with party representatives

perceive regarding family and social acceptance, and within the party structure itself<sup>10,11</sup>.

“They may think that coming out can damage your career. This will not cause your exclusion from the party, but everyone will start to look differently at you and it is very difficult to be elected in the future either within the party or by voters”.

*Interview with left-party political representative*

Two of the political party respondents, both women and supporters of LGBTI rights, said that the constituents in their electoral zone have reacted negatively to them as a result of their association with LGBTI issues<sup>12</sup>.

*Interview with left-party political representatives*

Most of them felt that within their parties, there is no form of discrimination against LGBTI persons, but it is also too early for Albania to put openly LGBTI persons on the lists for MPs and municipal councils.

One of the interviewees believes that parties are rational and often reactive actors that reflect the needs, norms, and sensibilities of the society in which they operate. If these parties, according to surveys and research, verify that the placement of an LGBTI person will not only harm them, but, on the contrary, will bring electoral benefits, they will certainly be open and invite LGBTI community representatives to become part of their lists.

*Interview with left-party political representative*

Concerning the coming out and running of LGBTI persons from political parties lists there are two potential scenarios:

**The first scenario** is when people are already elected, or have made their political career within parties or even in the country’s institutions, come out as LGBTI. In this case, according to left-party respondents, the level of acceptance by society would be greater because the politician would not be seen as merely

<sup>12</sup>“So strong is the stereotyping of association with the LGBTI issue, that as well as representatives of international organizations or other foreign institutions refuse to be publicly expose at various LGBTI community rights meetings.” (interview with the representatives of one of the active international organizations in support of LGBTI rights)

a part of the LGBTI community but also as an LGBTI person who has demonstrated publicly other skills and has made various contributions.

If someone declared as LGBTI in our political forum, after this person has contributed within the subject and has the adequate skills, he/she would be more easily accepted by other forum members. If then the same person would be promoted by the party's governing structures all the members within the party would not only accept him/her, but also would have more respect for him/her due to the fact that he/she has come out.

*Interview with left-party political representative*

The second scenario would be when the person comes out publicly as LGBTI and then becomes part of the political parties or lists of candidates for municipal councils or MPs. In this scenario, as a result of lack of information from society/voters about the skills and contributions of the person concerned, the dominant feature of this person to be recognized by the public would be their LGBTI identity. In this case, the level of social acceptance would be lower.

In fact, according to the interviews conducted with representatives of LGBTI organizations, there have been direct invitations from political parties such as Libra for membership and inclusion of LGBTI persons on the list of MP candidates. Such formal invitations from other left parties did not occur (even though the expectations of LGBTI representatives are different).

“We should be careful to get involve in political parties. Political parties will simply use us as an image to show themselves as open-minded and progressive. Meanwhile, on the other hand, we will not be able to change anything regarding the promotion of LGBTI rights”.

*Interview conducted with a representative of LGBTI organization*

### **Why is it difficult to be openly LGBTI in Albania?**

According to all the interviews (the interviews conducted with representatives of political parties, LGBTI organizations representatives, social workers who interact on a daily basis with members of the community, and representatives from other groups interviewed), it is very difficult to come out as LGBTI in Albania.

The difficulty is multidimensional and involves family, community, societal acceptance<sup>13</sup>, as well as a vague integral institutional response<sup>14</sup>. The consequences of coming out as LGBTI vary from life-threatening situations to career breakdown and social isolation.

Difficulties and direct consequences are potentially encountered by all members of the LGBTI community, regardless of their economic status, education, profession or age. The difference lies in the type of potential consequences that must be faced.

**Survival/Existence:** Difficulties of LGBTI persons to come out in rural areas, small towns, and peripheries of large cities are very real. These difficulties become worse if the family is poor, the LGBTI person does not have a job, or has not attended any school<sup>15</sup>.

In this context, the first confrontation is within the family. Parents and siblings have a very high level of rejection for a family member who comes out as LGBTI. This level of rejection does not only appear as a denial of acceptance, but also as a result of the consequences that each family member and family as a whole may face in their community. Social pressure on the family, shame, the destruction of the “normal” image, lack of information, and the inability to deal with such an “event” constitute the framework on which violence occurs and is viewed as justified<sup>16</sup>. According to interviews conducted with professionals who work daily with LGBTI members who have been rejected from the family, the most intense, physical and psychological/verbal violence against LGBTI persons occurs within the family<sup>17</sup>.

As a result of this violence and disapproval by family members, expulsion/rejection from the family is the fate of LGBTI members who live in this context. Despite short-term solutions, the lack of an integral supportive<sup>18</sup>/effective institutional scheme, the lack of a social/family network, lack of income, inability to find a job<sup>19</sup>, attend school, and above all the need to survive seem to be decisive in driving these persons into the practice of prostitution. Through prostitution, they secure their livelihood, transforming this activity as the only means of survival. As a result of prostitution, these members of the LGBTI community are

<sup>13</sup>When discovering a friend or neighbor to be LGBTI 34% of people surveyed with stop communicating with him/her and 17% would use physical punishment. While other 25% will try to help him/her to find a cure for that. NDI poll on LGBTI issues in Balkans. [https://www.ndi.org/LGBTI\\_Balkans\\_poll](https://www.ndi.org/LGBTI_Balkans_poll).

<sup>14</sup>The 2012 European Social Survey asked “should gays and lesbians be free to live as they wish” and 23% disagreed while 30% strongly disagreed. This was the highest level of antipathy of any country in the survey. It was also the only country in the Western Balkans that was included.

much more vulnerable to sexually transmitted diseases, which combined with lack of timely health care could threaten their life. For this category of LGBTI people, coming out means confrontation with survival, and with existence itself.

**Career Destruction Costs:** Here are included LGBTI people who share a relative “success” in the Albanian society. These are LGBTI people who can work in various sectors (public, private, in politics, media, organizations, and academia) and have created a professional career. Coming out for them has costs that are mainly related to social rejection and the overthrow of the reality where they live. Otherwise, it means the destruction of professional career, the deterioration of public and professional image, radical change in social relations, and uncertainty about the future. Despite the potential costs, this grouping does not risk survival and the life itself. If we refer to the neighboring countries (the case of the Prime Minister of Serbia) but also to other European countries, the US, Latin America, are LGBTI people from this category the ones who come out and shake the prevailing non-receptive mentality of the society.

From all the interviews with LGBTI organizations, it turns out that these people have a dual life and have no strong motivation to come out, because they are able to manage it, as heterosexual in public and as LGBTI in smaller private environments.

**Intermediate Groups:** These include LGBTI people who have the highest potential of acceptance within family, not very poor or with higher incomes, with more education, from urban areas but who have not yet created a professional career. The costs for these LGBTI people if they come out are related to the impossibility of a professional career, the development of out-of-profile and

<sup>15</sup>Actually there are 50 LGBTI people staying in Shelters. It is an emergency accommodation for them. Most of them come from rural areas (or small cities) of Albania. Their ages ranges from 18 up to 25 year old. The majority of them have completed elementary/secondary education or high school” Interview with LGBTI representative.

<sup>16</sup>According to the interviews conducted with social workers in the Shelter, one fundamental reason why LGBTI young people do not to come out is because they choose to protect their family image within the community they are living.

<sup>17</sup>The respondents from LGBTI community report that 24% of psychological violence is caused within family, 24% from friends, 16% from colleges and 14% from people on the street. NDI poll on LGBTI issues in Balkans. [https://www.ndi.org/LGBTI\\_Balkans\\_poll](https://www.ndi.org/LGBTI_Balkans_poll).

<sup>18</sup>According to interviews realized with social workers in the Shelter, those LGBTI people who get expelled from their family are not informed on what institutions provide in terms of social protection. They also think that the level of trust toward among LGBTI community or toward institutional response mechanism is very low.

<sup>19</sup>The HeadHunter Index <http://www.headhunter.al/sq-al/lgbtq-index>

out of the LGBTI dimension, skills. The LGBTI identity perceived in society is the dominant marker/quality of the person. These LGBTI people for the rest of society have no interests, skills, professional career, they are simply LGBTI. Coming out for them in the Albanian context (and the overwhelming image about LGBTI persons) means living just like LGBTI, working only because you are LGBTI, reducing all interests of the person to one identity dimension.

#### **4.4. The LGBTI community as voters**

All political party representatives interviewed did not have information regarding the number of LGBTI people in Albania, and even less about their voting behavior and political preferences. According to them, from the electoral point of view, as long as there are no accurate statistics, LGBTI voters have no electoral meaning or significance.

It is also important to note that they perceive discourse about LGBTI rights (mostly “advanced” rights) is premature and may have negative electoral consequences.

In this context, they do not see LGBTI rights as part of political discourse or that such an issue is sensitive, divisive or mobilizing to voters.

