



CYPRUS

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

MP candidate of the ELAM party Andreas Themistokleous made transphobic statements and was later expelled from the far-right party, but for reasons unrelated to the incident.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Pressured by homophobic bullies at a party to binge drink beyond his tolerance, a teen fainted and was left to choke to death in February. Three of the peers received 18 months of suspended sentence for involuntary manslaughter.

EDUCATION

Following the tragic bullying case in February (see above), civil society urged the government to put in place sensitising training programs in schools to prevent and address the issue. The Ministry of Education has not formally responded to the request.

Accept - LGBTI Cyprus held two training sessions this year for educators on tackling homophobia and transphobia.

EMPLOYMENT

A multi-stakeholder meeting was held in October to address LGBTI rights in the workplace, bringing together government officials, employers' bodies and companies for the first time.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

On IDAHOBIT (May 17), the Ombudswoman released a statement warning of the danger of underestimating anti-LGBTI incidents and framing them as isolated cases. The Minister of Justice also made a public statement on condemn anti-LGBTI discrimination and violence.

On 18 May, Cyprus co-hosted an online IDAHOT+ Forum together with the UK, welcoming around 150 activists and government officials from Europe. In June, the Ministerial Council approved the National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Human Rights, which includes eliminating homophobic and transphobic discrimination and exclusion.

In October, Accept - LGBTI Cyprus published a draft Action Plan for LGBTIQ+ Rights. The draft was prepared by an interdisciplinary working group, consisting of

civil society, university and party representatives, the Ombudswoman's Office and representatives of the European Commission. It has not been endorsed by the government, but civil society is now advocating for its adoption.

FAMILY

Family rights remained an important concern for civil society this year, but no developments took place despite civil society's continued advocacy.

At least one same-sex couple encountered difficulties this year with the recognition of their civil partnership in Cyprus, which they previously concluded abroad. The couple also faced hurdles attaining civil partnership in Cyprus and sent a complaint to the Ombudswoman.

FOREIGN POLICY

Cyprus and the UK have approved the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Protection and Promotion of the rights of LGBTI+ people in Europe. In October, the UK Prime Minister's Special Envoy on LGBT Rights met up with the Minister of Justice, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the Advisor to the President on Multiculturalism and Diversity, and other stakeholders to discuss joint actions.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

There were no Pride events held this year due to COVID-19 restrictions.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

A scene featuring a kiss between two men was cut from the popular Greek series "Agries Melisses", when it aired in Cyprus in November.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

A Cypriot trans woman was detained in Egypt in January 2020, was released on 29 January this year and safely returned home.

HEALTH

Accept - LGBTI Cyprus continued to advocate for the government to address healthcare inequalities, particularly on the provision of hormones to trans people.



While hormones were previously offered by the state, the new Cyprus General Health System (GESY) excludes them, which has made them unavailable for many.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

For the first time, a joint ministerial committee dealing with LGBTI matters was formed, following approval by the Council of Ministers in December. The Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Interior, coordinated by the Advisor to the President on Multiculturalism and Diversity, were tasked to tackle the outputs proposed by the Cyprus - UK MoU on LGBTI+ rights.

Despite a request to the state, Accept has not received any state funding this year.

In December, the government increased its annual financial support to the Council of Europe SOGI Unit.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The legal gender recognition reform process continued very slowly this year, after years of being stalled. The committee, consisting of the Law Commissioner, the Advisor to the President on Multiculturalism and Diversity, and officers from the Ministry of Interiors, finalised the draft bill in November. The parliamentary Human Rights Committee announced in the autumn that it would revisit the matter at the beginning of 2022.

In October, the Council of Europe's SOGI Unit, the Law Commissioner, and the Advisor to the President on Multiculturalism, and Diversity, co-organised a roundtable discussion on LGR as part of the thematic review of the implementation of the Council of Europe (CoE) Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 of the Committee of Ministers. Cyprus was one of four CoE member states that voluntarily engaged in a dialogue aimed at making progress on this topic. The final review by the CoE on LGR in Cyprus is yet to be published. The event was held at the parliament, under the auspices of the Head of the Parliament, Annita Demetriou.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Accept shared a questionnaire with candidates ahead of the parliamentary elections in May and made their

responses available. The questionnaire focused on the candidates' stance on LGBTQI rights. All candidates of AKEL and Famagusta for Cyprus participated and were in support of the LGBTQI rights. Some candidates of the Democratic Rally, Animal Party Cyprus, Independents Movement, and Green Party-Citizens' Cooperation also responded - with answers including both for and against stances towards the rights raised. There were also parties without any candidate also participated in the questionnaire.

