

EUROPEAN COMMISSION AGAINST RACISM AND INTOLERANCE

REPORT ON ALBANIA

(seventh monitoring cycle)



Adopted on 17 March 2026

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All other correspondence concerning this document should be addressed to the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), Council of Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex.
E-mail: ecri@coe.int

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European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)
Council of Europe
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FOREWORD

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), established by the Council of Europe, is an independent human rights monitoring body specialised in questions relating to preventing and combating racism, intolerance and related discrimination (on grounds of “race”, ethnic or national origin, citizenship, skin colour, religion, language, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics). It is composed of independent and impartial members appointed on the basis of their moral authority and recognised expertise in dealing with racism and intolerance.

Within the framework of its statutory activities, ECRI conducts country monitoring work, which consists of analysing the situation in each of the member States of the Council of Europe regarding racism and intolerance and action against these phenomena, and of drawing up relevant proposals and recommendations to address any issues that have been raised during the monitoring process.

ECRI’s country monitoring deals with all member States on an equal footing. The work takes place in cycles of about five years, on average. The first-cycle reports were completed in 1998. Work on seventh-cycle reports started in 2025.

The working methods for the preparation of the reports involve desk research and documentary analyses, a visit to the country concerned, and then a confidential dialogue with the national authorities.

ECRI’s reports are not the result of inquiries or testimonial evidence. They are analyses based on information gathered from a wide variety of sources. Desk research and documentary studies are based on a large number of national and international written sources. The in situ visit provides the opportunity to meet with various stakeholders directly concerned (such as relevant public officials, national or local elected officials, prosecutors and judges, representatives of equality bodies, national human rights institutions and civil society organisations working in areas of relevance to ECRI, relevant professionals and people belonging to groups of concern to ECRI) with a view to gathering detailed information. The process of confidential dialogue with the national authorities allows the latter to provide, if they consider it necessary, comments on the draft report, with a view to correcting any possible factual errors which the text might contain. At the end of the dialogue, the national authorities may request, if they so wish, that their viewpoints be appended to the final ECRI report.

The seventh-cycle country reports focus on two topics common to all member States: (1) preventing and combating hate speech and hate crime, and (2) ensuring equal treatment and inclusion in education and healthcare.

In the framework of the seventh cycle, priority implementation is requested by ECRI for two specific recommendations chosen from those made in the report. These recommendations should be implemented within 18 months after the publication of the report on the country in question. A process of interim follow-up is subsequently conducted by ECRI to review action taken to implement them.

The following report was drawn up by ECRI under its own responsibility. It was prepared following a visit to Albania from 16 to 20 June 2025. Unless otherwise indicated, it covers the situation up to 4 December 2025; as a rule, developments since that date are neither covered in the following analysis nor taken into account in the findings, proposals and recommendations therein.

SUMMARY

Since the adoption of ECRI's sixth report on Albania on 7 April 2020, progress has been made and good practices have been developed in a number of fields.

The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD) has been active in tackling hate speech. For example, between 2021 and 2024, the CPD established that hate speech had been used against LGBTI persons, Roma and Egyptians, and other groups of concern to ECRI.

The Alliance Against Hate Speech, established in 2019, brings together national institutions such as the People's Advocate, the CPD, the Audiovisual Media Authority and the Albanian Media Council. It issued a statement of concern over a surge in hate speech targeting the LGBTI community and urged institutions to address the problem.

ECRI was informed about initial and continuous training on hate speech and hate crime provided by the Security Academy and the School of Magistrates to police officers and other criminal justice actors, which is considered as a good practice. In 2023, for example, 7 155 police officers were trained, inter alia, on hate crime, diversity and non-discrimination. ECRI also learned that the authorities are working on a case management system for prosecution services to record data on hate crime cases more effectively.

The Ministry of Education adopted a National Action Plan Against Violence and Bullying 2025–2028 and, according to the authorities, there are currently 930 psychologists and social workers in schools and 340 security officers, that in two years will increase to 500, dealing with bullying.

The authorities have taken various measures to improve the education levels of Roma and Egyptian children: the pupils can receive free textbooks and free transport to schools, if the distance is more than two kilometres. Limited scholarships are available for upper secondary and tertiary education, as well as for vocational training. The government also introduced special scholarships for pupils at risk of drop-out.

In its previous report, ECRI noted that de facto segregation of Roma and Egyptian pupils was a problem in some schools, including in Korça. In this regard, in 2022, the European Court of Human Rights found a violation of Article 1 of Protocol No.12 to the European Convention on Human Rights in the case of *X and Others v Albania*. Since then, the authorities have taken some measures towards executing the judgment,

especially by coordinating the various stakeholders. ECRI also notes that the “Trifon Prifti” school in Balteza (Fier), in which Roma and non-Roma pupils are learning together, is a positive example for integrated education.

According to the authorities, the provision of care packages for Roma and Egyptian mothers giving birth in hospitals has been successfully implemented, which has led to a significant increase of Roma and Egyptian mothers giving birth in hospitals with positive health outcomes for mothers and children and increased uptake of post-natal services.

A medical protocol for transgender persons has been finalised by a dedicated working group composed of physicians from several fields and civil society organisations, under the guidance of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.

ECRI welcomes these positive developments in Albania. However, despite the progress achieved, some issues give rise to concern.

In its previous report, ECRI noted the lack of a comprehensive data collection system for racist and LGBTI-phobic hate speech incidents and recommended that the authorities establish such a system. Since then, ECRI has not registered any substantial progress in this regard.

Despite some positive developments, additional training, awareness and capacity-building about hate crime is needed among law enforcement and other criminal justice professionals, and the collection of appropriate statistical and other hate crime data is yet to be fully ensured.

The authorities failed to move from general anti-bullying activities to developing and implementing group-specific modules against bullying of members of vulnerable communities, such as Roma and/or LGBTI children and young people, as recommended in ECRI's previous report.

School completion rates and educational outcomes among Roma and Egyptian children are still considerably lower than for the rest of the population. Furthermore, in spite of some positive efforts, the “Naim Frashëri” primary school in Korça seems to have remained segregated, while other schools in the country are also affected by over-representation of Roma and Egyptians pupils.

The medical protocol for transgender persons is still awaiting final approval. Moreover, many LGBTI persons indicate challenges in accessing healthcare, including discriminatory behaviour.

The housing conditions for many Roma reportedly remain difficult: buildings are frequently in a dilapidated state and often have insufficient sanitary installations. In addition, ECRI's previous priority recommendation to find a speedy solution to the housing crises affecting the Roma and Egyptian communities in the Kabash and Guri i Kuq areas of the Pogradec municipality has still not been fully implemented.

Many Roma and Egyptians are said to face problems with the newly rolled-out electronic access system for public services in Albania ("E-Albania"). This digital platform reportedly poses problems for communities characterised by high levels of illiteracy and poverty and low levels of digital usage.

Jehovah's Witnesses of Albania (JWA), registered as a non-profit association, applied in 2018 to obtain the status of "religious community", which normally grants certain privileges, including tax exemptions. The government has still not replied to this request. Given the absence of criteria for obtaining this status, there is a risk of leading to differential treatment without a reasonable justification.

In this report, ECRI requests that the authorities take action in a number of areas and makes a series of recommendations, including the following.

ECRI recommends, as a matter of priority, that the authorities equip police and prosecution services with the necessary human, technical and financial resources to effectively investigate and prosecute racist and LGBTI-phobic hate crimes, including by intensifying capacity-building and training activities, in close collaboration with the Security Academy and the School of Magistrates, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the Council of Europe, as appropriate.*

The authorities should also set up a robust country-wide mechanism to monitor, prevent and counter racist and anti-LGBTI incidents in schools.

ECRI recommends, as a matter of priority, that the authorities take measures to increase pre-school and school enrolment and attendance of Roma and Egyptian children, reduce drop-out rates and facilitate their secondary school completion, inter alia by substantially increasing

the number of Roma and Egyptian education mediators and conducting awareness campaigns with Roma and Egyptian families and schools.*

ECRI recommends that the authorities end all forms of de facto segregation of Roma and Egyptian children in schools as soon as possible.

The authorities should provide healthcare staff with adequate training and guidance to deal with issues relevant to LGBTI persons appropriately and ensure their access to healthcare without discrimination. Moreover, a mechanism to receive and investigate complaints of racist and LGBTI-phobic discrimination by healthcare professionals should be set up.

The authorities should, without any further delay, secure a solution for the long-standing housing problems affecting the Roma and Egyptian communities in the Kabash and Guri i Kuq areas of the Pogradec municipality.

ECRI recommends that the authorities monitor the situation regarding problems for Roma and Egyptians to access the E-Albania public services platform with the aim of ensuring that the necessary assistance is provided.

ECRI recommends that the authorities consider as soon as possible the request of Jehovah's Witnesses for recognition as a "religious community", with a view to avoiding any unjustified differential treatment. More generally, criteria for a clear and transparent process of how to grant this status should be formulated.

* This recommendation, which will be subject to a process of interim follow-up by ECRI, should be implemented within 18 months after the publication of this report.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. PREVENTING AND COMBATING HATE SPEECH AND HATE CRIME¹

Action against racist and anti-LGBTI hate speech

1. The Law on Protection from Discrimination,² as amended in October 2020, reinforces the role of the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination (CPD),³ including in addressing hate speech complaints, and contains a definition of hate speech.⁴ In the opinion of ECRI, these are positive developments.
2. ECRI also notes that the Criminal Code addresses criminal acts related to hate speech in several provisions.⁵ However, during the 2025 visit to Albania, some interlocutors met by the ECRI delegation considered that the civil and administrative legal framework was inadequate to deal with hate speech that falls short of criminal thresholds, and highlighted that hate speech, including online, remains an issue of concern.⁶
3. ECRI recommends that the authorities set up an inter-ministerial working group tasked with reviewing the civil, administrative and criminal legal framework on hate speech, in the light of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No.15 on combating hate speech and Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on combating hate speech, and prepare and bring to Parliament any appropriate amendments with a view to ensuring in particular that adequate legislation is in place to prevent and combat various forms of racist and LGBTI-phobic hate speech, both offline and online, in a manner that is proportionate to the level of severity of its expression.
4. ECRI received reports according to which persons belonging to the Serb, Greek and Roma communities, foreign nationals, in particular migrants, are amongst the most common targets of racist hate speech in Albania. Furthermore, xenophobic, anti-migrant forms of hate speech, particularly on social media platforms, were said to be on the rise after the Albanian and Italian governments signed an agreement in November 2023 to establish, in Albania, reception centres for migrants whose status is processed by the Italian authorities. One of the main anti-migrant narratives was reportedly about African migrants being presented as a threat to the local population or as potentially "replacing" the local population.⁷
5. As regards the existing data, the CPD reviewed a total of seven hate speech cases in 2021, six in 2022, 13 in 2023 and 12 in 2024, mainly on the grounds of sexual orientation, ethnic/national background and religion. Media monitoring also shows that ethnicity and sexual orientation are the most prevalent characteristics on which

¹ As regards definitions of hate speech and hate crime used by ECRI, see ECRI's [glossary](#).

