

ALBANIA

Currently, there are no legal provisions in the Republic of Albania that restrict individuals from discussing or reporting on LGBTI issues in the media. Additionally, no laws limit LGBTI people from assembling in public or private, forming associations, registering organisations, or holding events. However, in August, the Executive Director of Aleanca LGBTI was summoned by police to address a legal complaint received via email. The complaint alleged that the organisation's logo, which features a double-headed eagle with one half coloured in rainbow, was derogatory and offensive to national symbols.

AUSTRIA

In July, six billboards by German artist Anne Imhof featuring the phrase "Wish You Were Gay" were vandalised in the city of Bregenz, where they were on public display. The billboards were part of an art project described as "a love song to queer coming-of-age".

BELARUS

At the beginning of 2024, legislative amendments were introduced to expand state bodies' access to personal data, including without individuals' consent.

In January, President Lukashenko signed Decree No. 32 "On Automobile Carriage of Passengers," which grants the transport inspection authority to request and obtain personal data from carriers, dispatchers of irregular connections, and taxis without consent.

In March the Ministry of Culture revised the regulations on the production, distribution, and promotion of erotic materials, which now also encompass content related to sexual education. These changes expanded the definition of "pornography" to include "non-traditional sexual relations and/or behaviour".

In April, amendments were made to the Military Doctrine, introducing significant changes in its classification of internal and external threats. External threats now include the spread of cosmopolitanism and statelessness, as well as ideas that reject traditional values and obligations to defend the country.

According to a Telegram channel linked to law enforcement agencies, a website featuring LGBTI themes has been classified as "extremist material" by a court for the first time.

Starting in October, the Ministry of Information of Belarus started sending letters and emails to bookstores, including online platforms, instructing them to remove from sale any literature that "could harm the national interests" of the country. One of these

letters, signed by Deputy Minister Denis Yezersky, was received by Belarusian publisher Zmiter Vishnev who reported that the text highlights the Ministry's ongoing efforts to identify and prevent the spread of "destructive" literature, particularly works that affect the spiritual and moral sphere.

BELGIUM

In May, the LGBTI flag hung in front of the municipal administration of Awans (in the Walloon region) was taken down and burned by unknowns.

In August, a rainbow flag was torn from a balustrade and set on fire in central Antwerp. A complaint was filed with the local police.

NORTHERN CYPRUS

Reports from the solidarity line show violations of privacy, particularly within family settings. Several LGBTI people, including teachers, expressed fear about being outed or facing career repercussions due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

CZECHIA

Olga Richterová, Vice-Chair of the Chamber of Deputies and a member of the Pirate Party, successfully defended a court case against the ultra-conservative Alliance for the Family. The association had sued Richterová over a statement she made during a TV debate, in which she questioned the Alliance's funding and noted that its narrative, particularly regarding the rights of LGBTI people, often parallels the Russian state rhetoric. The court ruled that Richterová's comments fell within the bounds of acceptable criticism that a public entity like the Alliance for the Family must tolerate.

The Alliance for the Family, which frequently voices complaints to Czech Television regarding the coverage of LGBTI topics in its programming, initiated a public campaign aimed at restricting funding to the broadcaster. Both the chairperson and vice-chairperson of the Alliance for the Family maintain connections to the ODS party (the Conservative Party led by Prime Minister Fiala), with one serving as an assistant to an ODS MP and the other as an advisor at the Ministry of Justice to a vice-minister appointed by the ODS.

DENMARK

Copenhagen Pride lost several major sponsors following a press release in which the organisation expressed solidarity with the Palestinian people and raised concerns about business activities in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. In response, the organisation's leader and spokesperson Lars Henriksen stepped down, stating that the focus of the organisation is to create visibility on LGBTI issues and be a platform for LGBTI voices.

GEORGIA

The anti-LGBTI law severely restricts freedom of expression by prohibiting the distribution of materials that promote same-sex relationships, gender transition, or non-heterosexual identities. The law's vague definition of "popularisation" could encompass even the provision of factual information on gender identity and sexual orientation. This has raised concerns among artists, writers, and academics, who fear that their work will be severely limited due to censorship.

