



# SLOVAKIA

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Following a hate crime terrorist attack that shook the community in 2022 (see under Bias-motivated Violence), venues continued to post rainbow stickers on their doors to signal safe spaces for LGBTI+ people.

## ASYLUM

LGBTI+ and particularly trans asylum seekers from Ukraine faced serious challenges in access to gender-affirming healthcare and NGOs recommend they go to Czechia or other European countries within their reach to the West instead (see under Health).

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-LGBTI+ and particularly anti-trans hate speech, including by politicians, continued to be increasingly common. In January, Inakost released the findings of its comprehensive study with 1,600 LGBTI+ people surveyed in 2022. The study found that 58% had experienced verbal harassment, including threats and cyberbullying.

Politicians continued to use anti-LGBTI+ and anti-trans rhetoric, including to divert attention from political developments and challenges and to gain conservative votes. In January, Minister of Finance Igor Matovič wrote: “Turning 12-year-old girls into men? That’s sick. Remade men competing in women’s sports? That’s sick”. Following a protest in May (see under Freedom of Assembly), Matovič wrote about “LGBTIQXYZ+” people, adding “nowhere have I met so many primitive, arrogant, vulgar and bad people together as among these transgender activists” and that, “We must protect our children from these ‘people’”.

Ahead of the September elections, pro-Russian and anti-LGBTI+ rhetoric was very common. The far-right neo-Nazi ĽSNS party’s billboards, for instance, promised “We will protect Slovakia from LGBTI+ and gender”. Over 10,000 people signed a petition demanding that the billboard company remove them. Civil society filed a criminal complaint with the General Prosecutor and the National Criminal Agency (NAKA) launched an investigation, which was still ongoing after the elections. There is no known outcome to the investigation.

Smer, which later won the elections, also used anti-trans and homophobic campaign videos, featuring party leader Robert Fico saying “while the progressive Misho (Michal) decides whether he is a boy, a girl or a helicopter today, for us gender ideology in schools is unacceptable and marriage is a unique

union between a man and a woman.” In October, incoming PM Fico said trans people were not natural or normal. On 12 October, the European Parliament’s Party of European Socialists (PES) suspended the membership of Smer and Hlas, coalition partners, for “the clear divergence from the values of the PES family”, including on LGBTI+ rights.

In September, Chairman of the Christian-Democratic KDH Milan Majerský said LGBTI+ is a “plague” that can “destroy the society” and the “nation”. Majerský apologised, but several criminal complaints were filed against him. In October, SNS MP Rudolf Huliak made anti-LGBTI+ statements, which the NAKA started investigating.

A year after the deadly anti-LGBTI+ terrorist attack (see below), the police started investigating stickers that were posted in the capital this autumn and calling for the murder of “faggots”.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Presented in January, Inakost’s study found that 13% of respondents had been physically or sexually assaulted and 23% had experienced domestic violence. 80% are afraid in public places.

12 October marked the one year anniversary of the deadly anti-LGBTI+ terrorist attack in the capital. Commemorations were held to remember the two queer people murdered. President Zuzana Čaputová expressed her solidarity again. A report about the attack concluded that the killer did not act alone and the manifesto he shared, and which he said would hopefully inspire other attacks, was most likely co-written by others.

CSOs and the community feel betrayed and disappointed that instead of proactively protecting the community, politicians have continued their anti-LGBTI+ backlash. Over 100 civil society organisations and 33,000 individuals have signed the Ide nám o život /Our lives are at stake call, launched in 2022, demanding sanctions against hate speech by politicians, prevention and prosecution in hate crimes, support for safe spaces and support services, and other key actions. Since the attack, several bars and other venues that host LGBTI+ events have installed security cameras and hired security staff.

## EDUCATION

Inakost’s survey found that 86% had heard anti-LGBTI+ comments in school and 37% had been personally targeted by negative comments or behaviour from their classmates. In April, OĽANO tabled an amendment to the Education Act



which would [introduce](#) a parental veto on sex education in schools. The amendment was rejected.

