

## &gt;THEMES

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

## ALBANIA

In July, the European Parliament [adopted](#) the Commission's 2022 [report](#) on Albania, expressing serious concern about discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons in key areas.

The implementation of the National LGBTI Action Plan (2021-2027), which was formally [launched](#) in 2022, continued to remain flawed, with no implementation of legislation such as changes in the family code and a draft law on gender identity, or introduction of new legislation as requested by NGOs.

Streha held meetings with 110 legal professionals and young LGBTI people living in rural areas in the districts of Kajava, Kukesi and Lushnja, to raise awareness on key legal aspects impacting LGBTIQ+ communities.

Aleanca trained the staff of The Commissioner against Discrimination and Peoples Advocate to provide better services to the LGBTI community.

## ANDORRA

DiversAnd received accounts of microaggressions this year, but none of these were reported to the authorities. Both civil society and the government suspect that low reporting is due to fear.

Andorra's anti-discrimination body, the [Equality Observatory](#), created in 2020, will set up a dedicated LGBTIQ+ issues committee in 2024.

After significant delays, in February the Equality Observatory's survey, which explored world perceptions of homosexuality, based on 2018 data, was published. DiversAnd were invited to participate as an advisor in shaping the methodology for the next edition of the survey, strongly encouraging for the development of more studies that specifically focus on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people in Andorra.

On IDAHOBIT on 17 May, the Ministry of Social Affairs [launched](#) an awareness campaign against LGBTI-phobia, which featured posters and signs on buses and traffic lights.

Civil society continued to lobby for a specific LGBTIQ+ law.

## ARMENIA

The government [took](#) no steps this past year to enact legislation that would [protect](#) people from discrimination, harassment, or violence on the basis of SOGIESC. ECRI's report on Armenia, published in March, [noted](#) with concern that the current draft of the Equality Law, stalled since [2018](#), does not include any of these grounds. Pink Armenia's report, The Human Rights Situation of LGBT People in Armenia During 2022, published in May, [highlighted](#) that the police are often perpetrators of abuses against LGBT people.

Pink documented [51](#) cases of discrimination based on SOGI

this year, of which 16 were reported to law enforcement bodies. Some of these were rejected, and others have not been processed in a meaningful way.

RightSide released several interviews with LGBTIQ+ people (see [here](#) and [here](#)), who shared their life stories and experiences of discrimination and violence.

RightSide held an empowerment [training](#) for LGBTIQ+ youth and a rehabilitation [retreat](#) for sex workers in April, and a Gender-inclusive Empowerment [Camp](#) in August. Pink [held](#) its third Pride Camp in June. NTC [organised](#) the second edition of Armenian Gender Academy.

## AUSTRIA

In July, the Equal Treatment Ombudsman [called](#) for comprehensive legislation that would protect LGBTI people in all areas of life. Civil society organisations [launched](#) the [#schutzfüralle](#) [Eng: Protection for All] campaign, published a [position paper](#), and issued a [petition](#) calling to close the gaps in protection against discrimination.

Following a 2022 [announcement](#), a cross-party LGBTIQ Intergroup was [formed](#) in the Parliament in [January](#) this year, with representatives from all parties, except for the far-right FPÖ (Freedom Party). The Intergroup [hosted](#) its first event in parliament in April, where a drag queen also spoke (see more under Bias-motivated Speech).

The Social and Health Ministry [presented](#) the first Austrian LGBTIQ+ health report in June, finding that 89% of respondents had experienced discrimination in the past two years and highlighted that this has a negative impact on their health status.

## >THEMES

A grey rainbow statue to commemorate LGBT victims of Nazi persecution was installed in Vienna in June. All judgements during the Second Republic which unjustly condemned LGBTIQ people because of consensual sexual behaviour will be annulled and they will receive economic reparations. An apology by the parliament to the victims remains outstanding.

Several actors in the Catholic Church in Austria affirmed that LGBTIQ+ people are treated with respect, with several events and services catering to the community.

### AZERBAIJAN

In March, the European Parliament adopted its report on EU-Azerbaijan relations, recommending that the government adopt firm legislation to protect LGBTI people from discrimination and violence, wrongful arrest, and police abuse.

On IDAHOBIT on 17 May, the UK Embassy raised the rainbow flag in the capital, receiving harsh public criticism.

ECRI published its sixth periodic report on Azerbaijan in June, concluding that the government had not taken any steps to protect LGBTI people from discrimination and violence and ensure their equality. ol events after being accused of ‘LGBTQ propaganda’.