By this logic, they think that LGBTI voters generally behave politically as their parents or close family members, mainly as a result of the process of political socialization in the family.

Left-wing representatives emphasize that even though it is prudent for LGBTI rights to be addressed more loudly, as happens among left-wing European partner political parties, this will not happen in Albania because first, the society is not ready; second, there are very few LGBTI voters and non-LGBTI voters groups that can support this political articulation; and third, this public articulation by the their political party can produce electoral costs.

There is the perception that left-wing parties support or have to support more LGBTI community rights, referring to the practices of European/US political parties. Paradoxically if we take a retrospective look it turns out the opposite in the case of Albania. It is the Democratic Party that has been much more open and has taken the most important steps within LGBTI rights framework. All these have happened when this party has been in power.

- Decriminalization in 1995 and legalization of homosexuality
- Homosexuals can serve in the army (2008)
- First public photo with representatives of the LGBTI community and open support of the PM and leader of DP Sali Berisha
- Anti-Discrimination Law 2010 / Prohibition of Discrimination at Work or Services in the Field of Gender Identity

*Interview with right-party representative*

#### 4.5. Concerns of the LGBTI community

Noted throughout most of the interviews conducted with representatives of political parties is the lack of information on the daily needs and issues faced by members of the LGBTI community. The needs and concerns of LGBTI community, according to the political representatives, are equated with the right to same-sex marriage.

There is a general conviction that LGBTI people in Albania enjoy all the freedom to express their sexual orientation and there are very few, cases of physical violence against them. The rights of this community are guaranteed both in terms of law and everyday practice. There is a general perception that sexual orientation is a personal choice and there should be no discrimination for this choice.

Nowadays, young people, part of the forum, have no information on the daily issues of the LGBTI community. There are some rare exceptions of informed people due to their personal experiences with their friends and companions.

*Interview with left-party representatives*

It often happens that LGBTI organizations seek to impose themselves. At what extent are their rights violated? They are free. Where are they being discriminated against? Marriage between same-sex persons is premature and for me personally unacceptable.

*Interview with a left-party representative*

Respondents share a range of views from left-wing parties' view that the demand for same-sex marriage is at best premature to the conservatives' view



that it is threatening to the basic family unit.

With the exception of two cases, respondents were not aware of the concerns faced by LGBTI community members regarding access to work, services, education, health, and justice.

When talking about the LGBTI community, there is a kind of simplification or equalization of this community with representatives of LGBTI organizations. According to the interviewed political representatives, these people have access to media, institutions, receive funding from international organizations and enjoy all the rights to express their sexual orientation and identity. For some of the respondents, “often exaggerated discussion of discrimination against LGBTI persons or discussion about same-sex marriages is nothing more than an artificial mechanism of these organizations to benefit more from donor funding”. In other words, they believe it is a “tendency of LGBTI organizations to present the situation of the LGBTI community in negative terms to justify their work and income,” i.e. the production of an artificial reality that does not exist.

#### 4.5.1 LGBTI rights part of the political agenda

For most of the political parties’ representatives, it is still early in Albania to talk about these issues. Perhaps after five to ten years, as a result of the EU integration processes and the change in the level of social acceptance, this issue will be more present.

Even Albania will be very soon open to such discussions even in the political setting. This is a global trend. As a result of external pressure this kind of discussion will be openly made by Albanian political parties. The time of politics identity and affiliation will come.

*Interview with left-party representative*

#### 4.5.2 Contacts and interaction with LGBTI organizations in Albania

Those interviewed, mainly women, who have been part of the parliamentary law commission and the seminars organized by international organizations regarding LGBTI rights, personally know and interact primarily with representatives of LGBTI organizations. While the rest of the respondents expressed that they distantly know these representatives, mostly through the media.

It is interesting that all representatives of the youth forums of the three main parties show that they have never been contacted or invited to participate in LGBTI rights meetings or debates.

Those political representatives who have more interaction with LGBTI representatives say that there is lack of coordination between these organizations; there are unnecessary conflicts and lack of coherence in articulating the needs of the LGBTI community. Even with regard to communication strategies, they often regard these organizations as arrogant, and careless regarding the context in which they act and in collaborating with ‘allies.’

LGBTI organizations are in competition with each other. In my opinion, they should not talk about themselves, but enable third parties, parents, institutions, other organizations, or media to talk about them

*Interview with a left-party representative*

It should be noted that upon analyzing the attitudes of the political party respondents, different yet simultaneous positions in relation to LGBTI rights are apparent. Their position as a political representative is also that of the semi-official attitude regarding the LGBTI rights highlighted above. The other viewpoint is their more personal attitude towards the same issue, portraying themselves as more open and supportive of LGBTI rights, as a result of information dissemination, trust in human rights, their education level, or professional experiences. In this plane, according to them, the concept of an ‘ally’ is formed. Persons in political parties that are more open, mainly women or young people, will gradually influence their party colleagues to raise awareness of and support LGBTI rights. They require understanding and appreciation for their actions toward LGBTI rights, given the context in which they operate.

According to them, it is the fault of LGBTI organizations that political parties have little information on the needs and problems of the LGBTI community in Albania, and that often these needs are linked only with same-sex marriage.

#### **4.6. The gap between politics and reality**

If we refer to the legal framework, the role of constitutional institutions such as the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the Ombudsman,

concrete plans undertaken by the Albanian Government (such as the 2012-2016 and 2016-2020 action plans), and involvement of local government in defense and support of the LGBTI community, it can be stated that Albania has made concrete steps in the last 10 years. This finding is especially true in comparison to other countries in the region.

The Albanian Parliament's resolution, and in particular the action plan, indicates a serious institutional approach and commitment to addressing the different needs of the LGBTI community and increasing the access of this community to society. Both action plans were drafted in close consultation with international organizations, the Council of Europe, and LGBTI organizations.

From the interviews with representatives of LGBTI organizations and representatives of international organizations, the action plan is considered to be a quality step forward that engages many Albanian institutions in protecting LGBTI rights.

Regarding the implementation of the plan and its tangible effects on the daily life of LGBTI community members, the attitudes of the respondents are different. Some of them (mostly representatives of LGBTI organizations) estimate that the impact of the plan is minimal thus far.

Meanwhile, other interviewees estimate that although there are problems with implementation, as a result of these measures, the situation in some institutions and services has improved considerably. This is the case with the state police, where after numerous training sessions and awareness, the access of LGBTI persons to this institution has improved.

Despite the different attitudes, there is a full consensus among respondents that the action plan is conceptualized and well-designed, but more effort is needed on its implementation.

Action Plans and a number of other legal initiatives regarding LGBTI rights all seem to have a common denominator: the borrowing of international, mostly European, best practices.

The actual action plan and the legal framework could be considered a very well-built protective and promotional system for LGBTI people, if social acceptance was higher and the consequences of coming out were not as negative. Even from the viewpoint of implementation, the more institutions are tested in

their engagements, the more they will be upgraded, and as a result the responsibilities that they have undertaken will be better implemented.

It should be emphasized that the legal framework and policies in place are reminiscent of places other than Albania, or rather they are in place prematurely. In the context of Albania, where the absolute majority of LGBTI people cannot come out, plans and legal frameworks work in a vacuum. Institutions respond to few or very few emergency situations of LGBTI people, and do not offer integrated solutions and protection for people who come out.

The other problem of the legal framework and institutional response by sectors is the opposite effect they can produce in the society. Their existence in a vacuum, not addressing the real needs of LGBTI community in Albania, may produce a more conservative reaction to the idea of affirmative action for LGBTI people, that it is “discrimination” against the rest of society. Thus the real situation of LGBTI rights and access will change very little, while public consensus and the number of potential allies will be lower. It is this kind of public perception that can be developed in the future, the same perception that the politicians interviewed in this study possess, who think that the problems of LGBTI people equate to marriage and adoption, while all other rights are guaranteed.

Therefore, action plans and institutional interactions should add other mechanisms that better reflect the LGBTI situation in Albania. The mechanisms should provide protection, services and integration. The Shelter (STREHA), from organizational and functional point of view, can serve as an illustration of integrated institutional response.

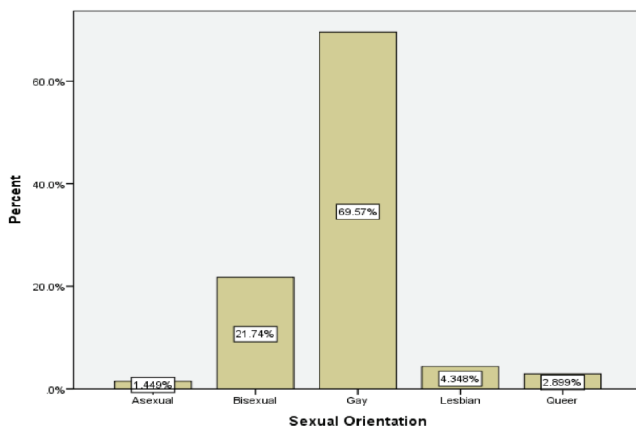
## 5. Perspectives from the LGBTI community

As pointed out in the methodology section, findings from the online survey conducted with members of the LGBTI community cannot be generalized for the entire LGBTI population in Albania resulting from methodological limitations<sup>20</sup>. In this context, the findings refer only to LGBTI persons who have completed the online survey<sup>21</sup>.