Smer [promised](#) in its election campaign that it would seek to ban the discussion of LGBTI+ topics in schools.

The student association of Faculty of Philosophy at Comenius University, Light\* [held](#) the second annual LGBTI+ festival in March.

In November, MPs of the former OĽANO (now “Slovakia”) party [submitted a bill to parliament](#) identical to the amendment to the Education Act rejected in April, which would introduce a parental veto on sex education in schools. The first reading of the bill should take place in early 2024.

## EMPLOYMENT

On IDAHOBIT, 25 large companies [called for](#) the improvement of the rights and living conditions of LGBTI+ people in the country.

A poll from the Profesia job search website [found](#) that LGBTI+ employees are the least accepted at work compared to, for instance, ethnic minorities, foreigners, people with disabilities, and others.

The LGBTI+ Business Forum 2023 [took place](#) in June, bringing together companies, organisations, representatives of the European Labor Agency (ELA) and the European Commission.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

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.

## FAMILY

Despite the new government’s 2020 [promise](#) to adopt legislation on inheritance and property rights for cohabiting and same-sex couples, [little progress](#) took place this year. Inakost’s study found that 77% of gays and lesbians [think](#) that the most pressing issue for the LGBTI+Q community is the lack of legal recognition of same-sex partnerships. The Progressive Slovakia party, which received the second most votes, [included](#) marriage equality in its election [campaign](#). The President [continued](#) to support introducing registered partnerships. The Ombudsperson [expressed](#) support for recognising marriage or civil partnership concluded abroad.

In January, Minister of Justice Viliam Karas [proposed](#) that same-sex partners receive a ‘confidant’ status, which would allow them to visit or get medical information of their partner, for instance, if hospitalised. Civil society [expressed](#) deep disappointment with the proposal, and continued to lobby for the [adoption](#) of the Life Partnership Act and equal adoption rights for same-sex couples. The initiative was [criticised](#) by the Ombudsman and was eventually [withdrawn](#) by Minister of Justice, Jana Dubovcová in May.

In March, a parliamentary committee [adopted](#) a resolution which would recognise parental rights obtained abroad, but [reversed](#) its decision shortly after.

In May, over 30 MPs [turned](#) to the Constitutional Court [asking it](#) to call on the parliament to provide legal recognition for same-sex couples. There have been no further updates.

In the autumn, Smer [shared](#) they might seek a constitutional ban on adoptions by same-sex parents.

In October, the first-instance Žilina Regional Court [established](#) in the case of a married Slovak-Argentinian gay couple that denying permanent residence to same-sex spouses of Slovak citizens is discriminatory

The Constitutional Court [heard](#) a case concerning the recognition of same-sex marriages formed abroad. The case passed its preliminary hearing and is ongoing.

## FOREIGN POLICY

Slovakia [did not join](#) the European Commission’s infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBTI+ legislation.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Activists [held](#) a demonstration outside the parliament in May

against the proposed ban on legal gender recognition (see below). Minister of Finance Igor Matovič (see under Bias-motivated Speech) called the event “propaganda” and got into a physical fight with the participants, filmed them, verbally harassed them, and tried to take their signs away. Other MPs also joined him.

The Bratislava Pride march was held on 22 July and was not open to political parties given the upcoming elections. The festival’s slogan was ‘Proud and indestructible’. This year, the patrons of Pride included the Culture and Justice Ministers, Silvia Hroncová and Jana Dubovcová. No violent incidents were recorded, but the ultra-conservative and anti-LGBTI+ March for Family was again held at the same time.

Three allies and family members of LGBTI+ people organised the first ever Pride march in the town of Bardejov. Pride marches took place again in Košice and Banská Bystrica. Košice Pride faced opposition from counter-protesters during the march. About 30+ extremists from the neo-fascist Kotleba party attempted to disrupt the march, threw plastic bottles and yelled hate speech at attendees of the Pride.