### BELGIUM

The parliament and the Prime Minister celebrated IDAHOBIT again this year. Municipalities also continued to raise the rainbow flag on IDAHOBIT and organise events (see here, here, here, here, here, and here).

The Ministry of Mobility announced on the occasion of IDAHOBIT that municipalities can request a rainbow pedestrian crossing from the Flemish Roads and Traffic Agency - in May over a third have already done so. The municipality of Hemiksem wanted to also install a rainbow traffic light, but the traffic institute deemed it unsafe and confusing. The rail company NMBS/SNCB ran a rainbow-coloured train from Antwerp on IDAHOBIT and a #rainbow in Liège.

Civil society petitioned the parliament to ban facial recognition technology in Brussels, which disproportionately impacts LGBTIQ+ people, migrants, homeless people, and racial and ethnic minorities.

Three laws on discrimination were amended to replace “sex change” as a protected group with “medical or social transition” and to recognise multiple discrimination. The definition of sexual orientation was updated to reflect that sexual orientation can be fluid.

### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In late June, Republika Srpska adopted the Law on a Non-Enforcement of Decisions of the Constitutional Court, which prohibits the implementation of the Court’s decisions in the entity. On 5 July, representatives of the European Parliament issued a statement condemning the law.

Ahead of the fourth Pride March in Sarajevo, the city mayor declined to approve illuminating the City Hall with the rainbow flag. LGBTI activists plan to file a lawsuit based on discrimination on SOGI grounds.

### BULGARIA

The new Law on Protection from Domestic Violence (LPDV), which was in the drafting process for over two years, fails to protect those in a same-sex relationship and anyone who does not live together with their partner.

### CYPRUS

ECRI’s report on Cyprus called for the development and adoption of a national LGBTI strategy. The Justice Ministry has been tasked with creating a multi-ministerial committee to develop this strategy.

### CROATIA

The Ombudsman for Gender Equality shared that she received 34 complaints relating to LGBTIQ rights in 2022.

The Rainbow Family Association’s study found that three out of four LGBTQ people in Croatia have experienced discrimination and that the fear of future discrimination or violence is very common. LORI’s study about young LGBTIQ people in Dubrovnik-Neretva found that two-thirds are planning to leave the area, most are not open about their identities, three-quarters have experienced verbal harassment and almost a third sexual violence.

The Možemo! party presented a package of 13 legislative changes to improve LGBTIQ equality, including on family recognition, medically assisted reproduction, trans healthcare, so-called ‘conversion practices’ and hate crimes, establishing the party as LGBTIQ+ friendly.

## >THEMES

Možemo! are in opposition, and all their suggestions have been ignored by the government.

The biggest opposition party, SDP, founded an LGBTQ+ Forum (similar to working groups) and promised to include NGOs.

Several trans people and a mother of a trans person shared their stories in the media this year (see here, here, here, and here), to tackle stigma and discrimination.

### CZECHIA

The report 'Being LGBTQ+ in Czechia' found that 43% had been discriminated against or harassed in the past five years and over a third just in the past 12 months. These rates were the highest among trans and non-binary respondents.

In its assessment of the implementation of priority recommendations in March, ECRI urged the government to adopt its draft comprehensive strategy on LGBTI equality.

### DENMARK

One of Denmark's largest companies Chr. Hansen withdrew its support to Copenhagen Pride in June, for fear of boycotts and loss of income. 400 employees signed a letter of protest.

For the first time, both municipalities of Aarhus and Odense adopted broad LGBT+ policies covering a wide array of initiatives. In 2023, the new government reconfirmed its intention to fulfil the LGBT+ Action Plan (2022-2025) of the previous government.

### ESTONIA

Civil society continued to advocate for anti-discrimination legislation that covers all areas of life and SOGIESC grounds.

Over 200 young people and LGBT+ activists left the EESTI 200 party in February, after one of their members was accused of sexual harassment and attempted rape.

### FINLAND

432 MP candidates signed Seta's pledge of commitment in the lead-up to the national elections, 33 of whom were elected to parliament, but most are in opposition parties. Seta's target goals for the 2023 elections included a

rainbow action plan, making legal gender recognition accessible for minors, a ban on intersex surgeries, the introducing of a third legal gender category, regulations on surrogacy and recognition of multiple-parent families, and a ban on so-called 'conversion practices'.

Seta published a report about the socio-economic marginalisation of LGBTQ+ people, also noting that services such as trans-specific healthcare or surrogacy require capital that many do not have. Seta called for data gathering on the issue.

