

>THEMES

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

ALBANIA

Activists raised rainbow flags on several castles in Albania on IDAHOT.

ANDORRA

With the endorsement of the municipality in Andorra's capital, civil society ainted a huge rainbow crossing between Avinguda Meritxell and Carrer Dr Molines. This was the first time that an LGBTI rights symbol was displayed by a municipality publicly.

BULGARIA

On May 27, Deystvie presented 'Courage to be' and 'Courage to be a parent', two books for rainbow families. About 20 extremists appeared outside the building of Radio Plovdiv, where the book event was held. Deystvie held events in other towns, for instance in Bourgas in May and Varna in June.

CYPRUS

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

CZECHIA

The politicisation of the Czech public TV and radio continued this year. A representative of the Roman Catholic Church was appointed to the supervisory board of Czech Radio, but later resigned and is now an assistant to a far-right MP.

The anti-LGBT+ organisation Alliance for Family filed a complaint against Czech TV claiming that its reporting on equal marriage is biased. The supervisory board partially sustained the complaint. In April, the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) warned that Czech media freedom was under threat and that an increasing number of members are affiliated with the ruling party. EBU called on Czechia to protect media pluralism.

DENMARK

Months of attacks on gender and migration studies and researchers culminated in MPs Henrik Dahl (LA) and Morten Messerschmidt (Danish People's Party) tabling 'On excessive activism in certain research environments', backed by parliamentary majority.

HUNGARY

In January, the consumer protection authority found that

consumers' rights would be violated if the publishers of the children's book, *Wonderland is for Everyone* did not include a warning that it contains "behaviour patterns that deviate from traditional gender norms". Labrisz Lesbian Association, the publisher, turned to the courts. On 15 July, the European Commission launched infringement procedures against Hungary, concerning the censorship.

In January, the Media Council launched an investigation against the TV channel RTL Klub for streaming a PSA about rainbow families. The investigation is pending.

In March, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović issued a statement on the lack of media pluralism and independence in Hungary and called for compliance with international standards.

The government continued its crackdown on LGBTIQ rights. On 25 May, Fidesz tabled amendments to enable "stricter action against paedophile offenders and the protection of children". The draft text was changed five days before the planned vote, practically banning any discussion of LGBT issues in front of minors, including in schools and media. The provisions include a ban on the "portrayal and the promotion of gender identity different from sex at birth, the change of sex and homosexuality".

More than 160 NGOs, schools, professional organisations, unions, embassies, and companies demanded that the parliament vote against the bill. Over 133,000 signatures demanded an end to the anti-LGBT crackdown. Civil society held a large demonstration outside the Parliament with over 10,000 people attending.

On 14 June, the parliament adopted the amendments. 157 MPs were in favour, including members of the Jobbik political party. One person voted against, and the other opposition parties boycotted the vote. A number of opposition parties and politicians, including the Budapest mayor, condemned the draconian law.

Civil society launched the #nemvagyegyedül (#YouAreNotAlone) campaign to support LGBTQI people in this difficult time. They also called on President János Áder not to sign the law and handed him over 350 handwritten letters from concerned citizens and 400 emails with personal stories, testimonies and worries about the possible impact of the law. Áder signed the law, which entered into force on 8 July. CSOs vow to continue their work as before. In August, a coalition of NGOs turned to the Ombudsperson to review the constitutionality of the amendments.

Several international actors spoke out against the law, including [MEPs](#), [18 EU Member States](#), [UN mandate holders](#), the [Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe](#), the [Venice Commission](#), and the [Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#).

Government representatives denied the anti-LGBT nature of the laws, including Prime Minister Viktor Orbán (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

On 20 July, Orbán [announced](#) a referendum on LGBT issues as a [response](#) to EU infringement procedures. On 30 July, the National Election Committee [approved](#) the proposed questions. On 26 October however, the Curia of Hungary refused to authorise the question, “Do you support that gender reassignment treatments should be available for children?”. The government appealed the decision at the Constitutional Court and [won](#).

In July, a bookshop selling the Hungarian translation of the American children’s book, *Early One Morning*, which features rainbow families, was [fined](#) for stocking it amongst other children’s publications. The decision was successfully challenged in court.

ICELAND

Rainbow flags were [raised](#) across the capital on the occasion of IDAHOBIT on 17 May.

A rainbow pedestrian crossing was [unveiled](#) in August on the occasion of Pride week in the capital, along the city centre’s Ingólfsstræti.

IRELAND

The Our Lady of the Assumption Church [received](#) backlash after raising the rainbow flag. Locals [held](#) a vigil to show solidarity with the Church.

ITALY

Pop star Fedez [accused](#) the state TV Rai of censorship after Rai wanted to pre-approve the singer’s comments made at a live concert stream in May. Fedez eventually got the green light and [called out](#) the right-wing League party for its anti-LGBT statements and stalling of the Zan law (see under **Bias Motivated Violence**).