(See also under Equality and Non-discrimination.)

GREECE

In March, the youth branch of neo-nazi criminal organisation Golden Dawn attacked Colour Youth's offices in Athens. On the day of the event, Colour Youth was organising a party to advocate for the reappropriation of LGBTI-phobic statements by LGBTI people but the event was eventually cancelled because of threats circulating on social media.

This year, Thessaloniki welcomed Europride, which brought together 27,000 people. The march, themed "Persevere, Progress, Prosper," took place on the ninth and final day of a series of events held across the city.

HUNGARY

In January, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) published a report on the Hungarian child protection system prepared by the National University of Public Service and the Office of the Fundamental Rights Commissioner on its website. The report referred to the anti-LGBTI law as 'promising practice'. After protest from civil society organisations, FRA added text distancing itself from the content of the report.

In February, the Budapest Metropolitan Court ruled on the legitimacy of a 12-million-forint fine imposed by the Hungarian government in September 2023 on Lira Könyvkiadó, a bookshop accused of violating regulations by failing to wrap and separate copies of the LGBTI graphic novel Heartstopper from other youth books. Lira appealed the fine, arguing that a missing comma in the legislation altered its interpretation.

The court upheld Lira's argument, clarifying that the law stipulates that books must be in closed packaging only if they are displayed separately from other products. Conversely, if the books are not separated, no wrapping is required. Since then, the Government has requested a review before the Supreme Court (Kúria) which, in October, overturned the lower court's judgment and remanded the case by prioritising teleological interpretation over grammatical interpretation, and invoking Article L and Article XVI of the Fundamental Law to demonstrate the legislative intent. According to the Kúria, despite the missing comma, the intent of the law

was clear, and the focus should not solely be on grammatical interpretation but also on the law's broader purpose.

In a similar development, in March, the Győr Regional Court overturned the fine imposed by the Komárom-Esztergom County Government Office on a Lira bookstore in Tatabánya. The fine had been levied after an inspection in September 2023 at the bookstore, which found the book *Esti mesék lázadó lányoknak* (Goodnight Stories for Rebellious Girls) being sold among children's books, wrapped in foil. The Government Office had argued that the book's depiction of gender reassignment violated the Child Protection Act, but the court disagreed, noting that the book's content did not promote gender reassignment for its own sake but as part of a wider narrative.

In April, in response to the above-mentioned judgements the Government Decree regulating the conditions of exercising commercial activities was amended to apply to products whose design, appearance or packaging prominently display gender nonconformity, gender reassignment or homosexuality.

In late October, the Szeged Court of Justice ruled in favour of a Lira bookstore in Kecskemét, in a lawsuit involving a consumer protection fine, determining that the government office's fine of five million forints was unlawfully imposed. The case dates back to September 2023 when the government office inspected the store and found several books which featured foil-wrapped covers. One of the stories in the book was about trans activist Coy Mathis, whose life was documented in a film. Following the inspection, the authority initiated a consumer protection procedure, claiming the book promoted "the deviation from the self-identity corresponding to the birth gender" and imposed the fine, additionally banning the book's sale in stores located within 200 metres of schools and churches.

In October 2024, Hungary's National Media and Communications Authority (NMHH) addressed a complaint regarding the TV2 programme *Sztárban Sztár All Stars*. A complaint raised concerns that the show promoted 'LGBTI propaganda', citing an instance where 'men dressed as women' performed songs. However, after an official investigation, the NMHH concluded that the programme did not breach classification rules or media regulations and no action was taken against the media provider.

ITALY

In September, *l'Espresso*, a weekly news magazine in Italy, dismissed Simone Alliva, a journalist recognised (also) for his advocacy in LGBTI rights. Alliva alleged that he faced significant pressure, insults, threats, and verbal assaults before being dismissed.

KAZAKHSTAN

In April, a proposal aiming to prohibit media outlets from covering what is termed as “propaganda of non-traditional sexual orientation” was added to the parliamentary discussions on a law concerning mass media. The proposed amendment was unexpectedly removed from the draft law, without any clarification on the status of the amendment, leaving its future uncertain.