### FRANCE

The new National LGBT+ Action Plan (2023-2026) was published in July, consisting of over 100 measures. Activist organisations expressed disappointment with the level of implementation of the previous action plan and the lack of cooperation with civil society in crafting the new plan. The National Consultative Commission on Human Rights strongly criticised the implementation of the previous plan.

Civil society organisations expressed serious concern about the appointment in July of two ministers, Aurore Bergé and Bérangère Couillard, who have had problematic stances on LGBTI- and specifically trans inclusion before.

In March, the municipality of Paris launched an online training platform for civil servants on working with trans clients during administrative procedures.

In November, the Senate passed a draft bill acknowledging the state's role in wrongly convicting thousands for sexual orientation but rejected the idea of financial compensation.

### GEORGIA

(See also under Bias-motivated Speech)

The new State Concept of Gender Equality, adopted in January, is cis/hetero normative and fails to mention sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. The 2022-2030 National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights also completely omits LGBTQI+ rights. CSOs repeatedly appealed to the government but received no answer.

In March, Levan Ioseliani was appointed as the new Public Defender. Civil society had supported three of the 19

## >THEMES

candidates competing for the position, but Ioseliani was not one of them.

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT, the Public Defender released a [statement](#) identifying the LGBT+ rights situation in Georgia as a serious problem. Embassies and international organisations also [published](#) a statement, highlighting that Georgia's key policies on human rights and development fail to mention LGBTQI people and that politicians keep perpetuating hate speech.

### GERMANY

The government continued to implement the [National Action Plan for Sexual and Gender Diversity](#), which was part of the government's 2021 [coalition treaty](#), and was adopted in November 2022. In March this year, the process of setting up working groups [started](#), with the involvement of [almost 80](#) civil society organisations. The thematic working groups will monitor the implementation process and share their assessment with the Federal Parliament in the autumn of 2024. Civil society [called for](#) sufficient financing and speedy implementation.

In June, the Independent Federal Commissioner for Anti-Discrimination [released](#) its 2022 annual report, finding a 22% increase in reported cases. 4% of the cases concerned discrimination based on sexual orientation and 21% based on gender. Civil society continued to advocate for a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, which is included in the Action Plan (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). Over 100 organisations [joined](#) the 'AGG Reform Now' campaign.

In line with the parliament's [decision](#) in 2022, this year's commemoration of the victims of nazi persecution [remembered](#) LGBT victims for the first time.

### GREECE

The equal treatment law was amended in February to include disability as a protected ground in all areas of life. Civil society [voiced](#) firm criticism that SOGI grounds are only included under employment and lawmakers failed to change this.

The conservative New Democracy Party [retained](#) its power in the national elections that were held in June. Three far-right parties [entered](#) parliament.

Prime Minister Mitsotakis continued to support legal reform to advance LGBTQI+ rights, following the adoption

of the [National Strategy for Equality of LGBTQI+ people](#) (2021-2023) last year.

The government is yet to set up a body in charge of addressing LGBTQ rights.

### HUNGARY

ECRI expressed serious concern about the deterioration of LGBTI rights in the past years and [recommended](#) that Hungary put in place an LGBTI action plan.

Hungary [became](#) the only EU country without a female minister.

The Diverse Hungary cross-party LGBTQ group [held](#) an LGBTQ forum at the Budapest City Hall in April.

Fidesz and Mi Hazánk representatives [vetoed](#) a public place being named after Alan Turing in Budapest, because he was gay.

An [assessment](#) of the impact of the abolition of the Equal Treatment Directorate shows that there are barely any cases concerning LGBTIQ or Roma people before the Commissioner of Fundamental Rights.

CSOs continued to request a meeting with the Ombudsman but received no invitation.

### ICELAND

As part of Iceland's Presidency of the Council of Europe, Iceland [hosted](#) this year's IDAHOT Forum in May in Reykjavik. Implementing Iceland's first-ever comprehensive [LGBTI Action Programme](#) (2022-2025). Some ministries [received](#) training on LGBTI issues from civil society this year. All ministries have actions assigned to them in the Action Programme and some have started implementation already. A dashboard is now [available](#) where the public can follow the process implementation under each action.

### IRELAND

Several rainbow crossings and steps were installed again this year (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

The government [published](#) a report summarising the issues raised by the 569 submissions to the public consultation of the Review of the Equality Acts. Submissions addressed all the equality grounds, as well as proposed protections for gender identity and more.

