

The lived realities of LGBTI people in every single EU country show that it's not yet an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone

[Blog](#), [Annual Review](#), [European Parliament](#), [European Union](#)

The EU is now an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone, as declared by the European Parliament. This is great news, but real action must be taken to make this a lived reality for LGBTI people across the EU.

On 11 March 2021, in response to the proliferation of over 100 so-called 'LGBT-Free zones' in Poland, the European Parliament voted and declared the EU an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone. While it's a strong symbolic gesture, this will not have any positive impact in LGBTI people's lives unless it's followed by meaningful actions and measures at EU and national levels.

Across the EU, we are witnessing a stark rise of hate against LGBTI people. In our recently published [Annual Review](#), we reported an increase of hate speech from political, religious leaders and on social media in several countries of the region. Additionally, the COVID-19 crisis has made vulnerable communities even more vulnerable.

It's not only in Poland and Hungary that LGBTI people and communities need protection. Earlier in March, a gay man was murdered in Beveren, Belgium, having been lured via a dating app to a park, where he was attacked by three teenagers. Declaring the EU an LGBTIQ Freedom Zone is not enough: this strong statement must be followed by actions that bring real change to LGBTI people and communities in the region.

Here is how LGBTI people's lives are negatively affected in every single member state of the European Union:

Austria

There is no protection against hate speech or hate crimes based on gender expression, gender identity and sexual characteristics.

Belgium

Hate and violence are on the rise. A [gay man was brutally murdered](#) on March 6 in Beveren. Three teenagers allegedly stabbed him to death after luring him into a fake date arranged on a dating app.

Bulgaria

Children of a same-sex couple can lose one parent just by crossing an EU border. A [child of a same-sex couple](#) is currently at risk of statelessness as Bulgarian authorities have not recognised the baby's valid EU birth certificate.

Croatia

There is an increase of hate speech and violence. In [February 2020](#), an effigy of two men kissing and a child was burnt at a festival, weeks after the country's highest court ruled that same-sex couples could become foster parents.

Cyprus

The reform of legal gender recognition has been stalling for years now.

Czechia

Sterilisation is required to access legal gender recognition. A case law from the European Court of Human Rights on the matter has been waiting for years now to be implemented.

Denmark

The country failed to ban unnecessary surgeries and treatment on intersex infants and minors, despite multiple United Nations' [recommendations](#).

Estonia

Attacks on civil society have increased. Despite recommendations from the UN Human Rights Committee in 2019, no progress has been made to include sexual orientation and gender identity in the hate speech and hate crime legislation.

Finland

Trans people are required to be sterilised before accessing legal gender recognition.

France

The number of hate crimes against LGBTI people increased in 2020, for a fourth consecutive year, according to [SOS Homophobia](#). Two LGBTI children, who were bullied at their schools, committed suicide.

Germany

Same-sex couples cannot adopt. Legal gender recognition legislation is outdated and its reform has been stalling for years.

Greece

The latest [amendments](#) to immigration legislation have restricted the rights of LGBTI asylum seekers. In January 2020, a [booklet](#) was distributed by the Church in the Athens Holargos high school, saying that being "homosexual" is a "hateful act" and that LGBTI people were "traitors" and "murderers".

Hungary

The Hungarian Parliament [banned](#) legal gender recognition in May 2020. The following December, it also voted to abolish the Equal Treatment Authority, Hungary's most important equality body. Bookshops selling the children's

book 'Wonderful is for Everyone', which depicted diverse families and characters, were labelled as promoters of homosexuality and their staff were threatened. Prime Minister Viktor Orbán commented on the book saying that homosexuals should "leave our kids alone".

Ireland

The country witnessed deeply worrying cases of hate crime and violence. A young gay couple was [beaten up](#) and stabbed in Kildare in February 2020. In September, a [video](#) on social media showed ten students from a Dublin private school verbally assaulting a classmate who had recently come out.

Italy

There is no legal protection against discrimination outside the labour market on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Latvia

In January 2021, the Latvian Parliament started examination of the constitutional amendment seeking to restrict the extension of the concept the concept of family. The country does not recognise same-sex partnerships and still requires trans people to be sterilised before having access to legal gender recognition

Lithuania

Partnership is not recognised. Politician and LGBT rights activist, Tomas Vytautas Raskevičius (Liberty Party) secured a seat in parliament during the autumn elections. When he wanted to be chair of the human rights committee, he was received with homophobic hate and threats.

Luxembourg

In July 2020, the town of Esch-sur-Alzette announced it would [prohibit](#) shared flats if those cohabiting are not relatives or partners, which would forcefully out many same-sex couples and could be used in a discriminatory manner.

Malta

The Equality Act has not been implemented yet.

Netherlands

Schools have the right to ask parents to sign a statement rejecting a homosexual lifestyle, as long as the school ensures a safe environment for all pupils. During the summer, over 60 cases of discrimination and violence against LGBTIQ asylum seekers were [reported](#).

Poland

In Poland, over 100 towns have declared themselves 'LGBT-free zones'. Officially led hate speech and scapegoating of LGBTI people continue to be on the rise. In [August 2020](#), 48 people protesting the detention of LGBTI activist Margot Szutowicz were also arrested. Partnerships are not recognised.

Portugal

There is no legal protection against discrimination outside the labour market on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

Romania

The CJEU judgement in the [Coman case](#), which three years ago established that same-sex spouses are fully recognised as spouses under the EU freedom of movement directive, has to this day not been enacted by the Romanian state, and the partner of Adrian Coman still has not been granted a residence permit in Romania, leaving other same-sex couples in similar situations in limbo. There is no partnership recognition and trans people are still required to be sterilised before having access to legal gender recognition.

Slovakia

The country still requires trans people to be sterilised before having access to legal gender recognition.

Slovenia

Non-governmental organisations in Slovenia are increasingly targeted by the government's restrictive measures and hostile rhetoric. Leading the government, the radical right Slovenian Democratic Party and PM Janez Janša direct their hostility especially towards NGOs engaged in independent cultural production and defending human rights, media freedom and the environment.

Spain

There are very harmful debates at the moment around the Trans Law. A group of trans people and their families are on [hunger strike](#) since March 2021. They will continue until the proposed legislation is debated at the Spanish House of Representatives.

Sweden

At the initiative of the right wing populist party Sweden Democrats, the municipality of Hörby put forward a new [policy](#) banning raising the rainbow flag on municipal flagpoles. The local church responded by displaying the rainbow flag on their flagpole. The policy was later withdrawn, but follows a similar and successful ban passed in 2019 in Sölvesborg.