



MALTA

ASYLUM

The government issued a new policy, whereby asylum seekers from “safe countries” will not be eligible for a work permit for the first nine months following arrival. The regulation will also affect LGBTIQ asylum seekers.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

A British lesbian singer and her partner were verbally harassed during their holiday in Malta.

Two men were finned for anti-trans hate speech against a trans woman.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

MGRM shared its concern this year that the police response to incidents of hate speech or hate crime remain flawed and insufficient. In 2020, MGRM’s online survey found that over 50% of LGTBQI respondents felt unsafe in Paceville, Malta’s main nightclub hub, and reported being denied entry into clubs or harassment. In July for instance, news articles circulated about homophobic bouncers in a club. Civil society called for more targeted action again this year, including training and awareness raising.

DATA COLLECTION

The National Statistics Office, for the first time, included questions on sexual orientation and gender identity as well as race, ethnic origin, religion and belief in the National Census conducted at the end of the year.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Governance, Edward Zammit Lewis announced a month-long campaign for LGBTIQ people’s equality in May, on the occasion of IDAHOT. Lewis thanked the Human Rights Directorate for its work and commitment to date on ensuring the implementation of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan.

The process of adopting the Equality Act, which would further strengthen rights protections for LGBTI people, continued to be stalled this year while the Ministry for Equality, Research and Innovation undertook the drafting of further amendments that will mostly affect the ability of the proposed Human Rights and Equality Commission to issue penal sanctions.

The SOGIGESC Unit of the Maltese government published its annual report in September as part of its annual conference.

In October, Malta launched its first Anti-racism Strategy.

FAMILY

Colombia joined Portugal as one of two countries from which Maltese same-sex couples are able to adopt.

FOREIGN POLICY

Malta and its MEP Cyrus Engerer took a lead on the European Parliament’s resolution to declare the EU an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone, following the adoption of a propaganda law in Hungary and continued attacks against the LGBTIQ community in Poland.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Malta’s Pride events were cancelled again this year due to COVID-19 restrictions, and instead a small and symbolic demonstration was held in six different locations.

HEALTH

Malta’s Gender Well-being Clinic shared in March that it has welcomed 200 trans people since its opening in 2018. A new plastic surgeon was appointed in the autumn, who will be responsible for providing breast surgeries.

Training on addressing barriers to healthcare for LGBTIQ persons was delivered by the Maltese SOGIGESC Unit to 180 health practitioners and sensitisation training was conducted with 300 reception staff working in healthcare settings. The website www.transhealth.gov.mt was launched in June.

Following a shortage of HIV medications towards the end of 2020, which led NGOs to crowdsource treatment for distribution to impacted persons, an updated HIV formulary was introduced towards the end of 2020. The rolling-out process continued throughout 2021. As yet PrEP and PEP remain available against payment.

Work on a sexual health policy became stalled in October as a first draft of the policy, which was submitted to the Minister for Health, was based on outdated information. MGRM called for consultation with NGOs and other stakeholders in order to avoid a similar mistake in the future.



Malta is confirmed as having one of the highest HIV transmission rates in Europe, 15.9 per 100,000 people, compared to a European average of just 3.7 per 100,000.

HOUSING

MGRM's Dar Qawsalla (Rainbow House) was one of four special housing proposals t by the Ministry for Social Accommodation. The scheme allocates government-owned dilapidated buildings to NGOs who are tasked with, and given the necessary funds to carry out repair works. Dar Qawsalla will be the first LGBTIQ-specialised accommodation in Malta.

MGRM is currently in the process of restoring the house it was awarded in San Gwann. It is planned to open the house in 2023.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

After announcing its support for Euro Pride 2023 last year, the Ministry for Justice, Equality and Governance signed a grant agreement with the organisers in May. The 300,000 euro grant will be disbursed over the course of the next three years. Euro Pride 2023 will be held in Valletta.

In December, the Ministry for Equality, Research and Innovation and the Ministry for Social Justice and Solidarity, the Family and Children's Rights signed a Memorandum of Understanding to provide support and community services to LGBTIQ persons and their families with a budget of 400,000 euro over three years.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The Maltese Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex, Sexuality & Gender were adopted by Cabinet and launched in November.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Malta Police Force introduced new recruitment policies that removed differential selection criteria based on gender, and which will ensure an equal playing field for trans applicants.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Leading regional and national NGOs expressed support for Malta's plans to decriminalise sex work, which was first announced in 2020. The government has faced criticism

from a number of NGOs in Malta who do not agree with the plan.

In October, the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner called on Malta to stop criminalising abortion.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a grave impact on the LGBTIQ community. LGBTIQ organisations have reported an increase in messages from people who feel unsafe at home during lockdown, and people unable to pay rent. Through a community call launched by a coalition of LGBTIQ NGOs in 2020, MGRM was able to assist individuals impacted by the pandemic throughout 2021, particularly where accommodation was required.

Following up on 2020 findings that called for increased support for male victims of same-sex domestic abuse, one additional staff member was hired to provide services. Although no male shelter is in place, the shelter of the national agency Appoġġ is receiving training on LGBTIQ issues and partnership violence.



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