

Abstract

In 2009 the People's Advocate in Albania announced their suggestion that Albania should become the first Balkan country to legalize gay marriage, a suggestion backed by the country's Prime Minister Sali Berisha. The odd thing is that this suggestion was presented in the same country voted the "most homophobic in Europe" according to a recent study, and simultaneously the suggestion came at a time when Albania did not even have an anti-discrimination law, and, assumingly, at a time when LGBT activist groups seemed more or less nonexistent. Since 2009, Albania has progressed severely in relation to LGBT matters, and the small Balkan country has adopted noteworthy liberal sexual minority policies. Yet, as stated above, this appears as a rather paradoxical fact, since homophobia in Albania appears widespread, and since it could be questioned why a country would even need to legalize gay marriage, since the gay population are unlikely to benefit from this kind of legislation, due to the harassment and marginalization of this particular minority group. The mismatch between the conservative values in Albania, and its emerging liberal policies, will therefore be the main research topic of this thesis, and I intend to explore the causes of this mismatch by looking into the characteristics of the Albanian society, its traditional values and customs as well as the current political situation. I want to explore not only why homosexual groups are under pressure in the Albanian society, but also what might be a driving force behind the political changes seen in recent years.