In April, Parliament deputies – Yedil Zhanbyrshin and Samat Musabaev, both from the Amanat party, proposed to include “LGBTI propaganda” as a punishable crime within Article 174 of the Criminal Code on the “Incitement of social, national, tribal, racial, class or religious discord” with penalties of imprisonment of up to seven years.

In June, Vitaly Shevchenko, a graphic designer from Ekibastuz, reported that two plainclothes police officers visited his home following his Facebook posts opposing a petition against “LGBTI propaganda.” The police officers issued a warning about his posts, urging him to be cautious to avoid “inciting discord” and warned him that his posts could lead to legal consequences. Shevchenko had previously appealed to the Minister of Culture and Information, arguing that the petition could incite discrimination and breach human rights norms, continuing to voice his concerns on his social media platforms.

KYRGYZSTAN

In March, Kyrgyzstan’s parliament passed the “foreign agents” bill introducing reporting requirements for foreign-funded NGOs, severely hampering their operations and threatening media freedom. The legislation, modelled after Russia’s 2012 law, aims to curb what it describes as undue foreign influence and political interference by requiring detailed annual audits and employee disclosures from NGOs, which could potentially drive many to shut down due to the high compliance costs. The bill was signed into law in April.

MOLDOVA

In January, the Transnistrian region declared the year as the “Year of Family Values.” In this regard, the region outlined a focus on introducing legislative measures to criminalise the promotion of non-traditional sexual relationships and gender identities among minors.

POLAND

In January, the District Court in Częstochowa discontinued proceedings related to an image of the Virgin Mary with a rainbow halo. The imagery was used in an equality march in August 2021 and was initially claimed to have desecrated a religious icon. In February, the Polish Supreme Court dismissed further Cassation

appeals regarding the case, deeming the appeals as “obviously groundless.” However, concerns have been raised regarding the status of the Supreme Court’s Chamber of Extraordinary Control and Public Affairs (Izba Kontroli Nadzwyczajnej i Spraw Publicznych) and the legitimacy of some of its judges, which may cast doubt on the impartiality of the proceedings. In response, former Prosecutor General Zbigniew Ziobro submitted an extraordinary complaint which was removed by Prosecutor General Minister of Justice Adam Bodnar after he received an open letter from civil society organisations advocating for the review of politically motivated prosecutorial proceedings and the rehabilitation of victims. The Częstochowa case remains open, and a decision by the Supreme Court is awaited. In March, the Supreme Court was expected to rule on cassation appeals in another case involving activists accused of insulting religious feelings for placing rainbow-halo stickers of the Virgin Mary near a church in Płock in 2019. Cassations had been submitted by regional prosecutors and private accusers, but after the change of government, the prosecutor’s cassation appeal was removed. The Supreme Court deemed the remaining private accusers’ appeals “obviously groundless,” concluding the case, with the defendants found innocent.

RUSSIA

Since the beginning of 2024, the Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media has blocked over 170,000 internet pages containing prohibited content. The volume of content blocked for alleged LGBTI propaganda has surged nearly twelvefold compared to the same period last year.

On 29 December 2023, a criminal case was opened against Yaroslav Sirotkin, an LGBT activist from Yaroslavl, for not marking his communications with the status of a ‘foreign agent’ (he had previously been included in Russia’s register of ‘foreign agents’) and not submitting reports as a ‘foreign agent’.

In 2024, at least seven criminal cases were opened for LGBTI extremism. The accused face up to six years in prison, and in some cases up to 10 years. Among the accused are employees of LGBT bars and organisers of LGBT parties, the head of the LGBT organisation Irina (Samara), the director of a medical Centre, the head of a travel agency for gays (in December, he died in a pre-trial detention Centre, the cause of death declared by the authorities was suicide).

The first openly gay politician and municipal deputy from St Petersburg, Sergey Troshin emigrated from Russia to Germany.

Since Russia’s Supreme Court ruling in November 2023 effectively outlawed any discussion or mention of LGBTI rights, activists report a climate of fear and intimidation in the country. The

legislative attacks on LGBTI people and their rights, which has been increasing for over a decade, intensified after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. President Putin continues to use the war to frame it as a battle against the West, which he accuses of attempting to undermine Russia's "traditional family values."