## >THEMES

Following a working group's [final report](#) on the issue, the government [announced](#) it would introduce a law to exonerate gay and bisexual men who were prosecuted when 'homosexuality' was still illegal. In June, the Government [issued](#) a long-awaited apology.

Trans organisations, groups and peer support initiatives [launched](#) the Trans Groups Alliance Strategic Plan (2023-2027).

CSOs also [launched](#) an all Island LGBTQIA+ Forum in April.

### ITALY

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May, President Sergio Mattarella [spoke](#) up for LGBT rights again this year. The Senate [adopted](#) a motion to [combat](#) criminalisation based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) worldwide.

In early October, the outgoing government [adopted](#) a National LGBT+ Strategy for the period of 2022-2025. The Strategy features six key areas, work, safety, health, education and sport, culture and media, monitoring and evaluation, but some have [highlighted](#) gaps in terms of indicators, deadlines, and resources. The new government [condemned](#) the adoption.

### KAZAKHSTAN

On the occasion of IDAHOLBIT in May, activists [held up](#) the rainbow flag at the [mausoleum](#) of Khoja Akhmet Yasawi in the Turkestan region.

Over 20 embassies [released](#) a support message urging the government to respect the rights of the LGBTQIA+ community on IDAHOLBIT.

### KOSOVO

Civil society [marked](#) IDAHOBIT in May. The Government Building was [lit up](#) with rainbow lights again, and several state institutions, embassies, the [National University Library](#), and the EU Office in Kosovo raised a rainbow flag. Prime Minister Kurti [tweeted](#) in support of the community, but did not post on Facebook, which many [saw](#) as reluctance to stand with LGBTI people on platforms where he has a huge following.

Civil society continued its cooperation with the [Office of Good Governance](#) and the [Prime Minister](#) and held several meetings on the rights of LGBTI people.

### KYRGYZSTAN

According to monitoring of a local organisation, Kyrgyz Indigo, LGBT people continue facing discrimination, harassment and violence both from state and non-state actors.

In 2023, according to the organisation, 119 cases of such discrimination and violence were reported. Furthermore, trans people continue facing difficulties in obtaining legal gender recognition (LGR) as a result of removal of legal provision for LGR in 2020. Kyrgyz Indigo reported 15 such cases. Local organisations also continue providing legal consultations for LGBTI people. Within this year, Kyrgyz Indigo reported providing such support to 105 cases: outings and threats (18%), fake dates and blackmail (13%), physical violence (10%), family violence (16%), theft and extortion (10%), police violence (20%). It should be noted that more than a third of fake date cases were perpetrated by the police.

ECOM's annual Report on Violations of LGBT People's Rights in Kyrgyzstan in 2022 [documented](#) 31 cases. Most cases related to discrimination in employment and healthcare, and being lured on 'fake dates'. Most of those discriminated against were people living with HIV.

On December 25, 2023, members of the Kyrgyz Parliamentary Committee on social policy [rejected](#) a draft bill on anti-discrimination, citing the need for improvements. In the discussions, MP Aigul Aidarova (Butun Kyrgyzstan) emphasised the necessity of clearly defining the grounds for non-discrimination in the law. She expressed concern that without precise definitions, "people with other sexual orientation" might exploit the law, suggesting that the anti-discrimination legislation should not be misused to shield the LGBTI community from discrimination.

### LATVIA

Riga's mayor, Mārtiņš Staķis, raised the rainbow flag on the City Council's building ahead of the Pride festival, but was criticised by several conservative politicians who demanded its removal (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). In June, the mayor [said](#) the flag would not be removed, but [apologised](#) for not coordinating with Council members about flying it. Hundreds of businesses and organisations [expressed](#) support for Staķis's action and asked for the flag to stay on the building.

## >THEMES

### LIECHTENSTEIN

The government committed to commission a study on the lived experiences of LGBT people in the country.

On the occasion of Pride month in June, the bus company Liemobil introduced buses with a rainbow design.

### LITHUANIA

The Vilnius City Hall was lit up in rainbow colours on the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May. Previously, a number of politicians from the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union party requested LGBTI-related flags to be removed from state institutions.

### MALTA

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May, the government launched and presented the new and third LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2027). The plan covers 10 sectors and 94 measures to combat discrimination and violence. It includes police training; addressing data gaps; inclusive education and review of sex-ed curricula; mainstreaming sexual health; and capacity building of professionals working with asylum seekers and migrants. The plan was drafted in cooperation with the LGBTIQ Consultation Council, which includes a range of stakeholders, including civil society groups.