### Demographic sample data

69 people participated in the survey<sup>22</sup>. Regarding the gender identity of respondents, 91.3% are men, 7.24% women, and 1.44% transgender. Out of the 69 respondents, 69.57% self-identified as gay, 21.74% as bisexual, 4.34% as lesbian, 2.89% as queer, and 1.44% as asexual. Regarding the age of the respondents, it ranges from 18 to 45 years old. 40% of respondents were born in the interval between 1992 and 1998.

As far as the level of education of the respondents, 15% of them completed secondary school, 28.77% of them were currently in university or had started university but stopped, 26.03% completed university studies, and 30.14% of them completed post-university studies.

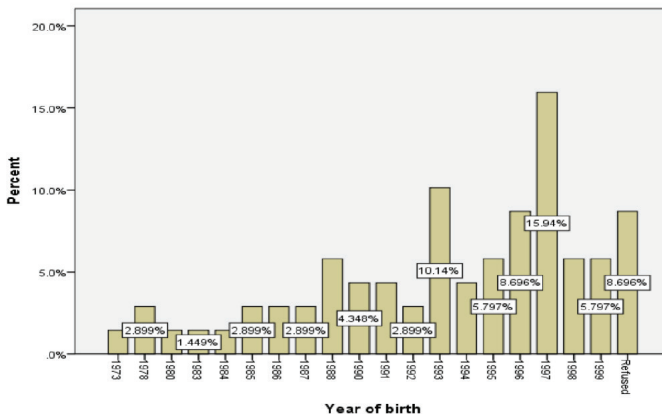
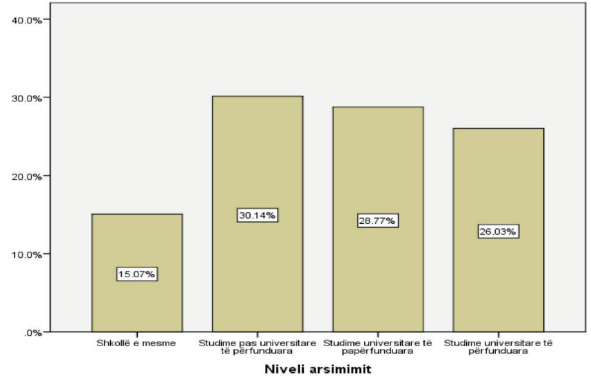
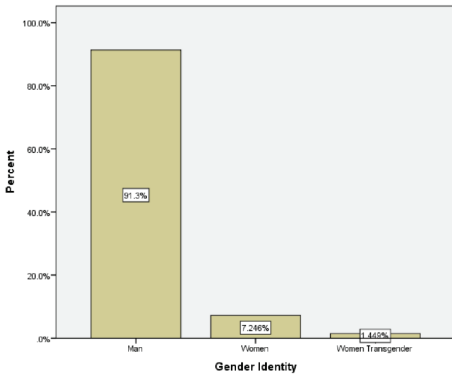


<sup>20</sup>The limitations are explained in methodological section describing the online survey.

<sup>21</sup>The questionnaire format for the online survey is provided in Annex III.

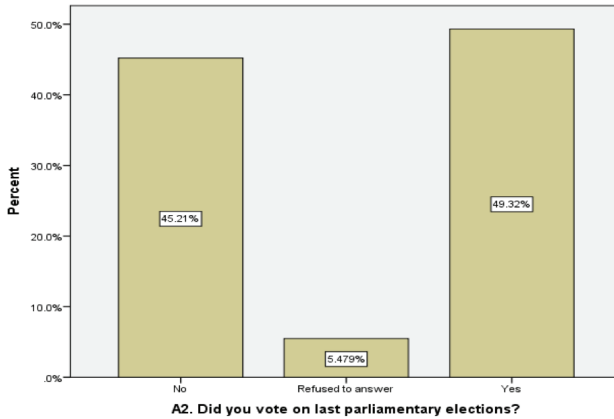
<sup>22</sup>The same response rate is reported from NDI poll on LGBTI issues in Balkans. [https://www.ndi.org/LGBTI\\_Balkans\\_poll](https://www.ndi.org/LGBTI_Balkans_poll)

72.6% lived in Tirana, while the rest lived in other cities of the country or were Albanians living abroad.



## Participation in the elections

Regarding participation in the elections, about 50% of the respondents participated in the elections, while 45.21% did not participate. The rest refused to answer this question. Although the sample is not representative, it is interesting to note that the participation is somewhat similar to the official voter turnout for the general population in the 2017 parliamentary elections.



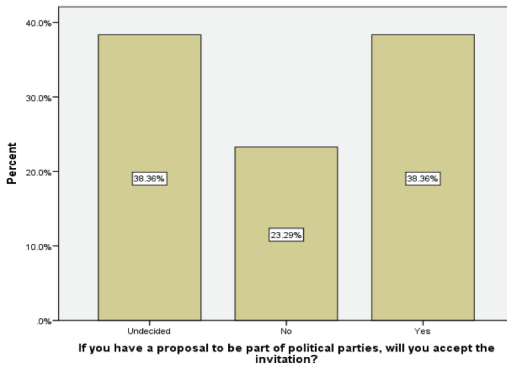
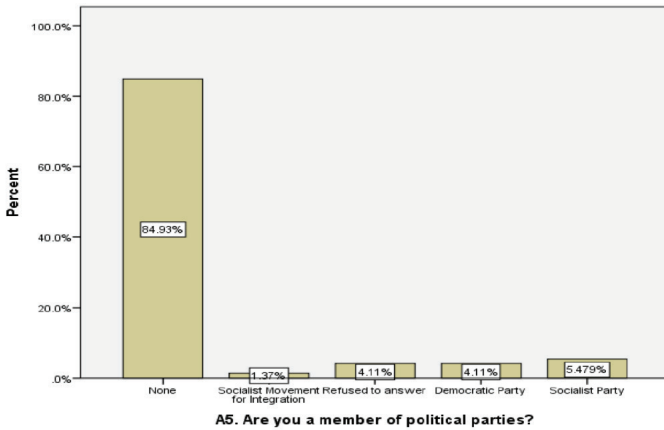
## Top three most important issues when voting

In the online survey, each respondent was able to select more than one option when asked about the three most important issues that affect the way they vote for political candidates. The three most important issues for LGBTI people when voting are employment, health, and education. The next-highest rankings, in order, were basic infrastructure, LGBTI issues, and criminality. The issues that the respondents identify as most important are almost the same as the selections made by the general population in other studies at the national level, showing that LGBTI citizens vote the same way as other citizens, while still prioritizing LGBTI issues as a lower-ranking priority. It should be noted that it is difficult to identify what the respondents include within the “LGBTI issues” section and in this context any assumption constitutes a speculation in relation to this section.

## Political party membership and the desire to get involved in politics

These two questions demonstrate the level of current direct involvement in politics and the willingness to become politically involved in the future. Regarding membership to political parties, about 11% of the respondents indicate that they were party members - more specifically 5.47% were members of the Socialist Party, 4.11% of the Democratic Party and 1.37% of the Socialist Movement for Integration party. Almost all respondents who were party members also were part of the youth forums of the parties.

Regarding the “willingness to participate further in politics” given the opportunity in the future, 38.36% expressed direct interest, 38.36% were undecided if they would like to become involved, while 23.29% were against becoming involved.

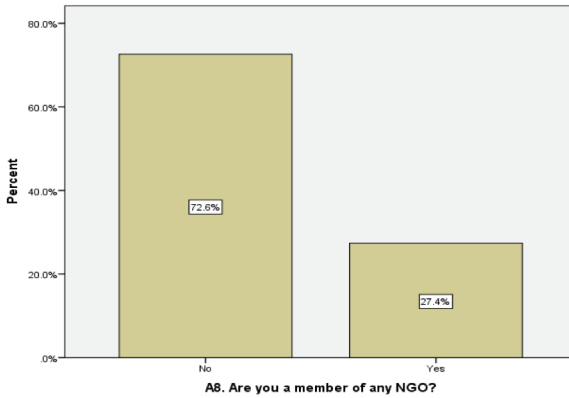


## Civil society organization membership

27.4% of respondents were members of civil society organizations, while 72.6% are not members of any organization. Thus, membership to civil society organizations was higher than membership in political parties.

