

# LITHUANIA

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Three victims were identified in the investigation launched against MP Petras Gražulis in 2022 after he called LGBT people “degenerated” and “spreading diseases”. Seimas revoked Gražulis’ legal immunity in November. The investigations are still ongoing. This year, Gražulis tabled an amendment to the Law on the Protection of Minors from the Negative Effects of Public Information, which calls sex education in schools “sexualisation” and “sexual exploitation” of children. The Speaker of the Parliament said the attempt was more about political gain than genuine concern for children.

Mayoral candidate in Kelmė, Asta Zavadskienė (Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats) called ‘homosexuality’ a disease that was important to recognise so children can be protected. Zavadskienė later apologised and said her statement was misinterpreted.

Former MEP Vytautas Landsbergis (Homeland Union) compared ‘homosexuals’ to paedophiles in a statement that was condemned by the Minister of Justice and other politicians. Landsbergis issued a defensive apology later.

A man was found guilty and fined 1,500 euro for an article about Baltic Pride in 2022, where he said ‘homosexuals’ should be “isolated and killed”. Another man was also fined 3,000 EURO for hate speech targeting gay politician Tomas Vytautas Raskevičius in 2022.

The news portal Kaunožinios received threats and faced homophobic comments on social media. Although the outlet reported these incidents to the police, authorities did not initiate an investigation.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Civil society continued to document cases of sexual violence, family violence, and LGBT people being lured on fake dates. At the same time, victims are scared to come forward in fear for victim blaming or additional harassment and trauma due to their identity.

A man painted hateful slogans and nazi symbols on a rainbow crossing in Vilnius in July - the police launched an investigation.

In December, a gay couple was violently attacked by a group of perpetrators, LGL prompted the General Prosecutor to start the pre-trial investigation.

## EDUCATION

(See also under Bias-motivated Speech)

A draft amendment to the Law on Education was tabled in September. The amendment proposes integrating sex education into religion and ethics courses.

Following the ECHR ruling on *Macaté v. Lithuania* in January (see also under Freedom of Expression), the Ministry of Justice proposed to repeal the anti-LGBTI “propaganda” law. In response to this, MP Gražulis initiated a proposal to ban the “sexualisation of children”.

An LGL survey showed that LGBT students aged 14 to 19 feel more insecure about their sexual orientation in the classroom compared to the previous survey from 2017. Over six hundred students participated in the survey, examining their experiences between 2021 and 2022.

## EMPLOYMENT

LGL held the first ever conference focusing on employment, Direction: Employment. Strengthening LGBTQ Workplace Inclusion, which was joined by the Minister of Economy and Innovation and several Ambassadors.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

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.

## FAMILY

In March, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights urged Lithuania to provide legal recognition for same-sex couples.

Three same-sex couples turned to the courts in April to have their partnerships legally recognised as marriages. The couples presented different requests to the courts, namely, the recognition of civil partnership, the recognition of marriage, and the recognition of a marriage formed abroad in the Lithuanian civil registry. The courts rejected the first attempt on 21 April, saying there was no legal basis for the claim. The second attempt was denied in July, but the couple appealed and asked the second-instance court to request clarification from the Constitutional Court on whether the current legal system is discriminatory.

The parliament's Human Rights Committee hosted a [conference](#) about parenting, including the rights and challenges of LGBT+ parents.

In May, the parliament [passed](#) the Civil Union Bill in its first reading with a [vote](#) of 60:52. The draft bill makes civil unions available for any couple regardless of gender. The draft is considered a much weaker version than the 2021 [Partnership Bill](#) and [seen](#) by many as too much of a compromise. Civil unions would be registered by a notary, not the civil registry office, and partners could not take each other's last names. The law would be a positive development in terms of inheritance rights and accessing a partner's health information. It however does not mention children at all, and like the previous Partnership Bill, does not allow for adoption either. The second vote was [put](#) on the agenda of the autumn session. The vote was delayed, and there has been no announcement of a new date.

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT, 22 embassies [expressed](#) support for the LGBTIQ+ community, including the right to be recognised as a family.

The Vilnius District Court [denied](#) the request of a long-term same-sex couple, who sought to legally require the Vilnius City Civil Registry Office to recognise their marriage. The couple intends to pursue cassation.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Vilnius Pride, [held](#) on 1 July, was [attended](#) by over 5,000 participants and was joined by the city's newly elected [mayor](#). This year, the march was [organised](#) by trans organisation Trans Autonomija and Demonstrate. Despite road closures, one car [drove](#) through the crowd on one of the main streets, which many understood as a dangerous provocation. No one was injured, but the police started an investigation. Several counter protesters [were](#) also in the streets.

LGL's demonstration in September (see Freedom of Expression) was [disrupted](#) by counter-protesters. The police did not take action to secure the safety of LGBTI protesters from hostile crowds. A pre-trial investigation was initiated regarding the actions of the counter protesters, however the actions of police officers have not been investigated, despite authorities [acknowledging](#) that mistakes were made (see under Police and Law Enforcement).

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In January, the European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) in

[Macatė v. Lithuania](#) that restricting and labelling a book of fairy tales as harmful to children for including LGBTIQ+ characters is a violation of Art. 10 (freedom of expression) (see more [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). To implement the judgement, the Ministry of Justice [prepared](#) the necessary amendments to the Law on the Protection of Minors from the Negative Effects of Public Information in July. With the proposed change, information about same-sex relationships and diverse families would no [longer](#) be [considered](#) harmful. Heated debates are [expected](#) on the issue. LGL started a [petition](#) in support of the legal amendments and [held](#) a protest in September.

The Lithuanian Family Movement [announced](#) plans to submit motions to municipality councils to adopt a declaration on "stopping gender propaganda and LGBTIQ+ ideology". The plans included motions in Kaunas, Šilalė, Šilutė and Pagėgiai. Some council members expressed their support (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Motions were tabled but rejected in [Prienai](#).

In November, the Parliament [rejected](#) the Ministry of Justice's proposal to repeal the "anti-LGBTIQ propaganda" law. President Gitanas Nausėda [said](#) that a repeal would give "green light to denigrate family."

## HEALTH

Fulfilling its promise made in 2022, the Ministry of Health [made](#) monkeypox vaccines available and free for men who have sex with men.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Trans people continued to be able to access legal gender recognition (LGR) through a judicial procedure, without surgery or sterilisation.

In April, the Ombudsperson [reiterated](#) the call for a LGR procedure that is set out by law. The case L. v Lithuania remains under the enhanced supervision of the Council of Europe.

The Ministry of Justice took steps to create a working group on trans-specific issues, involving CSOs.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

An exhibition at the National Art Gallery [celebrates](#) the work of Veronika (Vėra) Šleivyte, the first Lithuanian photographer to capture love in lesbian relationships.



## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

(See also under Freedom of Assembly)

Following the disruptions of the LGL demonstration in September, the police officers conducting the investigation insisted on obtaining information about the activists' ethnicity, failed to protect the privacy of a victim during their testimony, and did not inform them about support mechanisms available.



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