



# CROATIA

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

A group of LGBTI foreigners were told to leave a summer festival in Korčula. The city's mayor condemned the incident.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In January, the Zagreb County Court held the ultraconservative Vigilare Association responsible for discrimination and incitement for launching a homophobic petition against "homopropaganda". Vigilare filed an appeal, saying that the ruling judge was biased, being an open supporter of LGBTI rights. The Supreme Court accepted this complaint and the new judge, known for her anti-LGBTI bias, found no discrimination and argued for freedom of speech.

Online hate speech against LGBT people continued to be on the rise. Zagreb Pride filed six criminal complaints for online hate speech, homophobic graffiti, and hateful leaflets posted in the trams in Zagreb.

In February, a Zagreb court sentenced a young man to six months in prison, substituted with one year of probation for saying on social media that he was "sorry the consequences of a tear gas attack in a Zagreb queer party in 2017 had not been worse".

In March, the Zagreb Municipal Court dismissed a lawsuit Trans Aid filed against the right-wing NGO GROZD, for discrimination and harassment. Trans Aid filed a complaint to the Supreme Court.

In July, a couple of days prior to the Zagreb Pride, MP Nikola Grmoja suggested tabling an 'anti-pedophilia' bill similar to the one in Hungary.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

On 14 January, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in the Sabalić v. Croatia case that the Croatian authorities' failure to respond effectively to the applicant's allegations of a violent homophobic attack against her amounted to inhuman or degrading treatment and was discriminatory. Pavla Sabalić was brutally assaulted in a bar after turning down the perpetrator's advances. Croatia recognises homophobic hate crimes, but most cases are classified as minor offences.

In February, a woman was brutally attacked in Zagreb for her perceived sexual orientation. A dozen other minor

physical and verbal attacks were reported to Zagreb Pride, but only a couple to the police.

Zagreb Pride also documented several cases showing that small mobs had been 'hunting' for gay men in parks - in the first such attack in late 2020, a mob threw a Molotov cocktail at a gay man.

Rijeka saw an increase in homophobic hate crimes this year, with several people being physically assaulted and the City Hall's rainbow flag, in support of a local queer festival, being set on fire.

In Zagreb, six of 20 rainbow flags raised to mark the beginning of the Pride Month, were torn down, stolen, or burnt. For the first time in 10 years, several participants of Zagreb Pride were attacked by extremists, who verbally assaulted, hit, beat, and spat on them and burned a rainbow flag. The attacks mostly targeted young gay men and lesbian women. Zagreb Pride called on the police to investigate.

In November, a Split Pride volunteer was physically attacked on a beach and suffered severe injuries. The police failed to react promptly and downplayed the homophobic motive.

LGBTIQ organisations blame the increasingly hostile anti-LGBT rhetoric of political leaders for this increase in hate crimes.

## DATA COLLECTION

Trans Aid's research found that medical professionals have little to no knowledge about intersex issues, but most of the hospitals that responded do perform surgeries on intersex infants. Trans Aid will conduct further research in 2022 to map allies and main gaps in the knowledge of medical professionals.

## EDUCATION

Zagreb Pride published a guide for social workers, education and health professionals on working with LGBTI+ children and youth.

Zagreb Pride also developed the "Queer Classroom" program for young people under 30.

Civil society held an online workshop for teachers on LGBTI topics, which received so many applications that it had to be prolonged to go over several days.



## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Prime Minister Andrej Plenković said in a statement in July that all minorities should feel safe in the country and that LGBT people should be honoured, not merely tolerated. He also condemned recent hate crimes, especially violence on the day of the 20th Zagreb Pride march.

## FAMILY

The High Administrative Court ruled in April that same-sex marriage entered abroad must be recognised as registered partnership in Croatia.

On 21 April, the Administrative Court of Zagreb ruled that same-sex couples can adopt children. Local LGBTQI organisations reminded that life partners must be also included in the interpretation of the judgement, in line with the 2014 Life Partnership Act. Much to the condemnation of civil society, the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Policy filed an appeal.

In amendments to the Foster Care Act, drafted in October, the Croatian government refused again to explicitly indicate same-sex partners as possible foster parents.

## FOREIGN POLICY

Croatia was among the few EU Member States that did not condemn the Hungarian anti-LGBT law.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The LGBT 'Pride Riders' held a bike march in Zagreb on 5 June - for the second year in a row, focusing on family rights.

Zagreb's new mayor Tomislav Tomašević joined the 20th Zagreb Pride march and stated his support for LGBTI rights. He is the first Zagreb mayor to attend the capital's Pride.

Split Pride took place without any incidents on 17 July.

## HEALTH

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Zagreb Pride recorded a clear rise in requests for psycho-social counselling and set up a team to meet the growing demand.

The COVID-19 pandemic continued causing large delays in trans healthcare. Even before its onset, due to a lack

of clear regulations, trans healthcare was inaccessible, pathologising, and influenced by the personal bias of medical professionals.

In October, the Zagreb County Court ruled in favour of a trans man, finding that the Insurance Fund and the hospital discriminated against him when denying him insurance coverage of his mastectomy. The man was informed of the change on the day of his surgery.

## HOUSING

Family rejection and violence continued, as many trans people had to remain with unsafe families in year two of the COVID-19 pandemic.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Trans Aid and Trans Network Balkan formed a regional feminist group and are now in the process of developing strategies against TERF movements in the region.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Accessing legal gender recognition (LGR) continued to be difficult this year. Trans Aid helped two trans people turn to the Administrative Court to challenge the delays in the Council's work. The Council is mandated to issue a decision in all applications within 30 days, but some people have waited for two years. Soon after the cases were filed, the Council issued a decision in both.

Trans Aid lobbied firmly against the board of psychiatrists, which was set up in violation of the ordinance and which now evaluates any trans person who wants to access healthcare or LGR.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

In December, the boyfriend of Croatia's first openly gay MP Domagoj Hajduković shared a photo of them kissing, which was widely circulated on social media.



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