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

After a year of consultation, the group Drachma Parents presented the manifesto of Parents of Trans Persons to the Speaker of the Parliament in January.

### MOLDOVA

The buildings of the EU Delegation and the US Embassy raised a rainbow flag on the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May. 30 Embassies joined this year's IDAHOBIT statement and urged the authorities to protect Pride participants in June. In his 2022 annual report, the Ombudsperson called on the state to protect the rights of LGBT people.

### MONACO

AS Monaco's players wore a rainbow jersey on IDAHOBIT in May.

A bank (see under Employment) lit up its building for Pride month in June.

### MONTENEGRO.

In May, the government adopted a new Action Plan for the implementation of Montenegro's 2019-2023 LGBTI Strategy. The Action Plan envisions more research and training for the police, judiciary, teachers, medical professionals and civil servants. The government put in place 45,000 euro to accomplish this. In October, civil society started calling for a new strategy as the current one expires at the end of the year.

In June, Juventas, Queer Montenegro, Spektra and Stana refused to attend a meeting with the Minister for Human and Minority Rights, Fatmir Đeka for his failure to make progress on LGBTI rights equality. The Minister, for instance, failed to appoint a director for the human rights directorate, which caused the delay in the implementation of the Strategy; slowed down the LGR law reform process; failed to intervene when politicians engaged in hate speech; and did not make progress on family rights.

As part of its fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR), UN States recommended Montenegro to tackle discrimination and violence against LGBTQI people. The Ministry of Minority and Human Rights continued the preparation of the anti-discrimination law, with support from the EU.

In June, incoming President Jakov Milatovic convened his first meeting with civil society organisations, including those working on LGBTI rights, and assured them of his support.

### NETHERLANDS

Civil society addressed the stagnation of LGBTI+ emancipation in The Netherlands during Pride Amsterdam 2023. Organisations asked government and political parties for strong measures, with research for the first time showing a small decrease in acceptance among the population, the country taking fourteenth place in the Rainbow Europe Index, increased online hate speech, more reported incidents of violence and discrimination and increased feelings of unsafety.

55 rainbow municipalities continued their work this year, and with government funding.

Transgender Network's annual monitoring report found that the number of reported anti-trans discrimination cases almost doubled from 78 in 2021 to 149 in 2022. This was the highest annual number to date.

## >THEMES

After almost 20 years of campaigning by COC, in January the Senate adopted Constitutional amendments to cover sexual orientation and disability in the prohibition of discrimination. During the parliamentary procedures, it was made explicit that the existing constitutional ban on discrimination on the basis of sex, includes gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. The provision entered into force in February.

After calls from civil society, the Dutch government published its first policy document addressing emancipation of bi+ people, probably the largest group in the Dutch LGBTI+ community.

### NORTH MACEDONIA

The parliamentary Intergroup on LGBTI people's rights celebrated IDAHOBIT again this year. President Stevo Pendarovski also published a supportive statement.

Following the adoption of the new Gender Equality Strategy in 2022, the draft bill on Gender Equality was published in June, which sparked intense anti-gender backlash and hate speech (see Bias Motivated Speech). The bill would distinguish between 'sex' and 'gender'. Under the influence of the anti-gender movement, the Minister of Labor and Social Policy did not continue the process of adoption of the law.

In its September report, ECRI warned that the government is yet to carry out a comprehensive study on all forms of discrimination against LGBT persons. ECRI expressed disappointment that the 2022 Equality and Anti-discrimination Strategy hardly mentions LGBTI people. It recommended that an LGBTI working group be set up to facilitate communication between the government and civil society.

In November, the Parliament started the procedure for the election of four members of the Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination. The Network for Protection against Discrimination demanded a transparent election based on merit and in accordance with legal criteria, demanding that all four mandates be for five years. After a public interview, the parliamentary commission adopted a proposal list in which three candidates were chosen because of party affiliation without particular experience or knowledge.

One candidate, a co-ordinator of the Network for

Protection against Discrimination and an advocate for LGBTI rights, was elected for the term of one year and two months. Civil society accused the Assembly of partisan and illegal elections and of political discrimination.

### NORWAY

The new Action Plan for Gender and Sexual Diversity (2023-2026) was published in February. It identifies three priority areas: LGBT+ people with a minority background and in religious communities; trans people and people with gender incongruence; and sports for all. The Action Plan includes 49 measures. Civil society criticised the plan for not including people with disabilities explicitly.

The Co-operative Council for Religious and Belief Communities (STL) has organised dialogue meetings between representatives from queer organisations and religious and belief communities. They published a joint statement in September, emphasising a wish to listen more to each other and focus on common ground, as well as supporting each other when being subjected to attacks.