Civil society held a number of public and cultural events this year, including exhibitions, discussions and seminars for LGBTI people, to strengthen the community.

In September, the second Queer Wave LGBTQ+ film festival took place in person, in Nicosia, featuring over 40 short and feature films and selling more than 1,200 tickets.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The police made an official and in-person apology, upon the request of the Minister of Justice, to a trans person who was subjected to police harassment in May. The case was referred to the Minister by the Advisor to the President on Multiculturalism and Diversity.

In June, Accept held a seminar for police officers on LGBTI rights.

NORTHERN CYPRUS

**Areas not under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus.*

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

The LGBTI+ community and particularly trans sex workers were severely hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, with many continuing to lack access to basic necessities and food this year.

In February, officials from the local administration announced they would provide food and hygiene items



to those most vulnerable, explicitly mentioning LGBTI+ people. It was also clarified that support would be provided to those in need regardless of their citizenship or residence status, which was welcomed by Refugee Rights Association and Queer Cyprus Association (QCA).

Similar to last year, some political parties, the Nicosia Turkish municipality, and the Social Services Department, as well as some other NGOs, provided food for those most in need during the lockdown period. Queer Cyprus Association again provided financial support to those struggling the most, including trans and gay sex workers

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Despite the 2020 amendments to the Criminal Code, which criminalise anti-LGBT hate speech, civil society documented several incidents this year and a lack of action from the authorities. QCA reported several hate speech cases to the police this year, mostly from social media comments. For instance, volleyball player Ebrar Karakurt received countless hateful comments after posting a selfie with her girlfriend. QCA met with the police to urge them to investigate cases.

In September, the Media Ethics Committee established that President of the Cyprus Turkish Educators Union, Himmet Turgut's statements amounted to hate speech. Turgut had said that some "sexual identities" are "perverts, those who poison the young minds, those who spread diseases". QCA reported the case to the Committee, as well as the local education authorities. QCA met with the Ombudsperson in September, four months after it first alerted the authorities, but have not heard back.

QCA eventually met with the local "minister" of education Olgun Amcaoğlu, who affirmed the "ministry's" stance against anti-LGBTI hate speech and particularly against bullying in education. QCA reported a hate speech case in May, where a teacher posted anti-LGBT content.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

One of the billboards featured in QCA's awareness raising campaign 'My right' was vandalised in the Trikomo - Iskele region in December.

DATA COLLECTION

QCA launched the Human Rights Platform in October to monitor human rights violations impacting LGBTI people in the northern part of Cyprus.

EMPLOYMENT

QCA published 'LGBTIs in the Labour Market' in July. In parallel, QCA and its partners provided training and social services to LGBTI people most at risk.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

QCA published an analysis of the legislative framework in the northern part of Cyprus in terms of discrimination against LGBTI people.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

This year's IDAHOT event took place in person and drew attention to the adverse impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on those most vulnerable, including LGBTI+ people, refugees, women, children, the working class, health workers, the elderly and others. QCA highlighted that while many politicians used the slogan, "We are all in the same boat" during the pandemic, LGBTI+ people have faced discrimination and a lack of access to employment, healthcare, housing, and education since long before.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year's Pride parade only took place in the northern part of Cyprus in the form of a rainbow chain.

HEALTH

QCA published several health resources this year, including the comprehensive LGBTI+ Physical Health Booklet, a leaflet on HIV/AIDS, and a brochure on STIs.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

QCA continued documenting a stark increase in the number of people reaching out to their solidarity line to receive psycho-social or legal support, since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic.



INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

At the end of the year, QCA visited 25 institutions including municipalities, party representatives, politicians, the Ombudsperson, teachers, the police, and others to discuss how to address discrimination and violence against LGBTI people.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

QCA published a booklet on legal gender recognition in the northern part of Cyprus.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

QCA held its Queer Cyprus Film Festival online, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

QCA held an online workshop for the social welfare workers and published a report on the access of LGBTI people to social services, pointing to a lack of quality and long-term services and negative attitudes among social workers.



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