KYRGYZSTAN

In August, the President [signed](#) the law on “manipulating information”, also expected to further limit freedom of expression.

Labrys, in collaboration with [other NGOs](#) put in place funding to encourage more content on LGBT issues from journalists and activists in the region.

LATVIA

On 11 November, the parliament rejected [three amendments](#) to the Law on the Protection of the Children’s Rights, which would have prohibited the promotion of any materials that could “pose a threat to the psychological development of a child” and/or “pose a threat to a child’s biological gender” and/or “may lead to a deviation from gender identity, interest in gender reassignment, and a predisposition to homosexuality”.

LITHUANIA

In light of this year’s developments in Hungary, [many remained concerned](#) about Lithuania’s Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information, which has been in place for a decade and has had a chilling effect on the LGBTQ community. The ECtHR’s judgement in the case [Macatė v. Lithuania](#) on this law is expected in 2022.

NORWAY

Several rainbow flags were [torn down](#) during Pride month in June, including from outside the Oslo [municipality](#) and from several Oslo schools. The schools and authorities repeatedly replaced the flags, and some communities provided rainbow flags for households in the area.

The issue of gendered indigenous Sámi clothing was [discussed](#) this year.

POLAND

Three activists, Joanna Gzyra-Iskandar, Anna Prus and [Elżbieta Podleśna](#), who created stickers of the Virgin Mary with a rainbow halo, were [acquitted](#) on 2 March. The activists could have faced two years in prison. Prosecutor Ziobro appealed the ruling, with a new hearing planned for 2022.

The four creators of the [Atlas of Hate](#), an online map launched in 2019, which tracks which municipalities have adopted anti-LGBT resolutions, [had](#) their first court hearings in [July](#) and [October](#), [facing](#) up to 36,000 euro in fine. Atlas of Hate is facing seven lawsuits.

In a [resolution](#) adopted on 16 September, the European Parliament condemned the continuing deterioration of media freedom and the rule of law in Poland, and its impact on LGBTI rights.

ROMANIA

On 1 June, the ECtHR [found](#) a violation of the right to private and family life, freedom of association and assembly, and the prohibition of discrimination in the case of ACCEPT Association and Others v. Romania, which is under enhanced supervision. The case concerned a protest against a screening of a film involving a same-sex family during ACCEPT's LGBT History Month in 2013. The protesters were carrying far-right paraphernalia and abused cinemagoers. The Court ruled that the Romanian authorities had failed to offer adequate protection and to effectively investigate, and that "in doing so, the authorities showed their own bias towards members of the LGBT community".

RUSSIA

There were several attempts again this year to block LGBTI-themed websites, including the Russian LGBT Network's [social media accounts](#), the news and health site [Parni PLUS](#), and social media of the Alliance of Heterosexuals and LGBT for Equality. Parni PLUS was [fined](#) 300,000 rubles. The blocking of Alliance's social media was successfully appealed in court by Stimul LGBT group. Their social media pages had to be [unblocked](#); the case continues in a local court.

Three out of four venues cancelled on [QueerFest](#) after receiving threats from anti-LGBT activists.

The Russian LGBT Network [reported](#) in January that the Federal Security Service (FSB) was involved in launching at least four 'propaganda' cases, including that against Yulia Tsvetkova (see below). Such actions fall clearly outside the mandate of the FSB. The Network filed a complaint to the Prosecutor. The reports also flag that the FSB has requested that its mandate is extended to cover "activities to ensure the information security of the Russian Federation in the information and psychological sphere", which remains undefined as of now.

On 10 March, a Moscow District Court ordered the blocking of a video about same-sex adoption. In July, the Moscow City Court [overturned](#) the ruling and returned the case to the District Court. In September, the District Court

[agreed](#) and the prosecutor dropped the charges.

The UK film 'Supernova' was first [censored](#) by a number of Russian cinemas, by cutting a three-minute sex scene between a married gay couple, but due to public pressure was then re-released in its original form in April. A film about the Swedish author Tove Jansson was [released](#) in cinemas this year - no difficulties were reported.

In May, a prosecutor [filed](#) charges against Dolce & Gabbana, asking the courts to ban their ad, which featured two women kissing.

The food shop VkusVill featured a rainbow family on their ad for 'Family Happiness Recipes' and received serious backlash from customers and commenters. The family itself received countless death threats and [fled](#) the country soon after. VkusVill [published](#) an apology to its customers in July saying the ad was a "mistake", which was criticised by LGBTI people and allies.

On 1 July, the President [signed](#) into law an amendment that introduces criminal liability for links with 'undesirable organisations'. Previously, only leadership or repeated activity was punishable, but the new amendments also cover any 'participation' and 'financing'.