In January 2024, the human rights initiative 'First Department' gained access to the text of the decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation recognising the non-existent organisation 'International LGBT Public Movement' and published it (on 30 November 2024, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, having recognised the 'International LGBT Public Movement' as extremist, refused to publish the text of its decision). 'First Division' published the text and it became known that publishing on the Internet or displaying a rainbow flag is equated to extremist activity. The first offence carries a fine of 1,000 to 2,000 rubles (10 to 20 Euro) or arrest for up to 15 days, while the second offence carries criminal liability up to four years' imprisonment.

In February, Russian courts handed down the first extremism convictions under the 2023 Supreme Court ruling that labelled the "LGBT movement" as extremist.

On 5 February 2024, prosecutions for LGBTI extremism began in Russia. The first judgement was handed down by a Saratov court against photographer Inna Mosina, who had previously used an image of a rainbow flag in her photographic works. She was fined 1,500 roubles. Subsequently, fearing criminal prosecution, she was forced to leave Russia and obtained a humanitarian visa to live in Germany.

In March 2024, Artem Medvedev was detained by police for two days for an Instagram post against the backdrop of a rainbow flag. The Russian LGBT Network managed to free Artem in court with a fine of 1,900 roubles (19 Euro).

In April, Vedomosti reported that an expert centre had been established in Russia to ensure that published books comply with current legislation.

In April, following a recommendation from the Russian Book Union, three novels were pulled from sale due to their alleged violation of Article 6.21 of Russia's code of administrative offences. Article 6.21 particularly bans the "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relationships."

In May, a Moscow university student was sentenced to 15 days in jail for a Telegram post that allegedly featured symbols associated with the LGBTI community.

Reuters reported that two Russian online film distributors, including one owned by Nasdaq-listed internet giant Yandex, have been charged under Russia's "LGBTI propaganda" law

The Novosibirsk court fined the Elton John Bar 500,000 rubles for promoting LGBTI propaganda through the use of a rainbow flag. The ruling followed the bar's involvement in a video by blogger Karen Shainyan, who is labelled as a "foreign agent".

In July, Russian lawmakers demanded that Sberbank, Russia's largest bank, remove a rainbow-coloured unicorn from its children's bank cards. The lawmakers argued that the rainbow is a symbol of the "LGBTI movement." Following this appeal, Sberbank complied by discontinuing the issuance of the cards featuring the design.

In August 2024, a femaktivist from Ufa was fined 50,000 roubles (500 euros) for publishing a photo of a kiss between her and her friend (a girl) on the internet 14 years ago (before the law banning 'LGBTI propaganda' came into force).

In September, a Moscow court sentenced two young men, Timur A. and Daniil R., to prison on charges of violating Russia's law on "protecting traditional values." The case stemmed from a complaint by a passer-by who reported seeing the men standing naked by the window of their apartment. This incident is one of many recent cases under laws targeting perceived threats to "traditional values," which have been used to further restrict LGBTI rights and freedom of expression.

In September 2024, the Russian LGBT Network secured the dismissal of two cases of 'LGBTI propaganda' against two feminists and LGBT persons from Kazan. The Russian state tried to prosecute them for a photo of their wedding ceremony on Instagram.

In October, Russia's lower house of parliament gave initial approval to a bill that would criminalize "child-free propaganda". The legislation, which is part of a series of increasingly restrictive laws, aims to combat what proponents claim are Western efforts to weaken Russia by encouraging population decline. The bill makes spreading information that advocates voluntary childlessness punishable by fines of up to 5 million rubles (50,000 Euro).

In December, a student from Moscow, was fined 500,000 rubles (5,000 Euro) for sharing five images with LGBTI symbols on her VKontakte page, dating back to 2019. The fine was imposed under Russia's "LGBTI propaganda" laws, specifically Article 6.21 of the Administrative Code, which penalises the dissemination of LGBTI content online. The student was charged with five separate offenses, one for each image, and fined 100,000 rubles (1,000 Euro) per image. The court's decision was based on an investigation by employees of the "E" Centre, who reviewed 2,400 photos saved on Christina's page.