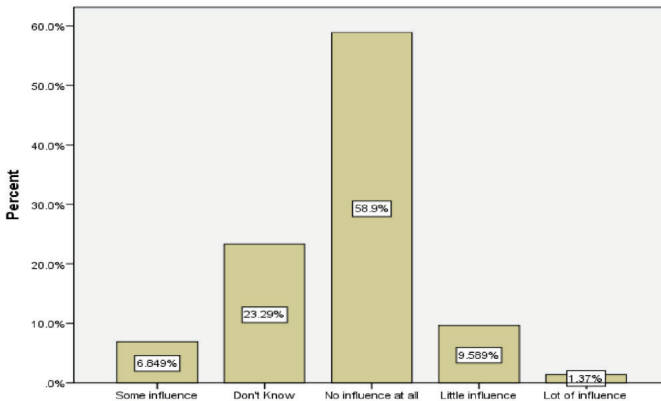
Interestingly, only 50% of the members of civil society organizations are members of LGBTI organizations, while the rest are members of other organizations that do not focus on LGBTI rights.



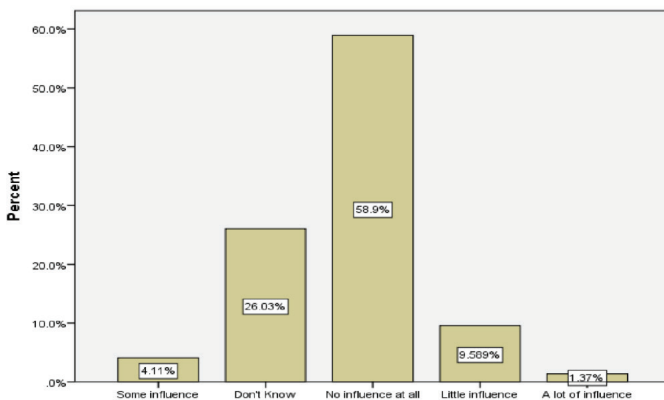


## Influence in local and central government decision-making

About 18% of the respondents stated that they feel that they have little, some, or a lot of influence in local government decision-making. Meanwhile, 59% estimated that they have no impact. Regarding the central government, about 15% of respondents ascertained that they have little, somewhat, or a lot of influence on decisions made by the central government. Even in this case, 59% of the respondents stated that they have no influence at all.



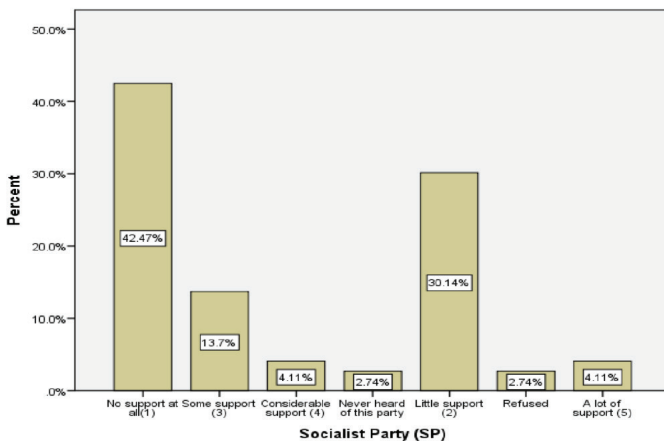
How much power to influence, if any, do you feel you personally have over decision making in your municipality?



How much power to influence, if any, do you feel you personally have over decision making in your country as a whole?

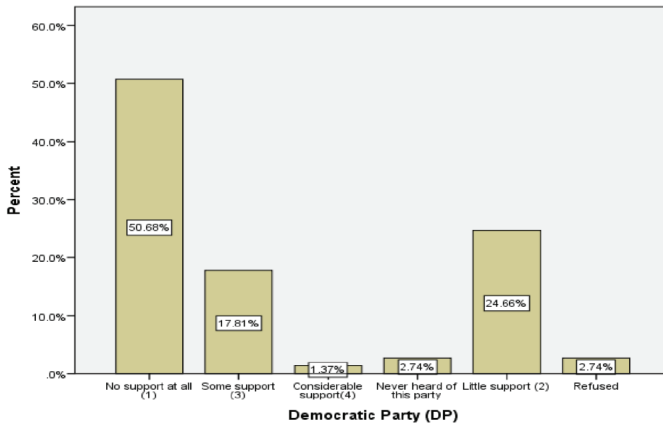
## Support and promotion of LGBTI community rights by the Albanian political parties

Regarding the Socialist Party, 42.47% of the respondents state that the Socialist Party does not support and promote LGBTI rights at all. 30.14% of them think that the Socialist Party has shown little support for these rights. 18% of them think that support is either considerable or somewhat. Only 4.11% of the respondents think that the Socialist Party strongly supports and promotes LGBTI rights.

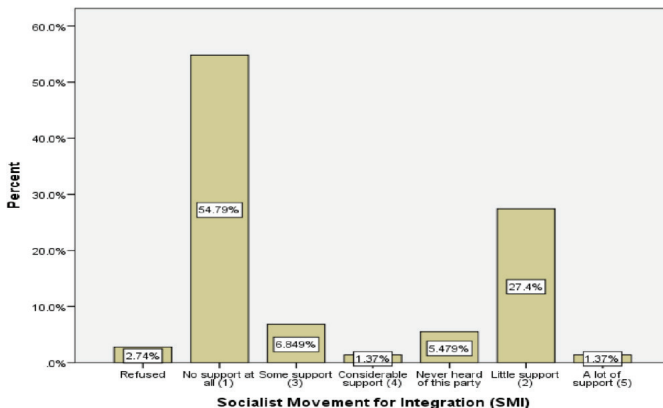


As far as the Democratic Party is concerned, about 51% of the respondents think that this political entity does not support and promote the rights of the

LGBTI community. Meanwhile, 44% of respondents estimate that the Democratic Party has shown either little support, some support, or considerable support for LGBTI community rights. In the case of the Democratic Party, none of the respondents think that the Democratic Party strongly supports and promotes LGBTI rights. Compared to the Socialist Party, there seems to be a slightly more negative rating for the Democratic Party. However, values in the main indicators are similar.



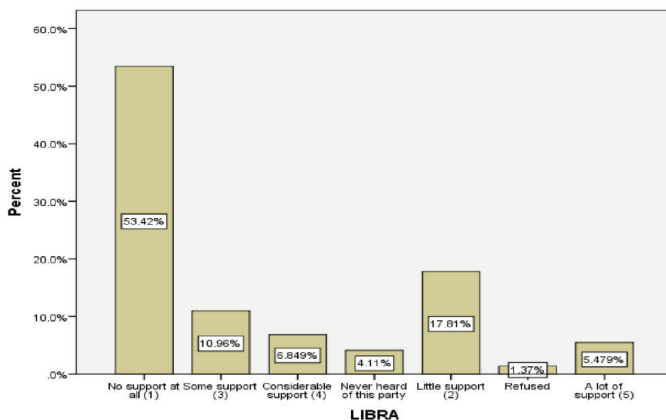
With regard to the Socialist Movement for Integration, 54.79% of respondents think that this political party does not support and does not promote LGBTI rights at all. 27.4% of them think that the Socialist Movement for Integration offers little support, and about 8% think it somehow or considerably supports the LGBTI community. It should be noted that 1.37% of respondents see the SMI as a political subject that strongly supports LGBTI community rights. Comparatively, the SMI as a subject despite its similarity to the two main parties seems to be less supportive.



The three parties above are the most voted parties in the parliamentary elections and with the maximum weight in the Albanian parliament. The rating for them, despite the easily identifiable differences, is similar.

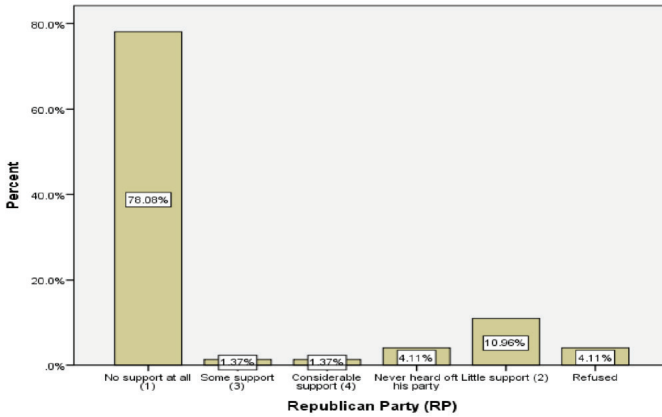
Below are listed four other parties that have the smallest electoral influence and the lowest representation in the country's institutions. Three of them have been part of the Albanian Parliament for more than 10 years, while one of them is considered a new party (the Libra party, which regards itself as a center-left party), which has competed for the first time in the 2017 parliamentary elections. Two of these parties (Republican Party (RP) and PJIU) are self-labeled as conservative right parties. The Union for Human Rights Party (UHRP) is a political party that is mainly focused in the representation of minorities and their rights in Albania.