² [Law on Protection from Discrimination](#) (English translation), No. 10 221, 4 February 2010, as amended in 2020 by Law No. 124/2020.

³ There are two equality bodies in Albania relevant to the work of ECRI, namely the People's Advocate (Ombudsman) and the CPD. See also ECRI sixth-cycle report on Albania (ECRI 2020): §§ 1-6.

⁴ "Hate speech" is defined in Albanian law as any form of public expression, through any means, of the promotion, incitement of denigration, hatred or vilification, any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatisation or threat against a person or group of persons, as well as any justification of all forms of expression on the basis of a non-exhaustive list of grounds set forth in Article 1 of this law, i.e. race, ethnicity, colour, language, citizenship, political, religious or philosophical beliefs, economic, education or social situation, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, sex characteristics, living with HIV/AIDS, pregnancy, parentage belonging, parental responsibility, age, family or marital condition, civil status, residence, health status, genetic predispositions, appearance, disability, affiliation with a particular group or any other ground.

⁵ See also Council of Europe / Bogdani, M. et al., (2021), [Beyond Definitions. A call for action against hate speech in Albania](#) - A comprehensive study: 91.

⁶ See also EU, European Commission, (2024), [Albania 2024 Report](#): 39.

⁷ Reporting Diversity Network / Anđušić, A. (2024), [MEDIA MONITORING REPORT ON HATE SPEECH IN THE WESTERN BALKANS - Reporting Diversity Network](#): 9.

hate speech is based.⁸ ECRI was informed by the CDP that, over the past five years, there was an increase in claims for compensation, direct references to courts, and participations in proceedings challenging administrative acts. At the same time, the attention of ECRI was drawn to the still low number of reported hate speech incidents.⁹ For example, a prevailing “don’t ask, don’t tell” attitude reportedly discourages potential LGBTI victims of hate speech to come forward and they are also said to frequently report reluctance by police officers to acknowledge hate elements.¹⁰

6. ECRI’s previous report pointed to the lack of a comprehensive data collection system for racist and LGBTI-phobic hate speech incidents.¹¹ During the 2025 visit to Albania, the ECRI delegation did not register any substantial progress in this regard. ECRI therefore strongly encourages the authorities to address this outstanding gap.
7. On several occasions between 2021 and 2024, the CPD found that hate speech was used by public figures, such as politicians and religious leaders, notably against LGBTI persons and Roma and Egyptians.¹² In 2024, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) also expressed concern about reports on the use of racist hate speech by politicians in public debates, in particular against Roma and Egyptians, and about the low number of cases related to racist hate speech that were formally reported and investigated.¹³
8. ECRI notes with concern that, over the last five years, there appeared to be an increase in hate speech against LGBTI persons, particularly in the context of specific occasions or events. By way of example, on 19 May 2024, two lesbian women held a symbolic wedding ceremony (in the absence of legal recognition of same-sex partnership or marriage in Albania), on the terrace of the Tirana Municipality.¹⁴ This apparently triggered a wave of hate speech led by organisations promoting so-called family and pro-life values and some religious associations.¹⁵
9. Similarly, on several occasions in 2023 and 2024, a well-known LGBTI activist, who appeared on national television and advocated for two mothers to be both registered as parents of their twins,¹⁶ has been targeted by threats and hate speech, especially on social media.¹⁷ ECRI also notes with concern an increase in

⁸ Reporting Diversity Network / Sulçe Kolgeci, V., Spanca, F., (2023), [MEDIA MONITORING REPORT ON HATE SPEECH IN ALBANIA - Reporting Diversity Network](#): 19; Reporting Diversity Network / Hysa, D., Lani, K., (2022), [MEDIA MONITORING REPORT ON HATE SPEECH IN ALBANIA - Reporting Diversity Network](#): 5. Monthly highlights can be retrieved from [Albania Archives - Reporting Diversity Network](#)

⁹ UN, CCPR, (2025), [Concluding observations](#): § 11; UN, OHCHR, (12 March 2025), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/meeting-summaries/2025/03/experts-human-rights-committee-welcome-albanias-pledge-combat-corruption>).

¹⁰ UN, OHCHR, (2025), [A/HRC/59/43/Add.1: Visit to Albania - Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity](#): § 66.

¹¹ ECRI 2020: §§ 25-26.

¹² See CPD’s Annual Reports by year: [Raporte Vjetore – KMD](#).

¹³ UN, CERD, (23 May 2024), Concluding observations on the combined thirteenth and fourteenth periodic reports of Albania: §§ 12-13, available [here](#).

¹⁴ Reuters, (3 June 2024), [In Albania, two women take on a nation with a rooftop wedding](#).

¹⁵ ILGA-Europe, (2025), [Annual Review 2025 | ILGA-Europe](#) - Albania; Aleanca LGBT, (June 2024), [Urgent developments in Albania and a call for action! - Aleanca LGBT](#).

¹⁶ Reuters, (15 May 2023), [Albanian lesbian couple vow 'fight to the end' for parental rights](#), Reuters; Balkan Insight, (10 June 2021), [Albania Activists Back Lesbian Couple's Battle to Register Twins](#), Balkan Insight.

¹⁷ Civil Rights Defenders, (17 June 2021), [Accountability for Hate Speech Against LGBTI+ Community and HRDs in Albania](#), Civil Rights Defenders; Balkan Insight, (28 April 2022), [Albania's Pioneering LGBT Activist: 'We Should Not Be Second-Class Citizens'](#) | Balkan Insight.

the public discourse of rhetorics falsely portraying LGBTI people as threatening family values or children.¹⁸

10. In its Decision No. 23, dated 19 January 2024, the CPD found that there was hate speech against Jehovah's Witnesses in a TV show. The Commissioner recommended that the person responsible should make a public statement to distance himself from the use of hate speech and that the TV channel in question should take immediate measures to eliminate the discriminatory expressions in the recordings of the show. This approach was also taken by the CPD in a 2022 case regarding the use of hate speech against the Roma national minority by a public figure in a programme broadcast on one of the national television channels. ECRI considers these responses as **good practice** in terms of holding both the alleged perpetrators and platforms concerned accountable for hate speech. However, during the 2025 visit to Albania, the ECRI delegation also learned that Jehovah's Witnesses had been subject to various hate speech incidents. At least 84 such incidents were recorded by the association of Jehovah's Witnesses of Albania (JWA), especially after media reports emerged in 2020 about a falsely alleged involvement of Jehovah's Witnesses in a double suicide,¹⁹ for which JWA filed both criminal and civil defamation lawsuits.²⁰
11. ECRI recommends that the authorities step up their efforts to encourage public figures, such as high-level officials, politicians and religious, economic and community leaders, to refrain from using racist and LGBTI-phobic hate speech, as well as to take a prompt, firm and public stance against the use of such speech by others, including by reacting promptly with strong counter-speech and alternative speech, and to express solidarity with those targeted by hate speech.
12. The Alliance Against Hate Speech, established in 2019 and bringing together national institutions such as the People's Advocate, the CPD, the Audiovisual Media Authority (AMA) and the Albanian Media Council,²¹ issued a statement expressing concern over the surge in hate speech targeting the LGBTI community, noting that social platforms and the media were rife with offensive language, derogatory comparisons and threats, and urging responsible institutions to address hate speech, especially when propagated by public figures or those in positions of power.²² ECRI considers such an initiative as a **good practice**.
13. Law No. 97/2013 "On Audiovisual Media in the Republic of Albania", as amended, defines the obligations not to broadcast programmes containing content that incites hatred based on race, gender, religion, ethnicity, nationality, or any other form of discrimination. The 2023 Broadcasting Code, adopted by AMA, also includes provisions against hate speech. The Council of Complaints is the structure appointed by AMA to supervise the implementation of the Broadcasting Code and, during the 2021-2023 period, it dealt with seven complaints related to hate speech. ECRI encourages the authorities, in close co-operation with AMA and relevant civil society organisations, to increase digital and media literacy for different segments of society, particularly those who are mainly targeted by hate speech, and to support training on preventing and combating hate speech for journalists, editors and other media professionals, without encroaching on the independence of the media.

¹⁸ UN, OHCHR, (2025), [A/HRC/59/43/Add.1: Visit to Albania - Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity \(Advance edited version\)](#): 19.

¹⁹ Judicial District Court of Tirana, Decision No. 907 Master Reg., S.P., No. 5073/2020 Criminal Proceedings, 14 May 2021.

²⁰ European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses, (2024), Contribution from the European Association of Jehovah's Witnesses for the Universal Periodic Review Fourth Cycle – Albania (2024): § 14, available [here](#).

²¹ UN, CCPR, (2023), [State party report under LolPR](#): § 174; Council of Europe Office in Tirana, (17 January 2020), ["No Hate Alliance": a joint approach against discrimination and hate-speech](#).

²² No Hate Alliance, (28 May 2024), [Aleanca Kundër Gjuhës së Urrejtjes dënon gjuhën homofobike ndaj komunitetit LGBTI+](#).

14. ECRI notes that, before the parliamentary elections of 11 May 2025, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) held a training for the Central Election Commission (CEC) as regards methods to monitor inter alia hate speech.²³ It also notes that most political parties signed a voluntary Code of Conduct on Digital Campaigns prior to the electoral campaign.²⁴ These are positive developments. However, no authority was designated to monitor campaigning on social networks whereas several candidates reportedly spread harmful content online during the 2025 campaign.²⁵ ECRI invites the authorities to further support effective monitoring and self-regulation of hate speech in the context of electoral campaigns, with a particular emphasis being placed on accountability, and to encourage political parties to sign up the Charter of European political parties for a non-racist and inclusive society as endorsed by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in its Resolution 2443 (2022).²⁶

Action against racist and anti-LGBTI hate crime

15. In 2023, the Albanian authorities reported two hate crime incidents recorded by the police to the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). However, there is no indication of specific bias motivation or other hate elements, nor hate crime data, recorded by prosecution services and the judiciary. Similarly, while the police use a case management system aimed at recording all statistical data and information on criminal offences, there is no specific hate crime flagging. Hate crimes are identified based on the Criminal Code provisions, along with other types of crimes, but the application of the aggravating circumstance provision in Article 50 (j) of the Code is not recorded.²⁷ Therefore, ODIHR observed that Albania's hate crime recording and statistics do not sufficiently distinguish hate crimes from other criminal offences.²⁸
16. According to reports made available to ECRI, the LGBTI population is at risk, in particular transgender persons and LGBTI activists.²⁹ Out of 17 transgender persons in Albania who responded to a survey between August 2023 and April 2024, 75% of those asserting that they have experienced physical and/or sexual violence said that they have not reported the incident to law enforcement agencies.³⁰ In a 2024 survey involving 195 self-identified LGBTI individuals, 88% reported that they do not trust law enforcement agencies, and data shows that only 1 in 11 serious incidents of violence or discrimination is formally reported.³¹ In this connection, ECRI received more detailed reports about an homophobic assault against a journalist in August 2023 and about the case of a lesbian couple from Shkoder who was allegedly abducted, sexually assaulted and subjected to physical and verbal abuse, and was subsequently granted asylum in the UK in April 2025 due to a well-founded fear of persecution in Albania.³²

²³ International Election Observation Mission, (12 May 2025), Albania Parliamentary Elections of 11 May 2025, [Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions](#).