### POLAND

In March, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls visited Poland and emphasised concerns about restrictions on access to abortion, inequality, and the mistreatment of non-Ukrainian refugees and asylum seekers.

In March, the Katowice District Court ordered that PiS councillor Grażyna Welon apologise to city council chair Ewa Szota (KO) for outing her in 2020 and pay PLN 30,000 to KPH.

Krakow City Hall raised the rainbow flag on the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May.

On 5 June, the European Court of Justice ruled that Poland's 2019 justice reforms, which for instance prevent courts from applying EU law, are incompatible with EU legislation.

Much of the year centred around the autumn general elections. During the summer, mass protests were held against the government's policies, including those targeting LGBT people and women. The government, which had been in power since 2015, lost the elections to the opposition coalition in October. By the end of the year a government coalition was formed with a clear commitment to LGBTI rights.

## >THEMES

The Opatrzności Bożej Evangelical-Augsburg parish in Wrocław stood in support of the June Pride march and invited the community to a mass.

### PORTUGAL

Chega, the national conservative, right-wing populist political party, continued to try blocking legal measures for LGBTQIA+ equality and made hostile remarks throughout the year.

The President made a statement and Prime Minister António Costa committed to continuing to tackle discrimination against LGBTI people on the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May. The Lisbon City Councils raised the rainbow flag and for the first time, Ministries did the same and the Parliament was lit up in rainbow colours. There was considerable debate in parliament whether the flag should be raised and the Porto City Council voted down the move to ‘officially’ raise the flag. It was later displayed on the square outside the Council. The trans flag was also raised at the Lisbon City Council on Trans Day of Visibility in March.

The Observatory on Discrimination Against LGBTI+ People received 469 complaints between 2020-2022 on cases of discrimination and violence based on SOGIESC. Less than a quarter of the cases were reported to the authorities.

In November, after a legislative process initiated by the extreme-right wing party, proposals for a Constitutional revision were submitted, with political parties amending the equality principle to, namely, include gender (BE, PAN), gender identity (LIVRE, PS), gender expression and sex characteristics (LIVRE).

### RUSSIA

In April, Mariana Katsarova was appointed UN Special Rapporteur on Russia. The mandate, created in 2022, was extended in October. In September, the Special Rapporteur reported about the “significant deterioration” in human rights across Russia since the invasion of Ukraine and a “systematic crackdown” on civil society, including through persecution and detention.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination issued its concluding observations in April, warning about police violence against LGBTQI+ people who face racial discrimination. During the review of the Russian report, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights asked a number of questions about

LGBT rights in Russia, notably about when comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation would be adopted.

In May, Coming Out and Sphere published a joint report on the situation of the LGBT+ community in Russia, showing that the Russian invasion of Ukraine and mobilisation had a strong negative impact on the psychological state of Russian LGBTQ+ people, their economic situation, and access to medication (mainly gender affirmative hormone therapy and antidepressants). Almost every LGBT respondent has noticed an increase in homophobia and transphobia in the public sphere. One in five respondents (21%) faced threats of physical violence because of their sexual orientation or trans identity in 2022. 15% had experienced domestic violence. 14% have experienced online harassment. LGBTQ+ people encounter diverse violence most frequently in the North Caucasus, the Urals, the Far East, and Siberia. Everyday homophobia and transphobia (discrimination in the workplace/study, conflicts with others, denial of services) are common in the Southern Federal District. Trans persons are the most vulnerable of all respondents. They experience almost all types of violence and discrimination more often than others; war and mobilisation have also affected them more than others.

In November, Russia underwent its fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The working session of the UPR process raised the issue of LGBT rights in Russia, with recommendations from many countries stating the need to stop the persecution of LGBT people and LGBT activists.

In December, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe reviewed Russia’s implementation of ECHR decisions against Russia on violations of the rights of LGBT people. It noted deterioration of LGBTI rights in Russia, stressed further the need to change legislation, notably by making discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation a circumstance aggravating a crime, and repealing the “anti-propaganda” laws; to organise awareness-raising activities promoting protection of the human rights of LGBTI persons; to facilitate issuance of the Supreme Court’s guidance to the judges and instructions from the relevant executive bodies’ to their staff aimed at such protection; and to ensure effective policing and security of the LGBTI public events.

### SAN MARINO

The general situation of LGBT people significantly worsened since the escalation of anti-LGBT attacks and speech targeting the 2022 EuroPride in Belgrade.