Despite preparations and consultations with the local state police in Košice before Pride, a counter-protest took the police by surprise. Due to safety measures the police changed the route of the march. Organisers of Košice Pride felt that this was unnecessary backing down to extremists given that Košice Pride had been officially scheduled months earlier, and instead the police should have rerouted the counter protesters.

## HEALTH

The crackdown on trans healthcare services intensified this year. In late 2022, doctors and other medical professionals published a joint statement addressed to the government, calling for a halt to all trans healthcare provision. The statement, which now has over 400 signatures, has been widely condemned by human rights organisations. ECRI’s report on Slovakia welcomed the Professional guidelines to unify medical procedures for issuing medical opinions on gender reassignment (see under Legal Gender Recognition), which was adopted but then suspended in 2022, and called for its implementation. Civil society continued demanding the same.

In January, the neo-nazi People’s Party Our Slovakia proposed a law that would criminalise doctors who provide trans healthcare services.

In this climate, trans people have no access to healthcare and

many self-medicate or travel abroad. Some reported abuse by medical professionals, including verbal harassment and other forms of humiliation.

The counselling centre for LGBTI+ people in Poradna shared that in the current climate of anti-trans rhetoric and regression in legal gender recognition and trans healthcare provision, many trans people contemplate suicide or leaving the country. Another counselling centre for LGBTI+ people Prizma Košice also warned that a ban on legal gender recognition (see below) would have catastrophic mental health ramifications.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Following the 2022 terrorist attack at Tepláreň, Inakost raised over 80,000 euro this year for a community centre for LGBTI+ people, which is set to open in 2024.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The Progressive Slovakia party, which received the second most votes, included legal gender recognition (LGR) based on self-determination in its campaign programme. ECRI’s report on Slovakia called on the government to proceed with the implementation of the Professional guidelines to unify medical procedures for issuing medical opinions on gender reassignment (see under Health), which abolishes the sterility requirement but was suspended due to anti-trans pressure in 2022.

Although in April the guidelines had been finally approved by the outgoing Minister of Health Lengvarský, issues with implementation remained throughout 2023. Several state registries refused requests of trans people for legal gender change, arguing that the guidelines were not valid. Several state registries across the country conditioned legal gender change with medical proof of end to reproductive ability (castration/sterilisation), in direct violation of the Law on Birth Number stipulating conditions for legal gender change. The law does not specify which medical procedures an individual should undergo. The only condition in the law is a doctor certificate proving that medical transition has been completed.

In March, the parliament passed in the first reading a bill that would de facto ban LGR entirely. The bill was tabled by conservative MPs in February and sets out that LGR would only be available to those who can submit a genetic test proving that their ‘sex’ was “incorrectly determined” by doctors at birth. It also establishes that gendered birth numbers could not be changed, which would ‘out’ trans people, who change their name. The move, which was criticised by the Ombudsperson,



[received](#) wide media attention, including internationally, and was criticised by the [Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#), Amnesty International, [LGBTI+ organisations](#) and MEPs called for its immediate withdrawal (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)). Several demonstrations were held outside Slovakian embassies across Europe (see [here](#) for instance). Although the proposed bill had not managed to enter second reading in time for the last parliament session in June before elections in September, an identical bill was [submitted to the new parliament in November](#) by the same MPs from former OĽANO (now “Slovakia”) party, who are members of Christian Union.

## **PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE**

A young Roma queer person, Vojtěch Klinec [released](#) a song about his experiences growing up as part of two minorities.

In October, a Czech and Slovak produced film, [Úsvit](#), the story of an intersex person, premiered in theatres across Slovakia and Czechia. A trans non-professional actor, cast as an intersex character, was [awarded Best Actor Award](#) at Thessaloniki International Film Festival in Greece.

## **PUBLIC OPINION**

A study by the Slovak Academy of Sciences found that Slovaks [consider](#) LGBTI+ people to be the second most discriminated group, following the Roma.

In August, a poll by the TV channel JOJ 24 [found](#) that 40% of Slovaks support introducing registered partnership.



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