²⁴ IDEA, (25 March 2025), [Albanian parties adopt code of conduct on digital campaigns](#).

²⁵ International Election Observation Mission (12 May 2025).

²⁶ Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, (2022), [Charter of European political parties for a non-racist and inclusive society](#).

²⁷ OSCE/ODIHR, Hate Crime Report: [National frameworks to address hate crime in Albania | HCRW](#).

²⁸ OSCE/ODIHR, Hate Crime Report: [Albania | HCRW](#).

²⁹ UN, OHCHR, (2025), [A/HRC/59/43/Add.1: Visit to Albania - Report of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity \(Advance edited version\) | OHCHR](#): § 64.

³⁰ Ylberofilia / J. Sengla, (2025), [Needs Assessment of Trans People in Albania 2023-2024](#): Challenges Faced by the Transgender Community in Accessing Public Services, Housing, and Employment: 13.

³¹ Aleanca LGBT / D. Nini, (2025), [Albania's LGBTI+ Communities in Focus, Insights from the 2024 Survey and Trends Since 2020](#): 57.

³² In the latter case, see: The Times, (14 April 2025), [Lesbian couple can stay in UK as Albania is 'too homophobic'](#).

17. As regards action aimed at developing the capacities of police and prosecution services and the judiciary, ECRI was informed about initial and continuous training on hate speech and hate crime being provided by the Security Academy and the School of Magistrates to police officers and other criminal justice actors. For example, in 2023, 7 155 police officers from all local Police Directorates and Border and Migration Directorates were trained on hate crime, diversity and non-discrimination, human rights, community policing, crime prevention and communication skills. Further, approximately 500 students at the Security Academy received the “Handbook Against Hate Crimes and the Rights of the LGBTI Community”.³³ Similarly, officially-approved guidelines for police and prosecutors on hate crime, such as the manual “Policing Hate Crime against LGBTI persons: Training for a Professional Police Response”,³⁴ provide a framework for investigating and prosecuting hate crimes.³⁵ In the view of ECRI, such initiatives can be considered as **good practice**.
18. ECRI was also informed that the Prosecutor General adopted general instruction No. 17, dated 23 December 2020, aimed at providing guidance on how to identify bias motives in the investigation of criminal offences involving hate elements and collect evidence. In addition, during the 2025 visit to Albania, the ECRI delegation learned that the authorities were working on a case management system for prosecution services to record hate crime data more effectively. This is planned to be completed by 2028. ECRI welcomes this initiative and encourages the authorities to ensure its completion within the agreed timeframe.
19. Despite these positive developments, it emerged during the 2025 visit to Albania that additional training, awareness and capacity-building about hate crime were needed among police officers and prosecutors and that data collection and analysis on hate crime are yet to be improved.³⁶
20. ECRI recommends, as a matter of priority, that the authorities equip police and prosecution services with the necessary human, technical and financial resources to effectively investigate and prosecute racist and LGBTI-phobic hate crimes, including by intensifying capacity-building and training activities, in close collaboration with the Security Academy and the School of Magistrates, the OSCE and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Council of Europe, as appropriate.
21. It appeared during the visit to Albania that hate crime victim support services, including legal aid, psychological and material assistance, are mostly provided by civil society organisations. There is also no formal system in place for referring hate crime victims to the relevant organisations.³⁷ During the visit, the ECRI delegation learned that the “Streha Center”³⁸ is the only dedicated shelter for LGBTI persons who are victims of hate crime or at risk in the country. It is funded for 30% of its budget by the authorities. In the view of ECRI, it should be further supported.
22. ECRI recommends that the authorities provide victims of hate crime with access to targeted, specialised support, assistance and protection, in the light of the Council of Europe’s Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)4 on combating hate crime. These services should be made available throughout the

³³ OSCE/ODIHR, Hate Crime Report: [National frameworks to address hate crime in Albania | HCRW](#)

³⁴ Council of Europe, (9 April 2021), [Manual on Policing Hate Crime against LGBTI persons in Albania - Inclusion and anti-discrimination](#).

³⁵ Council of Europe / Hysi, V., (2023), Thematic analysis of the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity, [HATE CRIMES AND OTHER HATE-MOTIVATED INCIDENTS AGAINST LGBTI PERSONS IN ALBANIA, NATIONAL REPORT](#).

³⁶ EU, European Commission, (2024), [Albania 2024 Report](#): 39.

³⁷ OSCE/ODIHR, Hate Crime Report: [National frameworks to address hate crime in Albania | HCRW](#)

³⁸ Streha Center website, [Shelter, Care and Warmth for Hundred of Rainbow Hearts](#).

country, in close cooperation with relevant local authorities and civil society organisations.

II. ENSURING EQUAL TREATMENT AND INCLUSION IN EDUCATION AND HEALTHCARE

A. Equal treatment and inclusion in the area of education

23. Bullying and discrimination in educational institutions, especially against Roma and LGBTI children and youth, remain an issue of concern.³⁹ The ECRI delegation learned during the 2025 visit to Albania that the Ministry of Education adopted a National Action Plan Against Violence and Bullying 2025–2028 and that there are currently 941 psychologists and social workers in schools and 340 security officers, that in two years will increase to 500, dealing with bullying. Therefore, regular data collection and reporting about violence and bullying in schools should already be carried out. However, ECRI did not receive any specific data or information on the matter, except a general figure of 2 028 cases of violence and bullying in pre-university educational institutions for the academic year 2022-2023.
24. In its previous report on Albania, ECRI recommended that the authorities move from general anti-bullying activities to developing and implementing group-specific modules against bullying of members of vulnerable communities, such as Roma and/or LGBTI children and young people; as well as expanding these activities across the country, including into rural areas.⁴⁰ Unfortunately, ECRI can only record limited advancements in this regard. The situation appears to have even worsened with reference to LGBTI persons. For example, in a 2024 survey involving 195 LGBTI individuals,⁴¹ an overwhelming 73% of respondents described schools as “unsafe” for marginalised groups, including LGBTI students, due to bullying, harassment and exclusion.⁴²
25. ECRI recommends that the authorities, in addition to general anti-bullying activities, develop and implement group-specific modules against the bullying of children deemed vulnerable on the grounds of their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics. In this context, a robust country-wide mechanism to monitor, prevent and counter racist and anti-LGBTI incidents in schools should be set up, including through an appropriate data collection system.

*Roma and Egyptians*⁴³

26. Education is a priority area in the National Action Plan for Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025 (NAP).⁴⁴ However, there are challenges in implementing it. In 2023, it was noted that the NAP suffered from a funding gap of over 2.5 million EUR, as

³⁹ CRCA/ECPAT, (2024), [Collective Call for Safer Schools: Zero Tolerance for Bullying and Violence Against Children in Albania! \(Public Statement\)](#); UN, Universal Periodic Review, (2024), Albania, Fourth cycle, [Summary of stakeholders' information](#): 36.

⁴⁰ ECRI 2020: § 11.

⁴¹ Alenca LGBT / D. Nini, (2025), [Albania's LGBTI+ Communities in Focus, Insights from the 2024 Survey and Trends Since 2020](#): 52.

⁴² Among respondents who are currently in school or have recently attended one, 25% reported having difficulty accessing or attending secondary or vocational school in the last year due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, or sex characteristics. Furthermore, only 15% of those who experienced harassment or discrimination at school in the past year said they reported the incident to school staff. A vast majority (85%) did not file any complaints due to fear of being discriminated against by school staff and fear that confidentiality would not be respected.

⁴³ According to the 2023 population census, there were 9 813 Roma (5 000 male and 4 813 female persons) and 12 375 Egyptians (6 304 male and 6 071 female persons) residing in Albania. Out of a total of 2 402 113 inhabitants, 22 188 Roma and Egyptians amount to about 0.92% of the overall population (see: Instituti i Statistikave (INSTAT), (2024), Albanian Population and Housing Census 2023: 75, table 14).

⁴⁴ Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP), (2021), National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania, 2021-2025. The NAP was prepared in coordination with other ministries, municipalities, independent institutions, international organisations, experts and Roma and Egyptian NGOs.

well as from a lack of adequate data⁴⁵ and insufficient institutional implementation capacity.⁴⁶ According to the baseline data used for the NAP, the pre-school enrolment rate for Roma and Egyptians stood at only 35% compared to a level of 67% among non-Roma/Egyptian children. For compulsory primary and lower secondary education (7-15 years), the gap was 66% compared to 96% among non-Roma/Egyptian children.⁴⁷ Within this age-range, it appears that the primary school enrolment rate for Roma and Egyptian children was considerably higher than the one for secondary schooling. In the baseline data, the completion gap was particularly stark among 18–21-year-old persons, of which only 44% of the Roma and Egyptians had finished their compulsory education, compared to 98% among non-Roma/Egyptians. Completion of tertiary education among Roma and Egyptians was rare, with a rate of only 1% compared to 27% among non-Roma/Egyptians.⁴⁸

27. Interlocutors met during the 2025 visit to Albania provided information to ECRI's delegation indicating that as of 2023, about a third of Roma aged 15 years or older had never attended school. Among Egyptians that level is around 10% and among ethnic Albanians below 3%. The same information indicates that around a quarter of Roma between 15 and 24 years of age are illiterate (5% among Egyptians) and that, among Roma aged 25-49 years, this reaches about one third (and 10% for Egyptians). Concerning attendance of compulsory school education, the information received indicates that even two years after the adoption of the NAP, the gap remained, especially for Roma children: only around two thirds of Roma children attend school, compared with over four fifths of Egyptian children and nearly all ethnic Albanian children.⁴⁹
28. Furthermore, many interlocutors mentioned that the education attainment gap between members of these two communities and the general population is growing at the higher levels of schooling. School drop-out, especially in secondary education, remains a widespread problem among Roma and Egyptians. Contributing factors include family migration and the absorption into the informal labour market, notably among teenagers,⁵⁰ but also early marriages of girls.⁵¹
29. The authorities have taken various measures to address these issues. In particular, Roma and Egyptian pupils can receive free textbooks⁵² and free transport to schools, if the distance is more than two kilometres.⁵³ Limited scholarships are available for upper secondary and tertiary education, as well as for vocational training. The government also introduced special scholarships for pupils at risk of drop-out.⁵⁴ Persons who have not successfully completed compulsory education can enrol in so-called "second chance" classes.⁵⁵ However, according to Roma

⁴⁵ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM), (2023), Fifth Opinion on Albania: §§ 64 and 72.