Regarding the LIBRA party, 53.42% of the respondents estimate that this political entity does not support and promote LGBTI rights in Albania. While about 36% of respondents estimate that this political party shows little, somewhat, or considerable support for LGBTI rights in Albania. Interestingly, compared to any other party, the percentage of those reporting that Libra supports and promotes LGBTI rights is higher, 5.48%.

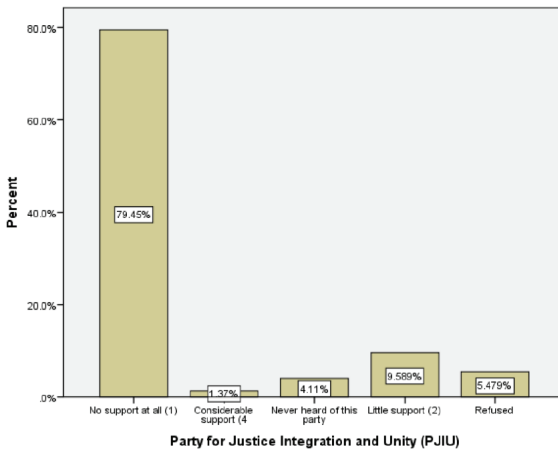


Although UHRP is considered as party with a particular focus on human rights, it is evaluated by the respondents as less supportive, compared to the parties discussed above. 67.12% of respondents estimate that this subject does not support LGBTI rights at all. While 23% of them think that this party shows little, somewhat, or considerable support for LGBTI rights.

About 78.08% of respondents think that the Republican Party does not support LGBTI rights at all. Meanwhile about 14% of them state that this party shows either little, some, or considerable support of LGBTI rights.

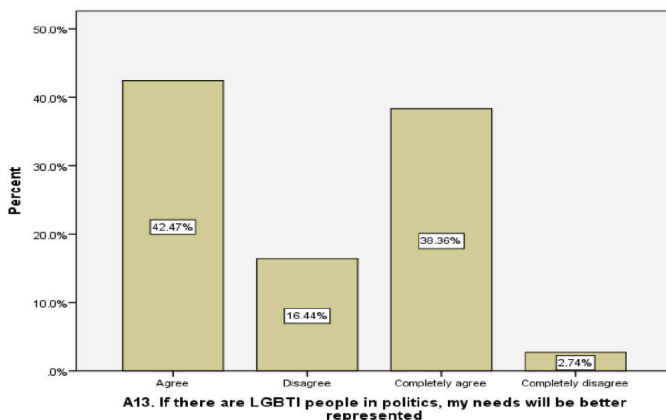


The party that is identified as the least supportive of all the indicators is the Party for Justice, Integration and Unity. About 79.45% of respondents estimate that this party does not support LGBTI rights at all. 11% of them estimate that this party shows either little support or considerable support for LGBTI rights.



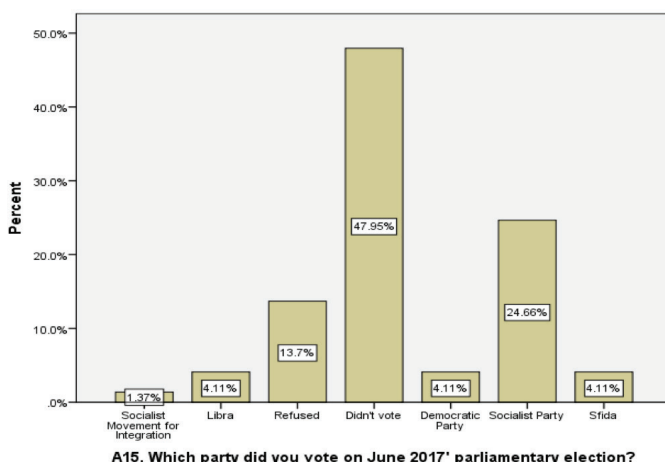
## LGBTI candidates and representatives

Most of the respondents, about 81%, agree or completely agree that the interests and rights of the LGBTI community would be better represented by an openly LGBTI politician. The rest of the respondents do not necessarily link the representation of their needs with openly LGBTI elected officials.



## Voting behavior in the 2017 parliamentary elections

47.95% of the respondents did not vote in the 2017 parliamentary elections. 13.75% of the respondents participated in the elections but did not declare which party they voted for. About 24.66% of the respondents voted for the Socialist Party, which is the most-voted-for party among respondents. 4.11% voted for the Democratic Party, and the same percentage of respondents voted LIBRA and Challenge (Sfida). Meanwhile, 1.37% of the voters voted for the Socialist Movement for Integration, or the third largest party in the country. Interestingly, the two new parties (Libra and Challenge) had the same number of votes from LGBTI people as the Democratic Party, indicating the need for alternative political representations.



## 6. Conclusions

Political participation and representation of the LGBTI community in Albania faces multiple challenges. On macro level, there are challenges which reflect country development, history, and tradition, reflective of the rest of the region. On micro level, there are challenges which derive from the three kind of gaps developed especially in the last decade. The first one is the gap between the formal and real position political parties have on LGBTI rights, the second is between the knowledge and information the political parties have of the needs of the LGBTI community and the needs the LGBTI community have, and the third is between the legal and policy framework on LGBTI rights in Albania and their minimized impact on everyday life of an LGBTI person. Addressing these challenges together can contribute to better understanding of potential LGBTI political participation and representation in the future.

Listed below are some of the main conclusions of this research:

- More than the conventional left and right-wing positions related to LGBTI rights, the political parties in Albania can rather be classified in two groups depending on their popular support and level of representation in decision-making institutions in the country.

The first group consists of the main political parties in Albania. These parties have larger electoral and parliamentary representation and exhibit **a neutral position (or even a positive stance, but one that is not public)**. This position is produced as a consequence of interaction between the image these parties want to project as supportive of the EU integration process and their supporters' sensibility toward LGBTI rights. In ideological terms, DP supports anti-discriminatory legislation, but it's against promotion of the "advanced rights" of LGBTI people, i.e. same-sex marriage. While the other two leftist parties consider the promotion and support of the "advanced rights" as premature in Albanian society, their ideologies do not cause them to wish to restrict these rights.

Meanwhile, the second party group includes small parties with less electoral significance and representation in parliament/executive institutions, including new parties (RP, LIBRA and PJIU). These parties have **more open positions against or for** LGBTI rights. This kind of positioning seems

to be not merely ideological but also strategic, with the aim of dictating the political agenda, attracting public attention, and addressing certain electoral segments that could potentially mobilize around this discourse.

Taking into consideration the difficulty of and the variety of implications of coming out as LGBTI in Albania, the political discourse on LGBTI rights seem to be in vain. What the political parties have in common is that all of them from different perspectives and calculations tend to use and benefit from the LGBTI discourse far less than addressing the challenges of the reality LGBTI persons face in Albania.

- Most political party respondents found it unjustified to separately organize vulnerable groups within the party in the form of special branches, forums, or structures. This not only applies to the LGBTI community, but also to other groups that are considered marginalized. Respondents believed that the interests of these groups could be expressed through the program without the need for identity or issue-based structures within the party.

On the other hand, all political party representatives interviewed stated that individuals that belong to vulnerable groups are part and will be part of the membership of these parties and have all the potential space to compete within their structures and develop a political career, regardless of their identity, based on political and professional skills. Most of the political party respondents do not support the idea of promotion within the party based on identity, gender, and minority status, or the use of “positive discrimination” mechanisms to promote them.

By this logic, LGBTI persons can become members, make a career, and choose to run for office on their personal skills and contributions, not merely as a member of the LGBTI community.

- All political representatives interviewed do not know anyone within their political party, in the capacity of members, bureaucrats, elected persons within parties, or candidates for municipal councils and parliamentary elections, who are openly LGBTI. This is expected if taking into consideration the costs of coming out in Albania.

In terms of coming out and running for positions within the party or on MP lists, LGBTI persons have two scenarios:



**The first scenario** is when elected persons, or those who have already made their political career within parties or even in the country's institutions, come out as LGBTI. In this case, mostly according to left-party respondents, the level of acceptance by society would be greater because the politician would not be seen as merely a part of the LGBTI community but also as an LGBTI person who has demonstrated publicly other skills and has made various contributions.

**The second scenario** would be when the person comes out publicly as LGBTI and then becomes part of the political parties or lists of candidates for municipal councils or MPs. In this scenario, due to a lack of an already existing public persona and an absence of a reputation regarding skills and contributions of the person concerned, the dominant quality perceived would be their LGBTI identity. In this case, the level of societal acceptance would be lower.

