



HORIZONTAL FACILITY FOR WESTERN BALKANS AND TURKEY

Preventing and combating discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in Albania

As part of the European Union and Council of Europe programmatic framework “Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey” (Horizontal Facility), the Council of Europe will implement the Action “Preventing and combating discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in Albania (SOGI)”, in close partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, the Ministry of Interior/Albanian State Police, the School of Magistrates, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination, the People’s Advocate as well as civil society organisations.

The Action will support the national and local authorities in preventing and combating discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), by addressing the legislation, policy and practice in particular fields. Expert advice will be provided to support the work of the National Implementation and Co-ordination Team (NICT) and the local Gender Equality Focal Points when implementing the National Action Plan on LGBTI People 2016 - 2020. In addition, the Action will focus on enhancing the capacity of law enforcement officials, prosecutors and judges to investigate and prosecute homo/transphobic offences and discrimination on grounds of SOGI. Finally, the Action will seek to increase the level of public awareness on discrimination suffered by LGBTI people in the country. To this end, two surveys will be developed, one focusing on attitudes towards LGBTI people and another addressing the main forms of discrimination suffered by the members of this group.

The Action, which started on 1 October 2016 and will finish on 31 May 2018, has an overall budget of 200,000 Euros.

The objectives of the Action

The **aim** of the Action is to contribute to reducing discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity in Albania, in line with the European standards.

The Action intends to accomplish the following **objectives**:

- ✓ Improve the inter-ministerial co-ordination and the capacity of the authorities to implement the National Action Plan on LGBTI People 2016-2020 both at the national and local level;
- ✓ Improve investigation and prosecution of hate crime towards LGBTI people;
- ✓ Increase public awareness on discrimination suffered by LGBTI people in the country.

Accordingly, the objectives of the Action will be achieved through the following **expected results**:

- ✓ Increased knowledge of the members of the National Implementation and Co-ordination Team (NICT) to implement the National Action Plan on LGBTI People 2016-2020;
- ✓ Increased knowledge of the local Gender Equality Focal Points on SOGI related issues;
- ✓ Enhanced capacity of law enforcement officials, prosecutors and judges to investigate and prosecute hate crime towards LGBTI people;

- ✓ New data published on attitudes towards LGBTI people and the forms of discrimination suffered by the members of this group;
- ✓ Review of the existing data collection system regarding the access to services of LGBTI people.

Background information

On 11 April 2016, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Thorbjørn Jagland, and the European Union's Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, Johannes Hahn, announced a new co-operation initiative of the two organisations aimed at supporting South-East Europe and Turkey in their efforts to comply with European standards. The initiative is called the European Union/Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for Western Balkans and Turkey (Horizontal Facility). It is a three-year programme (May 2016 – May 2019), focusing on three themes: ensuring justice, fighting corruption, economic crime and organised crime; as well as combating discrimination and protecting the rights of vulnerable groups. It has a budget of €25 million, of which €20 million has been provided by the European Union and €5 million by the Council of Europe. Through the Horizontal Facility, the European Union and the Council of Europe will assist beneficiary countries to comply with Council of Europe standards and the European Union *acquis* in the framework of the enlargement process, through a complementary two-fold approach of technical co-operation and the provision of expertise. The Horizontal Facility relies on the Council of Europe's unique working methods, whereby tailor-made technical co-operation activities are based on conclusions and recommendations of the Council of Europe's monitoring bodies, which highlight areas where improvements are needed in legislation and policies of the beneficiaries to comply with the Organisation's treaties and other standards.

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership between 28 democratic European countries. Its aims are peace, prosperity and freedom for its 500 million citizens – in a fairer, safer world. To make things happen, EU countries set up bodies to run the EU and adopt its legislation. The main ones are the European Parliament (representing the people of Europe), the Council of the European Union (representing national governments) and the European Commission (representing the common EU interest).

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