⁴⁶ EU, European Commission, (2024), Commission Staff Working Document - Albania 2024 Report, SWD(2024) 690 final: 41.

⁴⁷ MoHSP 2021: 17, 31; see also EU, European Commission (Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers), (2019), Report on the implementation of national Roma integration strategies – 2019. Annex 2, Country summaries on the enlargement regions: 16-17; and UNDP/World Bank, (2018), Factsheet Albania Roma: 1-2.

⁴⁸ MoHSP 2021: 17, 31; EU, European Commission (DG Justice and Consumers) 2019: 16-17; and UNDP/World Bank 2018: 1-2.

⁴⁹ As regards attendance figures for the 2024/25 school year, the authorities did not provide ECRI with relevant data. However, the authorities informed ECRI that with regard to pupils' enrollment, attendance, and completion, particularly among Roma and Egyptian children, a nationwide Early Warning System has been established and is being progressively rolled out to more schools. This system aims to identify pupils at risk of dropping out.

⁵⁰ EU, European Commission (DG Justice and Consumers) 2019: 17.

⁵¹ MoHSP 2021: 25-26.

⁵² MoHSP 2021: 31; see also Council of Ministers, (17 June 2020), Decision No. 486.

⁵³ FCNM 2023: 27, § 138. Council of Ministers, (1 March 2023), Decision No.119.

⁵⁴ Council of Ministers, (10 October 2019), Decision No. 666.

⁵⁵ EU, European Commission (DG Justice and Consumers) 2019: 17.

civil society organisations, this approach is not widely implemented. Schools often show little interest because teachers are expected to provide such classes in addition to their regular work.⁵⁶

30. The Covid-19 pandemic impacted very negatively on many Roma and Egyptian pupils, as the lack of electricity, hardware and internet access posed a problem for them to follow lessons online.⁵⁷ Civil society organisations indicated to ECRI that this is still an outstanding issue, as the use of technology becomes increasingly important in schools. ECRI encourages the authorities to make sustained efforts to provide IT-equipment and internet access to Roma and Egyptian pupils in situations of vulnerability and notes that education mediators can also play a crucial role in such situations.
31. ECRI received information about school mediators having been introduced in 2023. These mediators facilitate the communication and cooperation between Roma and Egyptian pupils, families and communities on the one hand, and schools on the other hand, thereby enhancing pupils' participation in the learning process. According to the authorities, the number of mediators has increased annually and for the 2025–2026 school year, 36 mediators have been employed, of whom 20 are Roma and 16 are Egyptian. The authorities pointed out that these are permanent posts, which is positive. However, while 36 mediators is promising, it is still too few given the scale of the problem.
32. ECRI recommends, as a matter of priority, that the authorities take measures to increase pre-school and school enrolment and attendance of Roma and Egyptian children, reduce drop-out rates and facilitate their secondary school completion, inter alia by substantially increasing the number of Roma and Egyptian education mediators and conducting awareness campaigns with Roma and Egyptian families and schools.
33. In its previous report, ECRI noted that de facto segregation was a problem in some schools, including in Korça.⁵⁸ This situation was not created intentionally, but is the result of a traditionally very high concentration of Roma and Egyptians in particular neighbourhoods. In the meantime, in 2022, the European Court of Human Rights found a violation of Article 1 of Protocol No.12 to the European Convention on Human Rights in the case of *X and Others v Albania*.⁵⁹ The applicants had complained about the authorities' failure to implement swift and comprehensive desegregation measures that had been recommended by the CPD to address the over-representation of Roma and Egyptian pupils in the "Naim Frashëri" primary school in Korça.⁶⁰ The execution of the Court's judgment is under enhanced supervision by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which noted in December 2024 that the authorities had taken some measures towards executing the judgment, especially by coordinating the various stakeholders, but also expressed concern because the school remained segregated, while other schools in the country are also affected by over-representation of Roma and Egyptians.⁶¹ The information ECRI's delegation received from various interlocutors met during the 2025 visit indicates that these problems persist. At the same time, ECRI notes positive examples at local level that could be built on. By way of illustration, the delegation visited the "Trifon Prifti" school in Balteza (Fier) in which

⁵⁶ European Roma Rights Centre, (21 October 2024), Rule 9 Submission with regard to the execution of: *X and Others v. Albania*: 4, § 14.

⁵⁷ FCNM 2023: 27, § 137.

⁵⁸ ECRI 2020: §§ 46-47; the 2017 UNDP-World Bank Regional Roma survey had also shown 19% of Roma and Egyptian pupils attending segregated schools.

⁵⁹ ECtHR, (31 August 2022), *X and Others v Albania*, (applications no. 73548/17 and 45521/19), judgment.

⁶⁰ Decision of the Commissioner of 22 September 2015; see *X and Others v Albania*, § 6.

⁶¹ Council of Europe, Department for the Execution of ECtHR Judgments (2024): [CM/Del/Dec\(2024\)1514/H46-2](#); see also FCNM 2023: 26, § 129.

Roma and non-Roma pupils are learning together.⁶² The school offers afternoon homework support for Roma pupils and in recent years eight former Roma pupils from this school have graduated from university.

34. ECRI recommends that the authorities take further, resolute, action to end all forms of de facto segregation of Roma and Egyptian children in schools as soon as possible, in line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and other relevant Council of Europe standards.

LGBTI persons

35. The National Action Plan (NAP) for LGBTI people 2021-2027, in its Specific Objective I.2, focuses on reducing inequalities and discrimination against LGBTI people in education, with dedicated measures that include capacity-building of professionals in the pre-university education system.⁶³ However, as underlined by a number of interlocutors to the ECRI delegation during the 2025 visit, the lack of resources substantially hinders its implementation.⁶⁴ ECRI was informed that, despite efforts to train educational staff within the framework of the NAP for LGBTI people, teachers and school staff remain uninformed about LGBTI issues and, in some cases, even openly display discriminatory views.⁶⁵ ECRI strongly encourages the authorities to develop suitable training for educators, particularly during their professional education, and for school and university teachers and administrators, to ensure that they have sufficient knowledge and competence to address issues of concern to LGBTI students in and through education, while at the same time promoting equality, diversity, and inclusion.
36. Pre-university education institutions plan and implement regular extracurricular activities during the school year focusing on various human-rights-related themes, and this process has been monitored by the People's Advocate during visits carried out in schools.⁶⁶ However, it appears to ECRI that LGBTI equality and LGBTI-related issues are not included in such extracurricular activities.
37. ECRI was informed that health and sexuality education is integrated in the subjects of biology, civic education, and physical education and sports, with the aim for comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) to reach 100% national implementation coverage by 2026. However, references to LGBTI-specific content are still missing. A 2020 report noted that the officially approved textbooks do not cover LGBTI equality issues and that the education provided does not include any information on sexual health, and the specific needs of LGBTI individuals, which leads to a pronounced lack of specialised sexual and reproductive health education of LGBTI persons.⁶⁷ Therefore, Albania's current curricula remain largely silent or even negative toward LGBTI-related topics and the significant dearth of information concerning the sexual and reproductive health of LGBTI individuals is a key concern.⁶⁸
38. ECRI recommends that the authorities ensure that educational curricula, including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), address LGBTI equality issues in a

⁶² The ECRI delegation also visited the primary school in Berat Moravë and gained a positive impression of the school's efforts regarding the education of Roma pupils.

⁶³ The National Action Plan for LGBTI people 2021-2027 is available [here](#).

⁶⁴ See also, in this connection, the 2021 [Evaluation report](#) of the previous action plan, the National Action Plan for LGBTI People in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020: 7.

⁶⁵ Aleanca LGBT / D. Nini, (2025), [Albania's LGBTI+ Communities in Focus. Insights from the 2024 Survey and Trends Since 2020](#): 53.

⁶⁶ See Article 17 of Instruction No. 13, dated 10.07.2024 "For the 2024-2025 school year in the pre-university education system", available [here](#).

⁶⁷ Aleanca LGBT / D. Nini, (2020), [SDGs implementation in the context of Albania. An LGBTI+ perspective](#): 12.

⁶⁸ Aleanca LGBT, (2024), [Albania under UPR: Aleanca LGBTI+ and ILGA World's joint submission](#) - [Aleanca LGBT](#): 33; UN, Universal Periodic Review, (2024), Albania, Fourth cycle, [Summary of stakeholders' information](#): 57.

manner which is sensitive, age-appropriate, easy to understand and evidence-based, placing particular emphasis on equality, diversity, and inclusion, in the light of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 17 on preventing and combating intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI persons.

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary or temporary protection

39. Various interlocutors confirmed to the ECRI delegation during the visit that migrant children, including refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary or temporary protection, have full access to regular schooling, following their first year during which they take part in an introduction and familiarisation period. During this initial year, the focus is on them learning the Albanian language through peer socialisation in schools or pre-school establishments. Specific Albanian language classes for children are not routinely offered,⁶⁹ partially also due to the low numbers of such children, who furthermore are dispersed across different schools in various locations. ECRI's interlocutors met during the visit confirmed, however, that despite the absence of specific language classes, children appear not to have language-related problems that create a barrier to their inclusion in education as it has been observed that they generally pick up the Albanian language quickly through interaction with their peers. Nevertheless, as such socialisation and the ability to learn a language in this informal fashion may vary substantially from one child to another, ECRI encourages the authorities to monitor this issue and remain aware of potential needs for additional language-learning support that may arise among certain children, including those with special educational or psychological needs.

B. Equal treatment and inclusion in the area of healthcare

40. Since ECRI's 2020 report on Albania, a number of strategic acts were approved, including the National Health Strategy 2021-2030, the Strategy of the Development of Primary Health Care Services in Albania 2020-2025, the National Hospital Plan 2023-2030, the Programme for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases 2021-2030 in Albania, the Health Promotion Action Plan 2022-2030 and the Mental Health Action Plan 2023-2026.⁷⁰ Despite the adoption of these general policy documents, it is unclear how the specific needs of groups of concern to ECRI are addressed in the field of healthcare. A recent study on access to healthcare services among vulnerable groups in Albania highlighted discrimination among the factors that erode trust in health care providers.⁷¹ A 2024 EU report on Albania also states that Roma and Egyptian women and LGBTI individuals face limited access to primary healthcare and to sexual and reproductive healthcare services.⁷²

Roma and Egyptians

41. For many Roma and Egyptians, access to healthcare is still accompanied by several challenges, including the inability to pay for certain services and medications due to poverty, physical distance from healthcare centres and transport costs, lack of information and awareness, frequent changes of residence, and insufficient cultural sensitivity among healthcare staff.⁷³ Furthermore, focus group discussions carried out in 2019/2020 among 1 553 primary healthcare users

⁶⁹ The authorities informed ECRI that based on Guideline No. 10 of 17 May 2021 "On the Registration and Support of Children of Persons in Migration/Asylum Situations, Refugees, Unaccompanied Foreign Minors, Returning Migrant Children, Children from Conflict Zones, and Child Victims of Trafficking in the Republic of Albania" the Ministry of Education can provide some support to pupils with regard to Albanian language instruction.

