



# SLOVAKIA

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Dunja Mijatović, the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights issued a Human Rights Comment in August on the worrying trend of anti-LGBTI backlash across Europe, including in Slovakia. The National Council became a space for anti-LGBTI hate speech this year. MPs called LGBTI people "deviants" and their families "perverted environments" where children are victims of sexual abuse. The LGBTI Rights Committee, a governmental advisory body, called for a code of ethics for the parliament and waiving MPs' immunity in the case of hate speech.

Polish priest Dariusz Oko's book on how the "homolobby" threatens the Church was endorsed by the Slovakian Christian Foundation and published with a preface by the Archbishop of Trnava, Ján Orosch. Oko was invited to present his book in several cities.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Civil society warned about the consequences of the growing anti-LGBT political rhetoric and the inadequate response to hate crimes by law enforcement. In July for instance, teenagers verbally harassed and then beat up two men they perceived as gay, in Bratislava.

In December, the Ministry of Justice issued accreditation to inPoradňa, the first ever counselling centre for LGBTI people in Slovakia, operated by the Iniciatíva Inakosť. The centre will provide counseling to victims of anti-LGBT hate crimes.

## DATA COLLECTION

Inakosť encouraged cohabiting same-sex couples to mark their relationship status in the census. While the census only asks about whether respondents are in a marriage, which is only possible for heterosexual couples, it does ask respondents if they live with anyone and if that person is a man or a woman.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Extremist rhetoric across the political spectrum has greatly increased over the past two years, since the 2020 elections. During the October parliamentary session, five legislation proposals were tabled by MPs, who were previously members of the far-right party ĽSNS (People's Party Our Slovakia) and now represent the far-right

Republika party. These include proposals to amend the Constitution saying that gender at birth cannot be changed and that a father is a man and a mother is a woman; to establish that the state can protect gender at birth and the the promotion of "homosexuality, gender reassignment and deviation from gender identity acquired by birth" must be banned from schools, in advertising or broadcasting; to ban legal gender recognition; to ban the display of rainbow flags on state buildings (see under **Family** and **Legal Gender Recognition**).

In lack of clear support from the centre right governing party OĽaNO, none have been passed yet. Nonetheless, the proposals resembling the Hungarian propaganda law received votes from dozens of MPs, including the leader of the social democrat Smer, Robert Fico. Several MPs from ruling parties Sme rodina and OĽaNO have publicly declared their support for the repressive laws. The further tabling of such laws is expected in the near future.

The Slovak National Centre for Human Rights, Slovakia's equality body, published an expert opinion finding that excluding those who have a psychiatric diagnosis of being trans from insurance of mortgages or other loans is discriminatory. The Centre called on insurance companies to remove the restriction. Incoming director Silvia Porubánová was the first representative of the Centre to speak at Dúhový PRIDE Bratislava this year.

## FAMILY

In March, 44 MPs supported Constitutional amendments that would define family as a unit of a man/father and a woman/mother, following Hungary's example. Those in support included MPs of ĽSNS, and also 26 members of the government and three MPs of Smer. More than 4,000 professionals, including school psychologists, social workers, and teachers condemned the move. A petition was also launched by parents, family members, and friends of LGBTI+ people, and was signed by almost 10,000 people. President Zuzana Čaputová met with some of the parents and pledged not to sign the law.

The Ombudswoman again called for legal recognition for same-sex couples in her IDAHOBIT statement on 17 May and her annual report.

Following the new government's 2020 promise to adopt legislation on inheritance and property rights for couples cohabiting and same-sex couples, little to no progress



took place this year. A group of MPs from the governing party Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) planned to publish a draft law in September, but the process was delayed. In the end, opposition MP Tomáš Valášek (Progressive Slovakia) submitted a bill in October, to recognise life partnership for couples of any gender. Only seven MPs supported the proposal, the lowest number in the history of similar proposals.

## FOREIGN POLICY

On 13 May, the family affairs ministers of the Visegrád Four (Czechia, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia) signed a 'Declaration Pro Familia' to commit to supporting 'families'.

Slovakia did not join the 17 EU Member States who jointly condemned Hungary's new propaganda law banning the discussion of LGBT topics in front of minors. Nonetheless, President Zuzana Čaputová spoke out against the law in July.

Pope Francis' visit to Slovakia in September received some pushback from conservatives in the country who are concerned about the Pope's accepting stance towards LGBT people.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bratislava Pride was celebrated both online for the second year. Ombudsperson Mária Patakyová supported the event again this year and raised a rainbow flag outside her office and the President also participated in some events. Bratislava's Mayor Matúš Vallo, the governor of Bratislava Self-Governing Region Juraj Droba (SaS), Justice Minister Mária Kolíková (Za Ľudí, now SaS), MEP Michal Šimečka (Progressive Slovakia), and State Secretary of the Culture Ministry Radoslav Kutaš were all in attendance and contributed with speeches.

## HEALTH

In 2020, the third Minister of Health refused to sign the Professional guidelines to unify medical procedures for issuing medical opinions on gender reassignment. Medical professionals state they do not want to provide trans healthcare services, without the guidelines being adopted. In March, civil society sent a joint letter urging the Ministry to sign the guidelines, highlighting the mental health toll of the delay on trans people.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In mid-March, one third of Slovakia's MPs supported amendments to the Constitution that would ban legal gender recognition (LGR), following Hungary's example. Hundreds of professionals, including psychologists, school psychologists, social workers, educators, lawyers signed a joint statement condemning the move. Civil society demanded the parliament to take a stand against the amendments. Inakost sent a letter to each MP and shared testimonies of young trans people about the possible impact of a ban on LGR. Inakost kept publishing testimonies throughout the summer.

The Minister of Health's refusal to sign the Professional guidelines to unify medical procedures for issuing medical opinions on gender reassignment (see under **Health**), means that trans people's access to legal gender recognition (LGR) has continued to be jeopardised. The guidelines abolished forced sterilisation and other medical interventions as requirements for legal gender recognition (LGR), and were developed jointly by medical professionals and trans advocates.

The Ombudswoman called for LGR legislation in her IDAHOBIT statement on 17 May.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Jakub Pružinský, the 2018 winner of Slovakia's music competition "Superstar" came out as gay in February.

The Slovak Queer Film Festival took place in October under the auspices of the President, who also attended the event.

## PUBLIC OPINION

A survey in March on public attitudes in Czechia and Slovakia found that Slovaks are less accepting of LGBT, but more accepting of immigrants.



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