## >THEMES

The Council to monitor the implementation of [Strategy of Prevention and Protection against Discrimination](#) and its related Action Plan, adopted in 2022, was set up this year. It includes [three representatives](#) of LGBTIQ organisations. On the occasion of IDAHOBIT, Serbia's Ombudsperson Zoran Pašalić [called](#) for sanctions against anti-LGBTI hate crimes and for providing free legal aid to LGBT victims of discrimination and violence. The Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue called for inclusion and equality. The Democratic Party [issued](#) a statement of support.

This year's conference during Belgrade Pride [focused](#) on the need for legal protection of trans, intersex and gender-variant communities.

### SLOVAKIA

ECRI's [report](#) on Slovakia, published in March, highlighted that the government is still to adopt an action plan to prevent and combat intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI+ persons. Yet, this year [marked](#) a wave of anti-LGBT bills being submitted to the parliament, both by government and opposition MPs, which the community has seen as alarming in the aftermath of the 2022 anti-LGBT terrorist attack (see above). Several sources reported that LGBTI+ and particularly trans people are considering moving abroad (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

In June, a number of Lutheran pastors formally [asked](#) the Church's leadership to support LGBTI+ people in the congregation. The letter was signed by pastors and other people from various Lutheran congregations in Slovakia. The Church leadership has discussed the petition at the Religious Committee and plan to continue discussions at the Synod. Formally, the Church leadership is bound to consider such petitions and meet with petitioners.

### SLOVENIA

In October, State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour, Dan Juvan (MDDSZ) [committed](#) to the preparation and publication of the country's first National Strategy for the Equality of LGBTIQ+ Persons and to engage in extensive consultations with civil society. The move follows up on the call of the Parliamentary Commission for Petitions, Human Rights, and Equal Opportunities in 2022 that the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities should prepare and adopt a strategy. The strategy is expected in 2024.

### SPAIN

FELGTBI+'s study [found](#) that more than half of respondents hid their identity from their family. The Basque Youth Observatory [found](#) that 14% of LGBT youth (15-29) felt discriminated against on the basis of SOGI. 70% of LGBTI+ people and 82% of trans people in Palma have been [discriminated](#) against.

Valencia [adopted](#) its first Municipal Plan for Sexual and Gender Diversity (2023-2027), which among other things, envisions gender-neutral bathrooms and changing rooms. Castilla-La Mancha [introduced](#) the Comprehensive Care Service for LGTBI people in March.

In July, the Canary Islands agreed to [set up](#) a Consultative Committee for Social Equality and Non-Discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, to implement the regional LGBTI law adopted in 2021.

In November, Madrid [proposed regional amendments](#) to curtail the rights of its LGBTI population especially trans people, including allowing conversion practices for trans people. 30 organisations organised a protest that [gathered](#) 15,000 participants, according to organisers.

### SWEDEN

As part of the Swedish Presidency of the EU, Sweden and the European Commission [hosted](#) the High Level Conference on LGBTIQ Equality in the EU in April. Following the end of the Presidency, civil society [urged](#) the government to continue working on gender equality, LGBTIQ rights, and sexual and reproductive rights.

In July, the Minister for Equality Paulina Brandberg [announced](#) that the state would provide 4.6 million SEK to municipalities and regions to increase knowledge about the situation of LGBTIQ people and to promote digital meeting places.

1.4 million SEK will go to the Gender Equality Agency (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten) for a survey with LGBTIQ people who are exposed to partnership violence.

During Stockholm Pride in August, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson raised the flag at the PM's official residence. RFSL [welcomed](#) the move but asked for a more effective response to hate speech in parliament instead. Prime Minister Kristersson also, during Stockholm Pride, hosted

## >THEMES

a Pride cocktail party, which was the first time a Swedish Prime Minister hosted a rainbow event at his residence.

### SWITZERLAND

Following several parliamentary requests, the Federal Department of Home Affairs concluded in January that LGBTI rights should be dealt with by the Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE) from 2024 onwards. Currently, LGBTI rights are covered by various federal offices, but on an ad hoc basis. The change will ensure more consistent focus. FOGE will hire two new staff members and will work in consultation with cantons, communes, civil society, and other stakeholders. (see more under Bias-motivated Speech)

The Canton of Geneva set into force a new law on equality and the fight against discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and intersex. The Basel-Stadt parliament revision of the canton's equality act to explicitly include SOGIGESC was delayed this year, after discussions in the parliament and a heated, primarily anti-trans discussion amongst the public. The draft sets out that gender is determined by several factors, including sex characteristics and each person's self-identification. The draft was criticised by some.