⁷⁰ UN, Universal Periodic Review, (2024), Albania, Fourth cycle, [National report](#): §§ 123-124.

⁷¹ Ismaili, E., Rama, R., Dragoti, E., (2024), [Access to healthcare services among vulnerable groups in Albania: unveiling barriers and proposing solutions](#) (in: Kontakt / Journal of nursing and social sciences related to health and illness, 26(4): 369-375): 369.

⁷² EU, European Commission, (2024), [Albania 2024 Report](#): 39.

⁷³ Ministry of Health and Social Protection (MoHSP), (2021), National Action Plan for equality, inclusion and participation of Roma and Egyptians in the Republic of Albania, 2021-2025: 27; Health for all project (HAP), (2020), Vulnerability in PHC in Albania: Considerations and recommendations: 1-2; UNDP, (2017), Regional Roma Survey: 52; and UNDP/World Bank, (2018), Factsheet Albania Roma: 3-4; cf. ECRI 2020: § 62.

as part of the *Health for all* project revealed that a lack of trust in healthcare providers also poses an obstacle for Roma and Egyptians.⁷⁴ The National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025 (NAP) acknowledges these barriers to accessing healthcare on an equal basis.⁷⁵ While there is a scarcity of precise official data on their health situation, progress seems to be limited.⁷⁶ Against this background, ECRI strongly encourages the authorities to collect comprehensive, appropriately disaggregated, data on the health situation of Roma and Egyptians.

42. A recent study also found that discriminatory practices against Roma and Egyptians in the healthcare sector requires urgent attention.⁷⁷ For some Roma and Egyptians, health insurance coverage is also still an issue.⁷⁸ Gaps in health insurance coverage is said to result from unemployment or informal and occasional work.⁷⁹ Some reportedly also faced problems accessing services due to a lack of identification documents, thus being unable to receive basic healthcare. A frequent coping mechanism is to delay medical visits until health conditions worsen and emergency services are required.⁸⁰ In the view of ECRI, this leads to worse health outcomes and put the lives of many Roma and Egyptians at risk.
43. According to the NAP, the average health outcomes of Roma and Egyptians and their life expectancy are lower compared to the general population. They have a higher morbidity incidence and are more vulnerable, especially to transmittable diseases.⁸¹ Immunisation rates among Roma and Egyptian children are also often lower.⁸² Some of the root causes for these problems have existed for a long time and include poor and unsanitary housing conditions (see also section III.A below), malnutrition, low educational attainment and low health-related knowledge, early marriages and births and frequent work in jobs posing health risks.⁸³
44. The authorities informed ECRI that they have taken various measures in recent years to address some of the problems. The Basic Service Package is considered to be a key instrument for providing necessary services at the primary healthcare level for everyone.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, it is not specifically dedicated to Roma and Egyptians. In this context, the authorities informed ECRI that they are aware that the relevant health centres have varying capacities and staff skills. In 2018, the authorities started the *Community National Health Programme*, which aims at ensuring healthcare for marginalised groups, including Roma and Egyptians. However, its key measures – such as building new health centres near settlements that lack access to health services and training healthcare practitioners to provide

⁷⁴ Health for all project (HAP) 2020: 2.

⁷⁵ MoHSP 2021: 19-20.

⁷⁶ Ibid. See also Advisory Committee to the FCNM 2023: 36, § 188.

⁷⁷ Ismaili et al. 2024: 372-374.

⁷⁸ EU, European Commission, (2023), Commission Staff Working Document - Albania 2023 Report, SWD(2023) 690 final: 92-93.

⁷⁹ MoHSP 2021: 27.

⁸⁰ Ismaili et al. 2024: 371. - The 2017 UNDP-World Bank Regional Roma Survey had already found that only 44% of the Roma and Egyptians (above 16-years of age) surveyed had indicated that they availed of preventive healthcare services, compared to 68% among non-Roma/Egyptians. (UNDP/World Bank 2018: 4.)

⁸¹ MoHSP 2021: 27.

⁸² MoHSP 2021: 19-20.

⁸³ MoHSP 2021: 27; see also: Roma Active Albania, (2013), Civil Society Monitoring Report on the Implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategy and Decade Action Plan in 2012 in Albania.

⁸⁴ The authorities informed ECRI's delegation that the basic healthcare package is accessible even without a health card (proof of public health insurance), but an identification document is necessary for referrals and secondary follow-up services. Generally, for services beyond the basic healthcare package, the health card is required.

equal services – still require further efforts to improve services for Roma and Egyptians in rural areas.⁸⁵

45. According to the authorities, the provision of care packages for Roma and Egyptian mothers giving birth in hospitals has been successfully implemented.⁸⁶ ECRI was also informed that the government now provides bonus payments to parents for the registration of their newborn babies (to ensure the issuing of birth certificates, also to facilitate future access to public services, which is problematic for Roma and Egyptians who lack identity documents), which has led to a significant increase of Roma and Egyptian mothers giving birth in hospitals, where birth registration is done automatically, with positive health outcomes for mothers and children and increased uptake of post-natal services.⁸⁷ ECRI is of the view that this could be considered as a **good practice**. According to the authorities, other positive results of their activities include an increased number of visits by medical professionals in informal Roma settlements in the context of the newly established mobile health teams.
46. ECRI notes positively that the authorities set up a Roma and Egyptian health mediators programme to overcome some of the access barriers for Roma and Egyptians. This initiative became active in 2025. At the time of the visit, the authorities could not provide ECRI's delegation with the number of health mediators that were already operational. They explained that due to delays most mediators were still being trained in 2025,⁸⁸ and that eventually a mediator should be available in every Roma or Egyptian community. However, no overall target for the number of health mediators that are ultimately to be employed under this programme was available. The lack of health mediators is also a problem that has been recognised as hindering access of Roma women to facilities that provide reproductive health services, especially for those Roma women who live in isolated rural areas⁸⁹ or are not fluent in Albanian.⁹⁰ This language barrier can contribute to their marginalisation and exclusion in the area of healthcare.⁹¹ In the already mentioned 2019/2020 focus group discussions, the *Health for all* project also found that women, across all the categories of vulnerable populations surveyed, are considerably disadvantaged compared to men in most aspects of access to primary healthcare.⁹²
47. ECRI recommends that the authorities take resolute action to improve access of Roma and Egyptians to appropriate healthcare services, more specifically: i) to ensure the full roll-out of the Roma and Egyptian health mediator programme as soon as possible and to a level commensurate with the scale of the problems these groups face when trying to access healthcare services, and ii) to conduct adequate anti-discrimination training activities and raise awareness among healthcare staff on the health needs of Roma and Egyptians, including the particular needs of women and girls.

⁸⁵ MoHSP 2021: 26 (cf. ECRI 2020: § 63); EU, European Commission, (2024), Commission Staff Working Document - Albania 2024 Report, SWD(2024) 690 final: 39; and EU, European Commission, (2019), Commission Staff Working Document - Albania 2019 Report, SWD(2019) 215 final: 93.

⁸⁶ See: Romalb (www.romalb.org), which is the e-system to monitor the progress of measures for the inclusion of Roma and Egyptians.

⁸⁷ This is not only available to Roma and Egyptian parents, but they benefit from it in particular.

⁸⁸ See also: EU, European Commission 2023: 92-93.

⁸⁹ EU, European Commission, (2024), Commission Staff Working Document - Albania 2024 Report, SWD(2024) 690 final: 39.

⁹⁰ Part of the Roma population speaks Romani at home and might not be fluent in Albanian.

⁹¹ MoHSP 2021: 27.

⁹² Health for all project (HAP) 2020: 2.

LGBTI persons

48. According to the evaluation of the NAP for LGBTI people 2016-2020, the goals set have not been reached, many instances are still recorded of LGBTI persons being denied access to healthcare and the situation worsened in 2020 when, as a result of Covid-19 restrictions, a number of people were unable to access the life-saving medication they needed.⁹³ The NAP for LGBTI people 2021-2027, in its Specific Objective I.3, focuses on guaranteeing access for LGBTI persons to healthcare services throughout the country and includes training for primary healthcare workers to provide LGBTI-friendly, quality and standard health services to LGBTI people. Against this background, ECRI received information about a training of primary healthcare providers on integrated sexual and reproductive health and rights involving 22 municipalities, in which the focus on LGBTI persons was mainly addressed as a key population group. This activity was nevertheless focused on the subject areas of HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs). ECRI did not receive any other information.
49. Transgender persons reportedly consider themselves at risk of discrimination by medical personnel, which may lead to abstaining from accessing health services.⁹⁴ Furthermore, of the 24 respondents who identified as transgender or non-binary in a 2024 survey, more than 90% were unable to consult a local doctor about hormone therapy or other gender-affirming medical interventions in the past year.⁹⁵
50. ECRI notes that a medical protocol for transgender persons has been finalised by a dedicated working group composed of health professionals from several fields and civil society organisations, under the guidance of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection.⁹⁶ ECRI welcomes this development. It understood during the 2025 visit to Albania that the protocol was still awaiting approval, but that the authorities were committed to ensuring its effective implementation.
51. ECRI recommends that the authorities, in close cooperation with specialised institutions, take further action to provide healthcare professionals with adequate initial and in-service training and guidelines to deal with healthcare issues of relevance to LGBTI persons appropriately and ensure their safe, affordable, and timely access to healthcare without discrimination, including to necessary gender-affirming treatments for transgender persons, in the light of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 17 on preventing and combating intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI persons.
52. In a 2024 survey amongst LGBTI persons,⁹⁷ the most frequently cited need was psychological counselling. Some LGBTI civil society organisations offer psychological counselling, but their capacity is said to be limited. This finding highlights an urgent need for increased public funding and state-supported mental health services tailored to the needs of LGBTI individuals.⁹⁸ ECRI encourages the authorities to include priority and intersectional targets and indicators on improving the mental health of LGBTI persons across relevant national equality and health strategies, accompanied by an investment in specifically tailored, accessible, affordable and quality mental health services.