SPAIN

In December, the Spanish Supreme Court ruled that LGBTI flags can be displayed at public buildings, such as town halls, since they do not have associations with any political party and they represent values such as respect for human rights.

SWEDEN

In September, a man barricaded himself in a room at the Moroccan embassy in Stockholm, breaking a window and displaying both a rainbow flag and an Amazigh (Berber) flag. The protest, according to his lawyer Majeed Alnashi, was politically motivated, aimed at raising awareness about the treatment of LGBTI people and the indigenous Amazigh people in Morocco, as well as religious freedom issues.

SLOVAKIA

In September, the Slovak National Party (SNS) submitted a proposal to the Slovak parliament for a law banning the display of flags other than the Slovak, European, and municipal flags on state buildings. The bill, which is gaining traction, aims to restrict the display of non-official flags, such as the rainbow flag, on state properties. Although the law is generally framed as a ban on all flags except these three, its proponents have clearly stated that its primary aim is to prohibit the rainbow flag.

In August, protests erupted in Slovakia in response to the actions of the country's Culture Minister, Martina Šímkovičová, who dismissed artists for refusing to align with her vision of culture, which she states must not promote what she considers to be "LGBT ideology."

In September, opposition politician Lucia Plaváková (Progressive Slovakia, PS) faced a verbal attack by Andrej Danko (Slovak National Party, SNS), the deputy speaker of the parliament, and Tibor Gašpar (SMER), due to the presence of rainbow stickers on her computer. In a press conference following the incident, SNS deputy Rudolf Huliak escalated the situation by referring to Plaváková with a derogatory term, calling her a "s*ka" (roughly translated as "bitch"). Huliak later attempted to justify his remarks by claiming he was overwhelmed by emotions, arguing that PS's supposed promotion of "their ideology" affected him personally.

TURKEY

In February, the Constitutional Court ruled that the 2020 access ban on the LGBTI dating network Hornet violated freedom of expression.

In May, the concert of a popular Turkish band at Gaziantep University was cancelled following a hate campaign by the New Welfare Party, which accused the band of supporting LGBTI rights.

On May 22, the Ministry of Family and Social Services officially classified three books with LGBTI themes as "obscene publications." The Ministry stated that the books "might adversely impact the spiritual and developmental growth of minors under the age of 18."

In July, LGBTI activist İris Mozalar was detained during a home raid for allegedly "inciting hatred and animosity among the public." She has since been released. The raid stemmed from Mozalar's social media posts, in which she criticised the targeting of Syrian-owned businesses and vehicles in Kayseri, condemned the violence against refugees, and called for an inclusive society where all individuals in Turkey could "live happily and equally."

In October, it was revealed that the website of the LGBTI organisation KaosGL was blocked under the "family" and "child" categories of the Information and Communication Technologies Authority's (BTK) Safe Net project. Although KaosGL was not formally notified of this decision, an inquiry on guvenlinet.org confirmed that the block had been in effect since September 18 and was justified by authorities as being in line with constitutional provisions aimed at protecting families and children.

In November, the Governor of Istanbul's Kadıköy district banned a screening of the movie, "Queer", which was set to be the opening film at the MUBI Fest İstanbul 2024.

In December, the Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA) reported that the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) imposed fines amounting to 568,000 TL (15,000 Euro) on broadcasts featuring LGBTI content between January 2023 and June 2024. The fines were justified under claims of protecting "national and moral values" and "the family." The report also criticised RTÜK for broadcasting anti-LGBTI hate rallies as public service announcements, while penalising digital platforms like Netflix and Disney+ for LGBTI-themed programmes.

UZBEKISTAN

In November, Alisher Qodirov, leader of Uzbekistan's Milliy Tiklanish (National Revival) party, announced that a draft law banning the discussion of LGBTI topics was being prepared in Uzbekistan. He shared this news on his Telegram channel, where he also referenced a social media post by Ivanka Trump, daughter of President Donald Trump, who supported her father's plan to cut federal funding for schools promoting "inappropriate sexual content" and "transgender ideology."