The canton of Basel Landschaft decided that its Office for Equal Opportunities will cover LGBTIQ rights in the future, but without additional budget allocation.

Switzerland's National Human Rights Institution was founded in May.

Geneva, Zurich and Bern published updated material about the rights of LGBTI people.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled in Semenya v. Switzerland that intersex athlete Caster Semenya's rights to privacy and effective remedy were violated when the International Association of Athletics Federations banned her from competing when she refused to undergo hormone treatment. The Court also found that there was a violation of the prohibition of discrimination, establishing that sex characteristics are a protected ground in the Convention. The case was referred to the grand chamber, upon request from Switzerland.

Zurich inaugurated a cemetery section for LGBTIQ people; all 'spots' were reserved within a few months.

In December, the National Council supported the prohibition of hate speech and discrimination in the access to goods and services on the basis of sex / gender. The parliamentary initiative also needs the support of the council of states.

### TAJIKISTAN

In 2023 many LGBT people were charged with "Illegal production and circulation of pornographic materials or objects" (Article 241 of the Criminal Code) after police detained them and found photos and videos on their phones that were deemed to be pornographic. Typically, police took the phones by force, without a court sanction, after threatening the detainees with reprisals.

### TURKEY

The government dropped a number of planned constitutional amendments after the earthquake in February. These planned to introduce a constitutional ban on marriage equality and could have paved the way to ban LGBTI+ associations. Civil society remains concerned that the initiatives will be tabled again.

Kaos GL and the May 17 Association released the "LGBTI+'s Access to Justice" report, finding inadequate mechanisms, difficulty finding LGBTI+-friendly lawyers, and high costs.

### UKRAINE

The war has resulted in a boost to codifying LGBTI equality in Ukraine, with several politicians echoing that supporting LGBTI rights is a stance against Russia (see here, here, here, and here). The war has also shifted public attitudes towards gender equality.

Two draft bills on anti-discrimination legislation were discussed this year. Bill no. 0931 aims to protect LGBTI people from physical and psychological violence, insults, neglect, and hate speech. Bill no. 6325-1 D would amend certain legislative acts to combat direct or indirect discrimination and intolerance, including against people on the basis of SOGI.

During Pride month, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs changed their social media profile photos to feature rainbow symbols. The Holos party did the same.

## >THEMES

Nash Svit's [annual report](#) documented 105 cases of discrimination and violence against LGBTI people in 2022, a decrease compared to the previous two years.

### UNITED KINGDOM

In April, the EHRC [recommended](#) that the Equality Act be changed to define 'sex' as 'biological sex'. The position is in line with PM Sunak's 2022 [statements](#). The Scotland and Wales Committees of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) firmly [condemned](#) the recommendations, saying they would have a detrimental impact on trans people. In May, over 30 LGBTQ+ organisations [sent](#) a joint letter to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) about the harm that the EHRC has been causing to trans people. In 2022, GANHRI [recommended](#) that the EHRC increase efforts to protect trans people and consult with LGBTQ+ groups.

In November, another ruling in Scotland [affirmed](#) that trans women who have legally transitioned are included in the definition of 'women'. Wales is set to [update](#) its Gender Quotas Bill with a trans-inclusive definition for women.

A leaked government guidance for the UK's 500,000 civil servants [made](#) headlines in July because it would mandate the protection of pro-trans and anti-trans beliefs on an equal footing and ban trans people who had not changed their legal gender from using the bathroom matching their identity. Both trans and cis civil servants [responded](#) with alarm.

In Scotland, a civil servant who argued that his employer's diversity and inclusion policies are an ideological imposition, [lost](#) his court case. The policies covered race, sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Post Office [removed](#) gendered titles from its forms this year.

The Stonewall report, *Ace in the UK* [found](#) that asexual people face discrimination and harassment in work and healthcare and many hide their identity.

In November, the Scottish Government published its [Non-binary Equality Action Plan](#), a comprehensive plan to improve the lives of non-binary people.

In February, the Welsh Government published an [LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#), which includes banning conversion practices, investing in hate crime prevention, providing trans guidance for schools and local authorities, and supporting the family lives of LGBTQ+ people. An [LGBTQ+ Action Plan tracker](#) was published, so that anyone in Wales can monitor updates and progress against each action and activity in the Plan.

### UZBEKISTAN

An article [shared](#) the experiences of several LGBT people from the community, regarding exclusion, discrimination, and violence.