⁹³ Evaluation report of the National Action Plan for LGBTI People in the Republic of Albania 2016-2020 (2021): 8, available [here](#).

⁹⁴ Ylberofilia / Sengla, J., (2025). [Needs Assessment of Trans People in Albania 2023-2024](#): Challenges Faced by the Transgender Community in Accessing Public Services, Housing, and Employment: 12.

⁹⁵ Alenca LGBT / Nini, D. 2025: 49.

⁹⁶ In June 2023, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection held an interactive seminar to develop the protocol. After the approval of Order No. 355, dated 2 July 2024, the first meeting of the inter-institutional working group for the implementation of the transgender medical protocol was held.

⁹⁷ For example, 25% avoided necessary sexual/reproductive health visits due to fear of judgement or mistreatment, and 14% experienced discrimination in healthcare.

⁹⁸ Alenca LGBT / Nini, D. 2025: 58-59.

53. In July 2020, the Ministry of Health and Social Protection approved the “Medical Protocol for the Assessment of Children with Atypical Genital Development”.⁹⁹ While ECRI considers it as a positive development, the situation for intersex people remains uncertain, as the country lacks legislation that would introduce a comprehensive ban on non-consensual and non-therapeutic surgeries on intersex infants. Certainly, according to the information made available to ECRI, the legislation provides that individuals undergoing surgical interventions must provide expressed consent. However, intersex children often undergo such procedures at a very young age, before they have the legal capacity to give consent. Surveys conducted between 2020 and 2024 revealed that approximately 2% of respondents, out of around 420 LGBTI persons surveyed, reported having been subjected to non-consensual interventions as infants.¹⁰⁰ ECRI notes that the lack of a legal ban on such interventions is acknowledged as a gap to be filled by the NAP for LGBTI persons 2021-2027.¹⁰¹ Therefore, ECRI encourages the authorities to take the appropriate measures in view of the adoption of legislation that prohibits so-called “sex-normalising” surgery and other medically unnecessary treatments until the intersex child concerned can participate in the decision on the basis of the right to self-determination and the principle of free and informed consent. In doing so, the authorities should draw inspiration from ECRI’s General Policy Recommendation No. 17 on preventing and combating intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI persons and Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)7 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on equal rights for intersex persons.¹⁰²
54. In 2022, the CPD handled two cases involving members of the LGBTI community, who filed complaints against a family doctor at a healthcare centre in Tirana for allegedly having exhibited discriminatory behaviour due to their sexual orientation. During the administrative review of the case, the doctor was summoned to a hearing before the Commissioner, where she expressed regret over how her behaviour had been perceived by the complainants. She emphasised that it was never her intention to discriminate against them and apologised. The case was closed without a final decision, as the complainants requested to withdraw from further proceedings. ECRI still notes the lack of protocols to address complaints and ensure culturally competent care for LGBTI individuals in healthcare settings.¹⁰³
55. ECRI recommends that the authorities set up an effective mechanism to receive and investigate complaints or reports of LGBTI-phobic discrimination and other forms of abuse by health professionals and ensure that any such abuse in public health services is subject to effective sanctions.

Refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary or temporary protection

56. ECRI’s delegation was informed that refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary or temporary protection have access to healthcare. However, the *personal identification numbers* they receive, which can be used for various administrative purposes, are of a different type than the ones Albanian citizens are assigned at birth and are actually not compatible with the electronic system used for managing access to the full range of public health care services. In order to access these

⁹⁹ OII Europe, (16 July 2020), [Not a ban. Albania misses the chance to clearly address intersex children’s health from a human rights perspective – OII Europe](#).

¹⁰⁰ ILGA-Europe, (2025), [Annual Review 2025 | ILGA-Europe](#), Albania.

¹⁰¹ Measure II.1.3.a. “Preparation of a draft law ensuring the right to legal recognition of gender, and a law protecting the human rights of intersex people” should have been developed by 2024, and measure II.1.3.b. “Adoption of the draft law” should happen by 2025-2026.

¹⁰² Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, (7 October 2025), [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2025\)7 on equal rights for intersex persons](#).

¹⁰³ UN, Universal Periodic Review, (2024), Albania, Fourth cycle, [Summary of stakeholders’ information](#): § 31.

services, a separate *health card* has to be issued, which can take a considerable amount of time: during the visit, ECRI's delegation received reports of durations of several months or even up to one year. In the meantime, the persons concerned could only access emergency healthcare despite their legal entitlement to the broader array of services. The authorities informed ECRI's delegation that they are aware of the problem and are working on synchronising the two different electronic systems to solve it. ECRI strongly encourages the authorities to complete the necessary synchronisation of databases as soon as possible, shorten the process for issuing the *health cards* to this group of persons, or find other solutions to ensure their access in practice to the full range of healthcare services they are entitled to.

III. TOPICS SPECIFIC TO ALBANIA

A. The housing situation of Roma and Egyptians

57. It emerged from the ECRI delegation's findings during the 2025 visit that the housing conditions for many Roma and Egyptians remain very difficult.¹⁰⁴ Civil society actors met by ECRI's delegation refer to conditions that are often inadequate. It should be noted, however, that housing conditions for the Egyptian community are usually considered to be better than for Roma and that Egyptians are also less often residing in areas that are spatially segregated from the majority population. Regarding Roma housing, the buildings are said to be frequently in a dilapidated state and in need of renovation. ECRI also received reports that they also often have insufficient sanitary installations. During the visit, ECRI's delegation received information from interlocutors that, for example, less than two-thirds of the dwellings have inside access to piped water (compared to over three-quarters among ethnic Albanians). Similarly, only around two-thirds of Roma houses have flush toilets inside (compared to more than 90% among those of ethnic Albanians).
58. ECRI notes that housing is a priority area of the NAP for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians 2021-2025. It is foreseen: i) that 5% of the beneficiaries of social housing should be Roma and Egyptians by the end of 2025; ii) to increase the number of Roma and Egyptian families benefiting from the rental subsidy scheme from 171 to 492 by the end of 2025; iii) to better support local authorities to improve the housing situation for Roma and Egyptians, including by increasing the number of legalised settlements by 16; iv) to place obligations on local authorities to produce annual monitoring reports and multi-year housing plans; and v) to ensure that Roma and Egyptian families benefit from improvements to their housing infrastructure.¹⁰⁵
59. ECRI's delegation was informed by a number of Roma and Egyptian interlocutors that social housing¹⁰⁶ is often difficult to obtain for many members of their communities due to their informal economic activities, as a result of which they cannot provide the required documentation of family income, even if they would normally qualify due to their very limited financial means. In addition, some of the local authorities have not built social housing units yet. Lack of affordable housing remains a major issue for Roma and Egyptians. Following the 2019 earthquake, rehousing programmes were initiated, but an applicant must be effectively homeless in order to qualify. Although many Roma and Egyptians lived in inadequate accommodation, they are not considered per se homeless and could therefore not benefit from rehousing options.¹⁰⁷ Applying for public rental subsidies is reportedly often difficult for Roma and Egyptians because many do not have a

¹⁰⁴ FCNM 2023: 35-36, §§ 181,184; EU, European Commission 2023: 40.

¹⁰⁵ See also FCNM 2023: 34, § 176.

¹⁰⁶ Regulated by Law no. 22/2018.

¹⁰⁷ FCNM 2023: 35, § 180.

formal rental contract.¹⁰⁸ These groups have also repeatedly expressed concern that it is very difficult to rent housing due to prejudices and discrimination against them.¹⁰⁹

60. Interlocutors met by ECRI's delegation during the visit conveyed a mixed picture with regard to the legalisation process of dwellings constructed without authorisation.¹¹⁰ While many Roma and Egyptian houses are now in the process of legalisation, many others are not. However, this also seems to be the case for illegally constructed dwellings of members of the general population, so appearing not to be solely a problem for the Roma and Egyptian communities. Nevertheless, given the array of other socio-economic problems that members of these communities often face, including poverty and insufficient access to education, as well as problems with the digitalisation of administrative processes (see section III.B), ECRI considers that the barriers for legalisation are particularly high and often cannot be overcome without external support. It is therefore regrettable that ECRI's previous suggestion to establish an administrative structure to facilitate the processing of legalisation requests has not been heeded.¹¹¹ ECRI encourages the authorities to provide such necessary support to Roma and Egyptians who require it.
61. According to the authorities, the most successful measure to improve the housing situation for Roma and Egyptians has been financial support for renovation work. The numbers presented to ECRI's delegation indicated that in 2024, over 50 Roma and Egyptian families received this kind of support, out of a total of 800 approved applications. However, given the continued need for improvements of Roma and Egyptian dwellings, the total financial means available for this programme do not seem to be sufficient. Given the positive experiences with this type of support, ECRI strongly encourages the authorities to scale up this intervention and provide additional resources for this purpose.
62. ECRI notes with concern that a priority recommendation it made in its previous report with regard to Roma and Egyptian housing has still not been fully implemented. This concerns the need for the authorities to find a speedy solution to the long-running housing crises affecting the Roma and Egyptian communities in the Kabash and Guri i Kuq areas of the Pogradec municipality.¹¹² Although some measures have been taken,¹¹³ ECRI's delegation learnt during the 2025 visit that the properties in question have still not been finally transferred by the state to the municipality, which had already previously indicated its willingness to make the investments required to renovate the buildings once it receives ownership of them. According to the information received by ECRI, transfers are still awaiting final approval by the Council of Ministers. Since 2019, the authorities have been unable to coordinate amongst themselves the transfer of ownership to ensure decent housing standards for the inhabitants.
63. ECRI recommends that the authorities should, without any further delay, secure a solution for the long running housing problems affecting the Roma and Egyptian communities in the Kabash and Guri i Kuq areas of the Pogradec municipality. To this end, the authorities should promptly transfer the ownership of the properties in question from the state to the municipality of Pogradec for it to make the investments required for renovation.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., and Minority Rights Group, (updated 2024), Roma in Albania, available at: <https://minorityrights.org/communities/roma/>.

¹⁰⁹ FCNM 2023: 35, § 180; and Minority Rights Group 2024.

¹¹⁰ Cf. ECRI 2020: §§ 54-55.

¹¹¹ See ECRI 2020: § 55.

¹¹² ECRI 2020: § 60.

¹¹³ ECRI 2022: 4.

64. The People's Advocate informed ECRI that, in recent years, she has continuously emphasised the need for a comprehensive improvement of living conditions for Roma and Egyptians. The institution made several recommendations concerning specific settings, for example, in 2024, regarding the improvement of living conditions of the Roma and Egyptian communities in the "Stan" neighbourhood of Moravë, in Drizë near Fier, as well as in Kukës, Saranda, Korça and Durrës. In 2023, the People's Advocate recommended taking immediate measures to ensure the normal supply of drinking water and adequate sanitation for the village of Borakë (Durrës municipality). In 2022, the institution had made a recommendation, addressed generally to municipalities, to adopt local-level strategic plans within the NAP framework. The People's Advocate is also concerned over the difficulties for Roma and Egyptian women to access adequate and safe housing, with the associated risks to their health and life.¹¹⁴ However, the recommendations of the People's Advocate are often insufficiently implemented.
65. ECRI recommends that the authorities increase their support for municipalities in the context of ensuring the effective implementation of the recommendations made by the People's Advocate concerning the improvement of housing for members of the Roma and Egyptian communities.