All political party representatives interviewed do not have information regarding the number of LGBTI people in Albania, and much less about their voting behavior and political preferences. According to them, from an electoral point of view, as long as there are no accurate statistics, LGBTI voters have no electoral meaning or significance.

- Noted throughout most of the interviews conducted with representatives of political parties is the lack of information on the daily needs and issues faced by members of the LGBTI community. The needs and concerns of LGBTI community, according to the political representatives, are equated with the right to same-sex marriage.

Generally, people are convicted that LGBTI people in Albania enjoy all the freedom to express their sexual orientation and there are very few, and not meaningful, cases of physical violence against them. The rights of this community are guaranteed both in terms of law and everyday practice. There is a general perception that sexual orientation is a personal choice and there should be no discrimination for this choice.

For most of the political parties' representatives, it is still too early in Albania to talk about LGBTI rights in election campaigns. Perhaps in five to ten years, as a result of the EU integration processes and a change in the level of social acceptance, this issue will be more prevalent.

It should be noted that upon analyzing the attitudes of political party respondents, different yet simultaneous positions in relation to LGBTI rights are apparent. The politicians interviewed (mostly women) show a more personal attitude towards LGBTI rights compared with the political party they represent, portraying themselves as more open and as more supportive of LGBTI rights because of information, trust in human rights, their education level, and/or professional experiences. According to them, within political parties, women or young people are more open toward LGBTI rights and will gradually influence their party colleagues to raise awareness and to support LGBTI rights.

- If we refer to the legal framework, the role of constitutional institutions such as the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination and the Ombudsman, concrete plans undertaken by the Albanian Government (such as the 2012-2016 and 2016-2020 action plans), involvement of local government in defense, and support for the LGBTI community, it is evident that Albania has made concrete steps in the last 10 years. This finding is especially true in comparison to other countries in the region.

The Albanian Parliament's resolution, particularly the action plan, indicates a serious institutional approach and commitment to addressing the different needs of the LGBTI community and increasing the access of this community to society. Both action plans were drafted in close consultation with international organizations, the Council of Europe, and LGBTI organizations.

The actual action plan and the legal framework could be considered a very well-built protective and promotional system for LGBTI rights if social acceptance was higher and the consequences of coming out were not so negative. However, while that is not the case, it seems that the legal framework and policies in place are reminiscent of places other than Albania, or rather they are in place prematurely. In the context of Albania, where the majority of LGBTI people cannot come out, plans and legal frameworks function in a vacuum. Institutions have few solutions for LGBTI people experiencing an emergency, and they do not offer integrated solutions and protection for people who come out.

The other problem of the legal framework and institutional response by sectors is the opposite effect they can produce in society. Their existence in a vacuum, not addressing the real needs of LGBTI community in Albania, may produce a more conservative reaction to the idea of affirmative

action for LGBTI people, that it is “discrimination” against the rest of society. As long as legal framework and action plans go beyond current realities, they could produce counterproductive results in the near future.

- About 50% of the online respondents participated in the elections, while 45.21% of them did not participate. The rest refused to answer this question. Although the sample is not representative, it is interesting to note that the participation is somewhat similar to official voter turnout for the general population in the 2017 parliamentary elections.

Regarding membership of political parties, about 11% of the respondents indicate that they were party members, more specifically that 5.47% were members of the Socialist Party, 4.11% of the Democratic Party and 1.37% of the Socialist Movement for Integration party. Almost all respondents who were party members also were part of the youth forums of the parties.

Regarding the “willingness to participate further in politics” given the opportunity in the future, 38.36% expressed direct interest, 38.36% were undecided if they would like to become involved, while 23.29% do not wish to participate.

- Most of the respondents, about 81%, agree that the interests and rights of the LGBTI community would be better represented by an openly LGBTI politician. The rest of the respondents do not necessarily link representation of their needs with openly LGBTI elected officials.

Most of the respondents perceive the Socialist Party as better representing LGBTI rights compared with the other political parties.

47.95% of the respondents did not vote in the 2017 parliamentary elections. 13.75% of the respondents participated in the elections but did not declare which party they voted for. About 24.66% of the respondents voted for the Socialist Party, which is the most-voted-for party among respondents. 4.11% voted for the Democratic Party, and the same percentage of respondents voted LIBRA and Challenge. Meanwhile, 1.37% of the voters voted for the Socialist Movement for Integration, or the third largest party in the country. Interestingly, the two new parties (Libra and Challenge) had the same amount of votes from LGBTI people as the Democratic Party, indicating the need for alternative political representation.

## 7. Recommendations

The recommendations are organized in three categories addressing different actors and stakeholders. The first group of recommendations is for political parties, responsible institutions and LGBTI organizations operating in Albania.

### *Recommendations for political parties and youth political forums:*

#### **1. Encourage key political parties to make their position public on various issues related to LGBTI rights.**

o Issues should not include only same-sex marriage, but also family violence, education, health services, social services, access to justice, employment, sex workers' rights etc. These positions should be written, published, and publicly articulated. Having a public position on each of the issues will contribute to adequately addressing the reality of LGBTI people in Albania, despite ideological differences. It will also contribute to diminishing "politically correct" language and artificial/populist public discourse. Silent consensus, which is widespread among main parties in Albania, negatively affects the promotion of LGBTI rights.

o Socialist Party (SP) and Socialist Movement for Integration (SMI), which are associate/members of European or international socialist bodies (Party of European Socialist (PES) and Socialist International (SI)), should especially make their position public regarding LGBTI rights, if it is the same with SI and PES resolutions or if it differs from them.

#### **2. Organization of roundtables among parties and LGBTI organizations**

o These types of discussions should be organized in order to become informed on LGBTI needs, social acceptance, and human rights restrictions. This will also help bridge the gap in understanding between these two groups, leading to enhanced cooperation.

#### **3. Higher levels of engagement on issues affecting the LGBTI population**

o Political parties and youth forums should better inform themselves on the current Albanian legislation and institutional engagement that addresses LGBTI rights. Political parties' representatives should be invited and should participate on the joint institutional annual meetings in order to be updated on the situation of LGBTI people in Albania. Also, they should aim to engage with LGBTI groups and organizations and foster healthy relationships.

*Institutions which are responsible for protection and promotion of LGBTI rights and approved legislation:*

**1. Design and implement an integrated institutional protection mechanism for the 2016-2020 Action Plan**

o This mechanism should address all LGBTI persons who are isolated from their families and jobs and as a result could turn to sex work as a means for survival, which carries a higher risk of violence. The experience of the STREHA shelter, in terms of organization and services provided, can be replicated large-scale by public institutions. A similar protection mechanism such as the one addressing human trafficking victims in Albania is a good example of legal framework, institutional involvement and victims' integration in society. Most importantly, this mechanism will enable a more realistic political and public discourse on LGBTI rights and the difficulties of coming out as LGBTI in Albania.

**2. Monitor hate speech and hold political officials accountable**

o The Anti-discrimination Commissioner and Albanian Ombudsman should continue using public institutions to condemn politicians in Albania who use hate speech against LGBTI people. Their stance should be made as public as possible to demonstrate that acts of discrimination are not acceptable and those that commit them will suffer consequences.

*LGBTI organizations and international actors supporting LGBTI rights in Albania*

**1. Better communicate the reality of the LGBTI population to government**

o Political parties and youth forums lack information on the challenges and realities that LGBTI people face in Albania. Thus, it is important to better communicate this information. LGBTI organizations supported by international actors should establish a systematic communication with political parties and parties' youth forums related to the LGBTI community's issues and situations in Albania. It is important to challenge the idea that LGBTI people in Albania are free to fully exercise their constitutional rights.

## **2. Form alliances and positive relationships with universities**

o LGBTI organizations should organize open discussions at universities to present the situation of LGBTI people in Albania. In these meetings it is important to share with students what it means to come out as LGBTI in Albania. It is also important to reflect not only on the perspective of an LGBTI person, but especially of their family and friends. These activities could contribute to informing young voters on LGBTI rights and challenges in Albania.

## **3. Foster strong alliances with the media**

o These alliances will allow the media to present systematic accurate information about LGBTI needs and rights that showcase other qualities of out individuals, such as professional achievements, societal contributions, and interests. This could encourage more LGBTI people who already have a professional career to come out and perhaps even participate in politics.

## **4. Create a public monitoring system**

o LGBTI organizations should work to establish an online presence and provide detailed information about LGBTI people and their rights in Albania through monitoring developments like updated legislation, action plans, local and central initiatives, political parties' position on various LGBTI issues, etc. Any online space should also provide information on the services provided, the activities being carried out, initiatives, rele-

vant studies and resources, and partners and allies.