[Yulia Tsvetkova](#), artist and activist, [continued](#) to be persecuted this year for her drawings of rainbow families and the feminist blog and social media group she ran. Yulia's social media work focuses on bodies, menstruation, and other harmless topics. On 12 January, she was [again](#) charged with 'distribution of pornography' in connection with online dissemination of her feminist drawings. This is the fourth time that the Investigative Committee indicted Yulia on these charges. Yulia spent several months under house arrest in 2020, and was put through dozens of interrogations and a psychiatric examination. She is still under gag order and cannot leave her town. In May, Yulia went on a six-day hunger strike to demand a speedy and fair trial after two years of investigation. During the latest hearing on 6 May, the judge denied Yulia's request to bring in a public defender. The trial was once again postponed due to absence of prosecution's witnesses. Yulia could face up to six years in prison. She continues to regularly receive death threats, and her formal complaints to the police are met with complete indifference and inaction. Over the past few years, Yulia's case was closely followed by national and international [media](#), the public, and human rights organisations (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

In November, TV channel Muz-TV was fined 1 million roubles for “propaganda” during a live-streamed Muz-TV Award ceremony. The expert statement that informed the court decision referred to appearance, clothing, and

statements of some of the celebrity guests of the ceremony as “promoting non-traditional sexual relations”. In November, the website and online movie theatre by Side by Side LGBT Film Festival were blocked in Russia by the Russian media monitoring agency. Later the Ministry of Culture denied the Festival’s request to be listed among accredited international festivals of 2022. Festivals outside of this list need to apply for rental licences for each film separately - a barely implementable procedure. Side by Side will appeal both decisions in court.

SPAIN

Legal rows over the display of rainbow flags continued this year. Courts in Zaragoza and Sevilla ruled that the municipalities cannot raise the rainbow flag. Using the Supreme Court’s ruling as an excuse, the City of Madrid did not display the flag at the city hall this year and did not use the 700-metre rainbow flag the municipality purchased in 2020.

TAJIKISTAN

This year, several Tajik bloggers addressed LGBTQI+ issues on their platforms and had live streaming sessions with members of the LGBTQI+ community. For instance, prominent blogger Shoir Pulatova had an open conversation with LGBTQI+ people on her page, discussing sexuality, gender, and societies.

TURKEY

On 5 March, the Adana Security Directorate announced that any display of signs about LGBTI+ rights or the Boğaziçi University protests, are banned for the duration of the 8 March Women’s Day demonstration. The police in Kadıköy and Beşiktaş enforced the same censorship on Women’s Day marches.

In May, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) fined Acun Ilıcalı’s digital platform Exxen for streaming an episode featuring trans woman Çağla Akalın. RTÜK ordered the removal of the piece.

In July, MP Oya Ersoy (Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP)) made a statement in parliament in support of Pride and LGBTI+ people’s rights, and showed a picture of the rainbow flag.

A number of INGOs launched a billboard campaign in July, calling for freedom from violence and equality for LGBTI+ people.

A British young adult novel “Heartstopper”, whose protagonist is gay, is being sold in envelopes in Turkish bookstores, with the sign “Harmful for children” upon the order of the Family and Social Services Ministry. On 10 September, the Ministry of Family and Social Services Protection of Minors officially classified the book as “obscene”.

Boğaziçi University trials involving LGBTI+ students continued: two are for the general protests against appointed Rector Melih Bulu, one is against the LGBTI+ Club for the LGBTI+ themed artwork, another is for students holding rainbow flags during a protest, and another for students protesting the arrest of those holding rainbow flags.

Hornet, a dating and partnership network, was removed from the Turkish App Store by a court ruling.

TURKMENISTAN

Most international social media sites, including YouTube, Facebook, Google, Instagram, even messaging apps, such as Whatsapp and Telegram, are blocked in the country. People access these sites through VPNs. The availability of TV channels is controlled.

UKRAINE

A number of MPs petitioned to Prime Minister to ban a children’s book “Princess + Princess” which that discusses same-sex relationships. Public criticism also concerned a Swedish sex education book for young boys, which was set to be released in Ukraine.

At the end of December, a group of MPs appealed to the Cabinet of Ministers and the Ukrainian State Film Agency to withdraw state funding from “My Young Prince” - a film featuring a gay romance story. In the explanatory note, they stated that “an open, erotic, homosexual context using Christian symbols and allusions to biblical works” causes outrage among Ukrainian citizens. They also claimed that the film promotes foreign, non-traditional values. The State Film Agency responded that withdrawal of funding awarded through a competitive selection is outside their mandate. The Agency also reminded that according to the Constitution, the national cultural policy

should be based on ensuring creative freedom and equal rights and opportunities.

The film's director, a Ukrainian of Armenian origin, Khachatur Vasilian reported an avalanche of hate speech and threats against him, following the release of the trailer.

UZBEKISTAN

Article 120 is perceived in civil society as a ban on LGBT people and any expression of LGBT issues.

At the end of March, the parliament adopted a bill criminalising “insult and slander” against Uzbek leaders and prohibiting “disrespect for society, the state, state symbols (national and universal values)” and calls for demonstrations “in violation of the established order.” While the law does not mention LGBTQ+ issues specifically, activists have warned it could further persecute them.