B. Access of Roma and Egyptians to public services via the "E-Albania" system

66. Several of ECRI's interlocutors from the Roma and Egyptian communities met during the 2025 visit indicated problems that members of their communities face with the newly rolled-out electronic access system for public services in Albania ("E-Albania"). This digital service platform was introduced by the authorities to increase the accessibility, efficiency and speed of public services.¹¹⁵ As a result, applications and requests for public services, including for example the enrolment of children in pre-school education, primary or secondary schools, applications for rental subsidies or social housing, or requests for birth certificates can now only be made online. This poses in particular problems for members of communities that are characterised by high levels of illiteracy, poverty (often resulting in not being able to afford computers or smartphones) and low levels of digital literacy. Roma and Egyptians are considered to be especially vulnerable in this regard.¹¹⁶
67. Roma and Egyptian interlocutors informed ECRI's delegation that members of their communities often have to resort to the paid services of small businesses that can provide assistance in accessing the platform or formatting relevant documents.¹¹⁷ However, the additional costs are often a deterrent to Roma and Egyptians, frequently resulting in them not requesting services. In addition, the need to share one's personal password in the process creates risks regarding the confidentiality of data. Accessing public services through the digital platform remains entirely impossible for those Roma and Egyptians that are still not registered in the population registry.¹¹⁸ Due to the already precarious socio-economic situation and high levels of marginalisation of the Roma and Egyptian communities, as well as a widespread self-distancing from administrative procedures (partially related to low levels of education, partially to negative or even discriminatory experiences in the past), the creation of additional barriers to accessing public services entails risks

¹¹⁴ Ombudsman of the Republic of Albania (People's Advocate), (2021), Alternative report on the implementation of the CEDAW Convention in Albania (period 2016-2020): §§ 1.57-1.60.

¹¹⁵ See Law No. 13/2016, Law No. 107/2021, and Government Decision No. 252 of 29 April 2022.

¹¹⁶ People's Advocate, (2024), Digitalisation of public services and protection of Human Rights in Albania: 39-40. - Other groups facing similar problems with accessing this digital administrative platform, such as older persons or persons with disabilities, are not within ECRI's mandate.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.: 39-40, 58.

¹¹⁸ Ibid.: 39.

of worsening even further the already difficult situation for many members of these communities.

68. The authorities informed ECRI's delegation during the 2025 visit that they have become aware of this issue and decided that any public institution should have staff available to assist those in person who cannot access the E-Albania platform themselves online. However, the ECRI delegation also received information that, at the time of its visit, this decision had not been implemented everywhere. According to a number of interlocutors, various public institutions and local level authorities did not yet provide such in-person assistance. The People's Advocate also carried out a situation-testing exercise with the same result and, in 2024, recommended providing direct interaction at service counters of the relevant institutions, especially for citizens who are less able to access services independently, including members of the Roma and Egyptian communities.¹¹⁹
69. ECRI recommends that the authorities monitor closely the situation regarding problems for Roma and Egyptians to access the E-Albania public services platform with the aim of ensuring that the necessary assistance is provided country-wide and to support municipalities and other public institutions in their efforts to maintain a minimum of staffed service counters.

C. Jehovah's Witnesses and recognition of religious communities

70. Jehovah's Witnesses of Albania (JWA) are registered as a non-profit association. In 2018, JWA applied to the government to obtain the status of "religious community", which is conferred by virtue of agreements between a religious group and the government, with subsequent approval by Parliament. Five such agreements have so far been concluded: for the Roman Catholic Church with the Holy See, with the Muslim Community of Albania, the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania, the Worldwide Bektashi Community and with the Evangelical Religious Community of Albania. The possibility of concluding such agreements is provided for in the Constitution (Article 10, section 5), which, however, does not indicate any criteria for granting or refusing a group's request for an agreement, nor any timeline. These agreements are the only possibility to obtain the status of "religious community" and can provide, in addition to other rights and guarantees, also certain financial privileges, such as tax exemptions (property tax for religious buildings, inheritance tax) or exemption from paying otherwise obligatory social security contributions for the group's clergy and staff.¹²⁰
71. In 2021, after several attempts to receive a reply to their request from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), which is in charge of the matter, and an unsuccessful intervention by the People's Advocate, JWA submitted a complaint about non-responsiveness to the First Instance Administrative Court of Tirana. The court rejected the claim. JWA appealed the judgment in 2022 to the Administrative Court of Appeal. When two years later still no decision had been taken on the appeal, JWA filed a request with the High Court to accelerate the review of the case. The High Court rejected this request in 2024. However, shortly before ECRI's visit to Albania, on 8 April 2025, the Constitutional Court, following a submission by JWA, decided that the Administrative Court of Appeal should review the case and take a decision within six months.¹²¹
72. ECRI's delegation was informed that, in February 2024, JWA representatives had a constructive meeting with the Prime Minister, who is said to have offered his

¹¹⁹ People's Advocate 2024: 60.

¹²⁰ See for example: "The Agreement between the Albanian Government and the Autocephalous Orthodox Church of Albania" (Law no. 10 057 of 22 January 2009), Article 15 (section 2a-c); and "The Agreement between the Albanian Government and the Evangelical Religious Community of Albania - Evangelical Brotherhood of Albania – VUSH" (Law no. 10 394 of 10 March 2011), Article 14 (section 1a-c). See also the Law "On the financing from the state budget of religious communities that have signed agreements with the Council of Ministers" (Law No. 10140 of 15 May 2009).

¹²¹ Decision No. 9/2025 of the Constitutional Court of Albania, published in the Official Gazette No. 64 (8 April 2025).

assistance. Nevertheless, ECRI has not been informed of any progress made on this issue since. In its discussion with relevant public officials, the ECRI delegation heard that no action can or should be taken by the PMO while there is an ongoing legal procedure. However, as the legal procedure was initiated on the basis of a complaint of non-responsiveness of the authorities to the request made by JWA,¹²² it is difficult to see why the PMO would not be able to take the matter further.

73. Given the absence of a regulation that stipulates criteria to be fulfilled to obtain the status of “religious community”, or a clear timeline for the procedure, the current situation is characterised by accessibility issues and a high degree of unpredictability, with the potential of leading to differential treatment without a reasonable justification, which could therefore be considered as discrimination on religious grounds as concerns privileges enjoyed by some religious groups but not available to others. In this regard, the current situation seems highly unsatisfactory not only for Jehovah’s Witnesses but potentially also for any other religious group that would like to apply in the future for the status of “religious community” and the privileges commonly associated with it. In this context, ECRI refers to the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, according to which the lack of accessibility and foreseeability of the criteria and procedure for recognition as a religious community or denomination may constitute a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights.¹²³

74. ECRI recommends that the authorities consider as soon as possible the request of Jehovah’s Witnesses of Albania for recognition as a “religious community”, with a view to avoiding any unjustified differential treatment. More generally, the authorities should formulate criteria for a clear and transparent process of how to grant the status of “religious community” and associated rights and privileges to religious groups, thereby providing safeguards against possible discrimination, taking into account the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights.

¹²² See also Constitutional Court decision No. 9/2025: 3-4.

¹²³ See, in particular, ECtHR, (5 April 2022), *Anderlecht Christian Assembly of Jehovah’s Witnesses and Others v. Belgium*, judgment: §§ 51ff. – The case concerned access to certain tax exemptions for religious communities and the Court found that neither the criteria for recognition nor the procedure leading to recognition of a religious denomination by the authorities were laid down in an instrument satisfying the requirements of accessibility and foreseeability. The Court also found an inherent risk of arbitrariness and a lack of minimum guarantees of fairness and an objective assessment. As a result, it found a violation of Article 14 (Prohibition of discrimination) of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), in conjunction with Article 9 ECHR and Article 1 of Protocol No. 1. (Ibid.: § 56.)

INTERIM FOLLOW-UP RECOMMENDATIONS

The two specific recommendations for which ECRI requests priority implementation from the authorities of Albania are the following:

- (§ 20) ECRI recommends that the authorities equip police and prosecution services with the necessary human, technical and financial resources to effectively investigate and prosecute racist and LGBTI-phobic hate crimes, including by intensifying capacity-building and training activities, in close collaboration with the Security Academy and the School of Magistrates, the OSCE and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Council of Europe, as appropriate.
- (§ 32) ECRI recommends that the authorities take measures to increase pre-school and school enrolment and attendance of Roma and Egyptian children, reduce drop-out rates and facilitate their secondary school completion, inter alia by substantially increasing the number of Roma and Egyptian education mediators and conducting awareness campaigns with Roma and Egyptian families and schools.

These recommendations should be implemented within 18 months after the publication of the report. A process of interim follow-up will subsequently be conducted by ECRI to review action taken to implement them.

LIST OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The position of the recommendations in the text of the report is shown in parentheses.

1. (§ 3) ECRI recommends that the authorities set up an inter-ministerial working group tasked with reviewing the civil, administrative and criminal legal framework on hate speech, in the light of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No.15 on combating hate speech and Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on combating hate speech, and prepare and bring to Parliament any appropriate amendments with a view to ensuring in particular that adequate legislation is in place to prevent and combat various forms of racist and LGBTI-phobic hate speech, both offline and online, in a manner that is proportionate to the level of severity of its expression.
2. (§ 11) ECRI recommends that the authorities step up their efforts to encourage public figures, such as high-level officials, politicians and religious, economic and community leaders, to refrain from using racist and LGBTI-phobic hate speech, as well as to take a prompt, firm and public stance against the use of such speech by others, including by reacting promptly with strong counter-speech and alternative speech, and to express solidarity with those targeted by hate speech.
3. (§ 20) ECRI recommends, as a matter of priority, that the authorities equip police and prosecution services with the necessary human, technical and financial resources to effectively investigate and prosecute racist and LGBTI-phobic hate crimes, including by intensifying capacity-building and training activities, in close collaboration with the Security Academy and the School of Magistrates, the OSCE and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Council of Europe, as appropriate.
4. (§ 22) ECRI recommends that the authorities provide victims of hate crime with access to targeted, specialised support, assistance and protection, in the light of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)4 on combating hate crime. These services should be made available throughout the country, in close cooperation with relevant local authorities and civil society organisations.
5. (§ 25) ECRI recommends that the authorities, in addition to general anti-bullying activities, develop and implement group-specific modules against the bullying of children deemed vulnerable on the grounds of their sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics. In this context, a robust country-wide mechanism to monitor, prevent and counter racist and anti-LGBTI incidents in schools should be set up, including through an appropriate data collection system.
6. (§ 32) ECRI recommends, as a matter of priority, that the authorities take measures to increase pre-school and school enrolment and attendance of Roma and Egyptian children, reduce drop-out rates and facilitate their secondary school completion, inter alia by substantially increasing the number of Roma and Egyptian education mediators and conducting awareness campaigns with Roma and Egyptian families and schools.
7. (§ 34) ECRI recommends that the authorities take further, resolute, action to end all forms of de facto segregation of Roma and Egyptian children in schools as soon as possible, in line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and other relevant Council of Europe standards.
8. (§ 38) ECRI recommends that the authorities ensure that educational curricula, including comprehensive sexuality education (CSE), address LGBTI equality issues in a manner which is sensitive, age-appropriate, easy to understand and evidence-based, placing particular emphasis on equality, diversity, and inclusion, in the light of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 17 on preventing and combating intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI persons.