**5. Encourage and support LGBTI people to engage in political system**

o LGBTI organizations should encourage and support LGBTI persons to express their interests to be part of political parties. This can be done in the form of political leadership workshops that impart the skills and knowledge necessary for LGBTI people to use civic engagement as a tool to advance toward equality.

## Annex I: Semi-structured interview guide: Political Parties

### Annex I:

*Guide of semi-structured interview with representatives of Political Parties (Socialist Party, Democratic Party, Socialist Movement for Integration, Libra, Party for Justice and Unity, Republican Party )*

1. What part of your program and election platform addresses the human rights issues? Is there any specific focus on LGBTI rights? What is your political party position on that?
2. As a political party, how are you creating more access to political spaces for vulnerable groups? Women, young people, people with disabilities, LGBTI people?
3. Is there in your party list any representative from LGBTI community? Are they openly declared as gay? If yes, when and how? What was the reaction within the party structures and among the supporters of your party? What are their chances to get elected? If not, what is your opinion to have them in the list? Can your party be considered as friendly, in terms of organization and structures toward LGBTI candidates and members? What would be their potential impact?
4. Do you have any idea on the electoral behavior of the LGBTI community? Do you see LGBTI community as potential voters of your party? Or do you think there is importance in reaching out LGBTI community for your party?
5. What are the main concerns of LGBTI community? How are you informed about these concerns? What is your party opinion on these concerns? Prompt and ask for discrimination on health services, education, labor market and access to justice.
6. What is your party position on the right of the LGBTI community to have a relationship?
7. What are your expectations related to political discourses on this election? Will there be any chance to address the LGBTI issues?
8. Do you know representatives of the LGBTI community in Albania? What is your personal opinion on the approach they are adapting to address their issues and concerns? What are your recommendations to the community representatives in order to better present their concerns and reach success (question to be conducted when positive attitude is reflected)?



## **Annex 2:**

### **Semi-structured interview guide: LGBTI activists**

#### **Annex 2:**

*Guide of semi-structured interview with representatives of LGBTI organizations*

1. Can you please explain, what are the main challenges LGBTI community is facing in Albania?
2. What are the instruments used by your organization to address these challenges?
3. What are the main difficulties faced during this process?
4. What is the position of the political parties according to your understanding toward LGBTI rights, please specify? And what about the above mentioned challenges?
5. Taking into consideration your experience and activities, what are the main positive developments in the last 10 years in Albania referring to LGBTI rights?
6. Are there positive practices? Why do you consider it a positive practice? Who are the actors involved? How it is measured?
7. What are the problems within LGBTI community in terms of organization?
8. Are there LGBTI representatives in politics or media? Are they declared openly as part of the LGBTI community? If not, why not? What would be their potential impact if they openly declare?
9. Are there representatives from LGBTI community/ organizations ready to run for elections as candidate? Do you know any in the parties' lists? Did political parties invited representatives from LGBTI community in their list? If there are, why they do not openly declare as gay?
10. Are there members of LGBTI community also members of the political parties? Do parties have friendly structures for LGBTI members? What is their position in the parties? If there are, why they do not openly declare as gay?
11. What are your expectations regarding LGBTI issues and concerns as part of the political discourse on the upcoming elections?
12. Do you have any idea on the electoral behavior of the LGBTI community? Do you think they are ready to support a political party which promotes LGBTI rights?

## **Annex 3: LGBTI community questionnaire**

### **PARTICIPATION IN POLITICS QUESTIONNAIRE**

This is a survey conducted by OMSA and Victory Institute on “Political participation of the LGBTI community”. We strongly believe that your contribution by completing this questionnaire is very valuable not only to ensure the quality of the survey but also it will help to improve the situation of LGBTI community in Albania. It will not take more than 5-7 minutes from your time to complete it. We guarantee that your feedback and opinions will be used only for the purpose of this survey and your anonymity will be kept strictly confidential.

Thanks a lot for your contribution.

#### **DEMOGRAPHY**

B.Are you 18 years of age or older?

- Yes
- No

(If yes, you cannot fill out this survey.Thank you for your interest.)

B1.What is your year of birth?

19\_\_\_\_\_

B2. Sexual Orientation

1. Bisexual
2. Gay
3. Lesbian
4. Pansexual
5. Queer
6. Asexual
7. Heterosexual
8. Other (Please specify)

B3. Gender Identity

1. Transgender woman

2. Transgender man
3. Woman
4. Man
5. Gender non-conforming
6. Genderqueer/non-binary
7. Other (Please specify)

B3/a. Do you identify as intersex?

1. Yes
2. No

B4. Which one of the following indicates your highest formal educational qualification?

1. None
2. Incomplete primary
3. Primary
4. Incomplete secondary
5. Secondary completed
6. High school
7. University undergraduate degree incomplete
8. University undergraduate degree complete
9. Post graduate degree
10. No answer

B5. Do you have a disability?

- Yes  No

B6. City/Region you currently live in

\_\_\_\_\_

## QUESTIONNAIRE

A1. In your knowledge, who won the majority of the seats in the Parliament during the last election?

1. Democratic Party
2. Socialist Movement for Integration
3. Party for Unity and Justice
4. Socialist Party
5. Libra
6. Sfida
7. Don't know

## 8. Refuse

A2. Did you vote in June 25th election?

1. Yes
2. No
3. Don't want to disclose

A3. When you vote, which three of these issues are the most important to you?  
(multiple options questions)

1. Education
2. Jobs
3. Basic Services (electricity and energy, water and sanitation, refuse and waste removal)
4. Crime and Security
5. Leadership
6. Health
7. Corruption
8. LGBTI Issues
9. Other \_\_\_\_\_

A4. During the elections, some people participate in various activities. Have you ever done any of the following? (multiple options questions)

- Attended election meetings/rallies?
- Contributed or collected money?
- Participated in door-to-door or phone canvassing in support of a candidate?
- Support and campaigning through social media and other online platforms?
- Not attended any activity but followed election news and activities
- None

A5. Are you a member of any political party?

- Democratic Party
- Socialist Movement for Integration
- Party for Unity and Justice
- Socialist Party
- Libra
- Sfida
- Can't say

- None

A6. If you answered yes to A3,

1. Are you also a member of a youth wing a party?

- Yes

- No

2. Are you also a member of a women's wing a party?

- Yes

- No

A7. Are you part of an NGO?

1. Yes

2. No

A8. If you answer yes to A7

Is this organization LGBTI?

1. Yes

2. No

A9. How much power to influence, if any, do you feel you personally have over decision making in your municipality?

1. A great deal of influence

2. Some influence

3. Not very much influence

4. No influence at all

5. Don't know

A10. How much power to influence, if any, do you feel you personally have over decision making in your country as a whole?

1. A great deal of influence

2. Some influence

3. Not very much influence

4. No influence at all

5. Don't know

A11. Rate the parties on how well you think they're doing to support and promote LGBTIQ+ needs and interests

	Poorly										Very Well	HAVEN'T HEARD OF PARTY
	00	01	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	96
Socialist Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Democratic Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Socialist Movement for Integration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Republican Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
LIBRA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Human Rights Union Party	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
PDIU	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

A12. If there were more LGBTIQ+ people in politics, my needs would be addressed better

1. Completely agree
2. Agree
3. Disagree
4. Completely disagree

A13. <If you did not cast a ballot in A12.> Could you please tell me why you did not cast a vote in the June 2017 parliamentary election?

- |      |   |
|------|---|
| Code | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Not eligible to vote</li> <li>2. Not on the voter list</li> <li>3. Not aware of the voting center's location</li> <li>4. Not support any candidate/party</li> <li>5. All politicians are corrupt/bad</li> <li>6. There is no real choice between candidates/parties</li> <li>7. Not interested in elections/politics</li> </ol> |
|------|---|

- 8. My vote would not make a difference
- 9. I was out of town/country when elections happened
- 10. I was busy
- 11. I was feeling extremely pressured not to vote
- 12. Didn't feel comfortable because my id has different gender as mine
- 13. There is no political party representing LGBTI issues
- 14. There was a be a big queue in the Voting Center in order to vote  
(Could not stay long in the Queue)
- 15. Can't recall
- 16. Other, (specify : \_\_\_\_\_ )
- 88. Don't know
- 99. Refused

A14. Which political party did you cast your vote for?

- 1. Democratic Party
- 2. Socialist Movement for Integration
- 3. Party for Unity and Justice
- 4. Socialist Party
- 5. Libra
- 6. Sfida
- 7. Would rather not say

A15. Given an opportunity would you like to participate in politics further?

- 1. Yes
- 2. No
- 3. Unsure

A16. How did you find out about this survey?

- Email from Victory Institute
- Email from OMSA
- Victory Institute's social media
- OMSA's social media
- Grindr
- Other (please specify)

A17. Would you like to receive a copy of this survey's results? If yes, what is your email address?

\_\_\_\_\_

## Bibliography

### RESEARCH PUBLICATIONS

1. A view to the political participation of LGBTI people in movements and political parties in Colombia - 2014 © Corporación Caribe Afirmativo. © Gay & Lesbian Victory Institute Western.
2. European Social Survey 2012/<http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org/>
3. Western Balkans LGBTI: Landscape Analysis of Political, Economic and Social Conditions. This report was produced by the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice as part of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Global Development Partnership. The Partnership was founded in 2012 and brings together the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Government of Sweden, the Arcus Foundation, the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, the National Gay & Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, the Gay & Lesbian Victory Institute, the Williams Institute, the Swedish Federation for LGBT Rights (RFSL) and other corporate, non-profit and non-governmental organization resource partners to promote equality, human rights and economic empowerment of LGBTI people in the developing world. Cover photo: Labris Belgrade Protest. Photo courtesy of In Serbia Network. Balkans LGBTI: Landscape Analysis of Political, Economic & Social Conditions. Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice. 2015.
4. NDI Public Opinion Poll in the Balkans on LGBTI Communities. NDI, USAID, Civil Rights Defenders, Gay & Lesbian Victory Institute. 2015.
5. Think Politically. Aleanca & Pro LGBT Albania. 2015.
6. Political Parties and the Human Rights of LGBT People: Monitoring of the General Election 2014. Darko Pandurević, Emina Bošnjak, Naida Kućukalić. 2015.
7. Human Rights do not Recognize Political Ideology: Political Parties and the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender People. Edita Miftari. 2015.
8. Women's participation in politics and decision-making in Albania: Public Perception Survey 2012-2013. Klea Faniko; Sokol Avxhiu, Suela Kusi, Zyhrada Kongoli, Valbona Sulce, Fiorela Shalsi. 2013.
9. Being LGBTI in Eastern Europe: Albania Country Report, Reducing Inequalities & Exclusion and Combating Homophobia & Transphobia experienced by LGBTI people in Albania. This country report is part of a sub-regional project "Being LGBTI in Eastern Europe", implemented



by UNDP in partnership with civil society and in cooperation with the LGBTI Equal Rights Association (ERA). In Albania the project is being implemented with the following country partners: Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, relevant line ministries, All United Pro LGBT Cause, Open Mind Spectrum, PINK Embassy, Alliance Against Discrimination of LGBT people, Ombudsman and Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, STREHA LGBT, and other civil society organizations that work in the human rights. UNDP 2017.

10. BTI (2016) Albania Country Report. Gütersloh: Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016. Accessed 03.08.2016, [https://www.btiproject.org/leadadmin/les/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2016/pdf/BTI\\_2016\\_Albania.pdf](https://www.btiproject.org/leadadmin/les/BTI/Downloads/Reports/2016/pdf/BTI_2016_Albania.pdf).
11. TheHeadHunter Index <http://www.headhunter.al/sq-al/lgbtq-index>
12. Garcia, A. (2013, April 1). Albania is Europe's most homophobic country according to a new survey. The Gaily Grind. Retrieved from <http://www.thegailygrind.com/2013/04/01/albania-is-europes-most-homophobic-country-according-to-a-new-survey/>

## REPORTS

1. Commissioner on Protection from Discrimination (2014a) Special Report on LGBTI rights in Albania, (Komisioneri për Mbrojtjen nga Diskriminimi: Raport i veçantë për mbrojtjen dhe respektimin e të drejtave të komunitetit LGBTI në Shqipëri), accessed 11.08.2016, <http://www.pinkembassy.al/sites/default/les/uploade/Raporti%20i%20Vecante%20i%20KMD%20per%20LGBT%202014.pdf>
2. Commissioner on Protection from Discrimination (2014b) Discrimination in Education (Komisioneri për Mbrojtjen nga Diskriminimi; Diskriminimi në arsim në këndvështrimin e Komisionerit për Mbrojtjen nga Diskriminimi), accessed 11.08.2016, <http://www.pinkembassy.al/sites/default/les/uploade/Raporti%20i%20Vecante%20i%20KMD%20per%20LGBT%202014.pdf>
3. Commissioner on Protection from Discrimination (2015) Annual Report 2015 (Komisioneri për Mbrojtjen nga Diskriminimi Raport Vjetor), accessed 21.8.2016, [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails.aspx?SessionID=1019&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails.aspx?SessionID=1019&Lang=en)
4. Commissioner on Protection from Discrimination (2016) Report for CEDAW Session 64 on Albania (KMD raport për Cedaw 2016, korrik Komiteti për Eliminimin e Diskriminimit ndaj Grave CEDAW, Informacioni i Komisionerit për Mbrojtjen nga Diskriminimi. Shqipëria-Sesioni

- 64, 4-22 Korrik 2016, Gjenevë), accessed 21.8.2016, [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1019&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/SessionDetails1.aspx?SessionID=1019&Lang=en)
5. Council of Europe (2008) Commissioner for Human Rights, Comm. DH (2008)8, Report by the Commissioner for Human Rights, Mr. Thomas Hammarberg, on his visit to Albania, 27 October – 2 November 2007, Strasbourg, 18 June 2008, accessed 12.08.2016, <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&id=1327977&Site=COE&BackColorInernet=DBD-CF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864&direct=true>
  6. Council of Europe (2010) Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 on Measures to Combat Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation or Gender; accessed 21.8.2016, <https://rm.coe.int/168047f2a6> Bibliography 47
  7. Council of Europe (2014) Report by Nils Muižnieks, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, following his visit to Albania from 23 to 27 September 2013, CommDH(2014)1, 2014, accessed <https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&id=2174147&Site=CommDH&direct=true>
  8. Council of Europe (2015) Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muižnieks, Research Paper on Human Rights and Intersex People, <https://www.coe.int/en/web/commissioner/-/europe-disregardsintersex-people-s-right-to-self-determination-and-physical-integrity> Council of Europe (2016)
  9. Commissioner for Human Rights, LGBTI people are not second-class citizens, Keynote Address by Nils Muižnieks, European Governmental LGBTI Focal Point Network Roundtable Strasbourg, 17 November 2016; [https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CommDH/Speech\(2016\)5&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&direct=true](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CommDH/Speech(2016)5&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&direct=true)
  10. Special Report of the activity of the Ombudsman on the rights of LGBT persons in 2012/Albania

## LAWS

- Constitution of Albania, Law No. 9904, date 21.4.2008, last amended by Law No. 76/2016, date 22/7/2016, Official Journal, accessed 20.08.2016, [http://www.pp.gov.al/web/kushtetuta\\_2016\\_1082.pdf](http://www.pp.gov.al/web/kushtetuta_2016_1082.pdf)
- Central Electoral Commission, <http://www.cec.org.al>. Election results.
- Law on Protection from Discrimination, No. 10221, date 4.2.2010, Official Journal, accessed 20.06.2016, <http://www.kmd.al/?fq=brenda&gj=g->

jl&kid=110

- The Electoral Code of The Republic Of Albania (Approved by Law no. 10 019, dated 29 December 2008, amended by Law no. 74/2012, dated 19 July 2012 and Law no. 31/2015, dated 2 April 2015)
- Penal Code of the Republic of Albania, Law No. 7895, dated 27 January 1995, last amended 2013, Official Journal, (Kodi Penal i Republikës së Shqipërisë), accessed 11.08.2016, <http://www.qbz.gov.al/Kode-pdf/Kodi%20Penal-2014.pdf>
- Labour Code of the Republic of Albania, Law No. 7961, dated 12.07.1995, last amended 2015, Official Journal, (Kodi i Punës i Republikës së Shqipërisë), accessed 12.08.2016, , <http://www.qbz.gov.al/Kode-pdf/Kodi%20i%20Punes-2016-qershor.pdf>
- Code of Administrative Procedures of the Republic of Albania, Law No. 44/2015, Official Journal, (Kodi i Procedurës Administrative të Republikës së Shqipërisë), accessed 14.08.2016, [http://www.erru.al/doc/Kodi\\_i\\_Procedurave\\_Administrative\\_2015.pdf](http://www.erru.al/doc/Kodi_i_Procedurave_Administrative_2015.pdf)
- The Code of Civil Procedures of the Republic of Albania, Law No. 8116, date 23.3.1996, last amended in 2012, Official Journal (Kodi I Procedurave Civile te Republikës së Shqipërisë) accessed 14.08.2016, <http://www.qbz.gov.al/Kodepdf/Kodi%20i%20Procedures%20Civile-2012.pdf>
- National Action Plan on LGBTI People in the Republic of Albania, 2016-220, March 2016.

## **POLITICAL PARTIES IN ALBANIA**

- <https://www.ps.al/>
- <https://pd.al/>
- <http://www.lsi.al/>
- <http://prsh.al/>
- <http://pdiu.al/faqa/>
- <https://www.libra.al/>