9. (§ 47) ECRI recommends that the authorities take resolute action to improve access of Roma and Egyptians to appropriate healthcare services, more specifically: i) to ensure the full roll-out of the Roma and Egyptian health mediator programme as soon as possible and to a level commensurate with the scale of the problems these groups face when trying to access healthcare services, and ii) to conduct adequate anti-discrimination training activities and raise awareness among healthcare staff on the health needs of Roma and Egyptians, including the particular needs of women and girls.
10. (§ 51) ECRI recommends that the authorities, in close cooperation with specialised institutions, take further action to provide healthcare professionals with adequate initial and in-service training and guidelines to deal with healthcare issues of relevance to LGBTI persons appropriately and ensure their safe, affordable, and timely access to healthcare without discrimination, including to necessary gender-affirming treatments for transgender persons, in the light of ECRI's General Policy Recommendation No. 17 on preventing and combating intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI persons.
11. (§ 55) ECRI recommends that the authorities set up an effective mechanism to receive and investigate complaints or reports of LGBTI-phobic discrimination and other forms of abuse by health professionals and ensure that any such abuse in public health services is subject to effective sanctions.
12. (§ 63) ECRI recommends that the authorities should, without any further delay, secure a solution for the long running housing problems affecting the Roma and Egyptian communities in the Kabash and Guri i Kuq areas of the Pogradec municipality. To this end, the authorities should promptly transfer the ownership of the properties in question from the state to the municipality of Pogradec for it to make the investments required for renovation.
13. (§ 65) ECRI recommends that the authorities increase their support for municipalities in the context of ensuring the effective implementation of the recommendations made by the People's Advocate concerning the improvement of housing for members of the Roma and Egyptian communities.
14. (§ 69) ECRI recommends that the authorities monitor closely the situation regarding problems for Roma and Egyptians to access the E-Albania public services platform with the aim of ensuring that the necessary assistance is provided country-wide and to support municipalities and other public institutions in their efforts to maintain a minimum of staffed service counters.
15. (§ 74) ECRI recommends that the authorities consider as soon as possible the request of Jehovah's Witnesses of Albania for recognition as a "religious community", with a view to avoiding any unjustified differential treatment. More generally, the authorities should formulate criteria for a clear and transparent process of how to grant the status of "religious community" and associated rights and privileges to religious groups, thereby providing safeguards against possible discrimination, taking into account the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights.

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APPENDIX: GOVERNMENT'S VIEWPOINT

The following appendix does not form part of ECRI's analysis and proposals concerning the situation in Albania.

ECRI, in accordance with its country-by-country procedure, engaged into confidential dialogue with the authorities of Albania on a first draft of the report. A number of the authorities' comments were taken on board and integrated into the report's final version (which, in line with ECRI's standard practice and unless otherwise indicated, could only take into account developments up until 4 December 2025, date of the examination of the first draft).

The authorities also requested that the following viewpoint be reproduced as an appendix to the report.

Viewpoints of the Albanian authorities on ECRI's seventh report

The Albanian authorities welcome the publication of ECRI's seventh report on Albania and express their appreciation for its continued engagement with and commitment to monitoring Albania's progress in combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia, antisemitism, and related forms of intolerance.

Albania highly values the constructive and open dialogue that has characterized its relationship with ECRI throughout this monitoring cycle and considers this process an essential mechanism for strengthening human rights protection and advancing equality for all persons within its territory.

The Albanian authorities take careful note of all the recommendations outlined in the seventh report, including the two recommendations subject to the interim follow-up procedure. The Albanian authorities are fully aware of the importance ECRI attaches to the interim recommendations and undertake to report on the measures taken in response to them within the 18-month timeframe, in accordance with ECRI's monitoring procedures.

In addition, the authorities present some observations and relevant information in relation to certain paragraphs of the report.

The Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) has drafted the National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians, 2026–2030. This strategic document is aligned with the objectives of the National Strategy for Development and Integration, as well as with the Sustainable Development Goals.

The new National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians, 2026–2030 is also in line with the objectives of the EU Roma Strategic Framework 2020–2030 and reflects ECRI's comments on its objectives.

The Action Plan for Roma and Egyptians has been developed and includes a comprehensive set of indicators to monitor its implementation. Line ministries have been actively engaged in this process, with the aim of integrating relevant measures and corresponding budget allocations into their respective budgets.

The MoHSW, in cooperation with the Council of Europe Office in Tirana, organized a training on Roma-responsive budgeting on 21–22 October 2025, with the participation of focal point staff at the central level (30 participants). The training aimed to strengthen the capacities of institutions and relevant stakeholders in implementing the principles of Roma-responsive budgeting.

Anti-Gypsyism is also a specific component of the National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians 2026–2030, aiming at recognizing and addressing anti-Gypsyism in public policies.

Furthermore, the implementation of the Action Plan for Health Promotion 2022–2030 aims to reorganize health promotion through interventions that address health challenges, with the objective of improving health outcomes and reducing health inequalities among the Albanian population.

More specifically, regarding Recommendation No. 47, under Priority Area III, "Health Care," in the upcoming National Action Plan for Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma and Egyptians, the recommendations addressed by ECRI have been incorporated as concrete measures in access to health. In addition, a working group has been established to draft the Action Plan for Primary Health Care, which will reflect these recommendations in detail.

Regarding Recommendation No. 51, the MoHSW remains committed to drafting policies and approving medical manuals and protocols grounded in the principles of non-discrimination and quality health service provision.

Regarding the issues raised under Recommendation No. 52 on mental health needs, we would like to inform that Albania's public health system provides a comprehensive strategic and legal framework for the development and delivery of mental health services in a non-discriminatory, inclusive and rights-based manner.

Mental health services are addressed within a consolidated national policy framework that prioritises the strengthening of community-based care, the expansion of psychosocial support and the integration of mental health into the general health system. This approach is operationalized through a dedicated national strategic document, the Mental Health Action Plan 2023–2026, which focuses on improving access, quality and continuity of mental health care, particularly by shifting services towards primary and community-based settings.

The legal foundations of the system are established by Law No. 44/2012 “On Mental Health”, as amended, which guarantees equal access to mental health care for all individuals, prohibits discrimination in service provision and ensures respect for dignity, confidentiality and informed consent. The legislation promotes a multidisciplinary and community-oriented model of care, aiming to reduce stigma, prevent social exclusion and ensure treatment is delivered in the least restrictive and most appropriate setting.

Public mental health services are organized and delivered across all levels of care, Primary Health Care and Community Mental Health Centers providing outpatient specialized care, to inpatient mental health services as secondary level and tertiary services, through psychiatric services at the University Hospital Centre “Mother Teresa” Tirana, ensuring access to more complex and specialized interventions when necessary.

To support the consistent and quality delivery of mental health services within the public health system, Albania has adopted key normative instruments that operationalize mental health care at primary level. The Guideline for the Management of Mental Health Conditions in Primary Health Care provides a standardized clinical and organizational framework for early identification, basic management and timely referral of mental health conditions by primary care teams.

Also, MoHSW is advancing the integration of health and social services at community level. More than 100 primary care facilities have been transformed into socio-health centers, where traditional medical services are complemented by psychosocial professionals. This integrated model aims to improve early identification of mental health needs, facilitate access to counselling and strengthen continuity of care within local communities.

Complementing this framework, the Psychologist's Manual for Primary Health Care and Socio-Health Centers, approved in February, defines the professional role, responsibilities and intervention modalities of psychologists embedded within primary care settings, and several trainings are planned to be implemented this year on these provisions.

Together, the above-mentioned instruments promote a biopsychosocial, multidisciplinary and community-oriented approach, ensure ethical and non-discriminatory practice, and strengthen the capacity of primary care to deliver accessible psychosocial support as an integral part of the public mental health system.

Furthermore, the ongoing expansion of the network of Community Mental Health Centers, including the establishment of new centers in several regions, aims to broaden geographical coverage and improve access to specialized community-based mental health services. Last year a Community Mental Health Center was established in Lezha, and another one is going to be established soon in Durres, to be followed by one more in Fire, measures that collectively contribute to a more accessible, equitable and sustainable public mental health system.

Recognizing that mental health is shaped by a combination of biological, psychological, social and structural factors, and that these determinants may have a disproportionate impact on individuals and communities exposed to stigma, discrimination or social

marginalization, and that effective responses therefore extend beyond the health sector alone, the MoHSW is currently engaged in the development of a new National Mental Health Strategy with a horizon up to 2030.

This strategy will be conceived as a comprehensive and intersectoral policy instrument, designed to ensure coherent action across health, social protection, education, employment, justice and community-level interventions. Its primary objective is to strengthen prevention and early intervention, promote equity and social inclusion, and enhance access to quality, community-based mental health services within the public system.

Furthermore, in line with Recommendation No. 55 on the handling of complaints, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare follows and implements the legislation in force in the field of non-discrimination and the protection of citizens' rights, ensuring the fair and proper handling of every complaint submitted, with the aim of continuously improving the quality of health services.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) is a unique human rights body that monitors Council of Europe member states' action against racism, intolerance and discrimination on grounds of "race", colour, language, religion, citizenship, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.

ECRI was set up by the first Summit of Heads of State and Government of the member states of the Council of Europe in 1993 and became operational in 1994.

ECRI is composed of 46 members appointed on the basis of their independence, impartiality, moral authority and expertise in dealing with issues of racism, intolerance and related discrimination. Each Council of Europe member state appoints one person to serve as a member of ECRI.

Secretariat of ECRI

Anti-discrimination and Inclusion Department
Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity
Council of Europe
F - 67075 STRASBOURG Cedex
Tel.: +33 (0) 3 90 21 46 62
E-mail: ecri@coe.int

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