



# ANNUAL REVIEW

OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION  
OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS  
AND INTERSEX PEOPLE IN EUROPE  
AND CENTRAL ASIA

**2025**

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# INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 14th edition of ILGA-Europe's Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe and Central Asia. The publication includes events that occurred between January and December 2024. It provides a snapshot of what happened during the year, at national, regional and international levels, and it documents progress and trends regarding the human rights situation of LGBTI people.

While the entire Annual Review is available online, information on each country and institution can be accessed separately via [ILGA-Europe's website](#). Each European country chapter is added to the ILGA-Europe [Rainbow Map](#), giving background to the country rankings.

We must warn that some parts may be potentially triggering for some readers. We must also stress that this document is not an exercise in apportioning blame. ILGA-Europe's goal is not to point fingers at specific countries. Instead, this publication intends to serve as a tool for the exchange of best practices and policies, and as an open invitation for enhanced cooperation between governments and LGBTI civil society.

ILGA-Europe wants this publication to meet our readers' expectations and needs, and welcome any suggestions for improvement. We hope that you will find this edition of the Annual Review informative and useful.

**ILGA-EUROPE'S ANNUAL REVIEW TEAM FEBRUARY 2025**

# A NOTE ON DATA COLLECTION AND PRESENTATION

This is our 14th Annual Review and we always strive to develop our rigorous data collection system. However, a number of limitations remain.

The use of terminology around LGBTI issues is often not harmonised across Europe and Central Asia. Nonetheless, all information within the Annual Review has been verified using original documents and the best available local knowledge. Where possible, information was checked against institutional and national reports, and reliable news sources.

For comparative reasons, the language within the Annual Review has been kept in line with ILGA-Europe's standards, and moves away from country-specific legal terms that may have a different meaning elsewhere. At the same time, we respected the variety of terms used by LGBTI communities to self-identify in different countries. For example, this is why the Annual Review does not exclusively refer to LGBTI, but also to 'LGBT', 'LGBTQ' and other formulations.

Of course, the Annual Review cannot cover every development in all 54 countries in intricate detail. When the development was not adequately reported, or the reports were confusing or contradictory, ILGA-Europe verified them with national experts' inputs. They are independent human rights defenders or legal experts in each country. We have also collaborated with regional LGBTI NGOs for their expertise on particular sub-regions or specific work areas, such as trans rights, intersex rights, lesbian rights or rainbow families.

## DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS?

REACH OUT TO US AT [INFO@ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](mailto:INFO@ILGA-EUROPE.ORG)

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# HIGHLIGHTS AND TRENDS

## ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD & GOODS AND SERVICES

Systemic discrimination in accessing goods and services remains a persistent issue for LGBTI people across Europe, with cases reported in Andorra, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, and Italy.

In response, civil society organisations (CSOs) have stepped in to address these gaps. Notable initiatives have been recorded in Andorra, Northern Cyprus, France, and Italy, highlighting the crucial role of grassroots efforts in challenging systemic inequalities. Positive efforts by state institutions to promote access to goods and services have also been documented in Greece, Ireland, Lithuania, Malta, and the United Kingdom.

However, in seven countries across the region, legislative proposals targeting alleged ‘LGBTI propaganda’ have raised serious concerns about potential restrictions of access to fundamental goods and services for LGBTI people. Such proposals could jeopardise individuals’ access to information by, for example, banning websites dedicated to raising LGBTI awareness, or limit access to adequate support by curbing the capacities of civil society organisations working to protect and promote LGBTI rights.

## ASYLUM

With governments across Europe limiting support and protections for asylum seekers and refugees, LGBTI asylum seekers are often left without adequate support, safe accommodation, and proper assessment of their asylum claims. Reports of such challenges have emerged from countries including Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Iceland, Italy, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, and the Netherlands. In Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Moldova, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, numerous cases have been documented where LGBTI asylum seekers had their appeals rejected as the assessments relied on inaccurate and unenforceable metrics that reduce sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) to quantifiable data, failing to capture their complex and personal nature.

This troubling pattern has been recorded in both Germany and Ireland, where several LGBTI asylum seekers from Ghana were denied asylum and international protection despite facing significant threats to their lives. In one such case in Ireland, a Ghanaian national who claimed persecution due to his sexual orientation had his application rejected as the tribunal questioned the credibility of his account, highlighting inconsistencies in his narrative and arguing that it lacked emotional depth, failing to reflect what they considered the ‘typical’ experiences of such a personal journey. Meanwhile, in the context of Russia’s recent wave of harsh anti-LGBTI laws, activists and LGBTI people are fleeing the country, yet challenges with their asylum requests have been reported in Finland, Moldova, and Sweden.

However, in Italy, Montenegro, Slovenia, and Latvia, local courts stood firm against the challenges of asylum procedures for LGBTI asylum seekers. Notably, in Latvia, an administrative court overruled the position of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, granting asylum to an LGBTI applicant who had initially been denied on the basis of the alleged lack of credibility of his claims.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech targeting LGBTI people has become increasingly normalised, often fuelled by public figures and state institutions. This has led to policies and legislation that further restrict or limit the fundamental freedoms of LGBTI people (see also under Freedom of Expression; Foreign Policy; and Health). This trend has been consistently observed across the region, with only 12 countries reporting no such incidents.

In Albania and Italy, conservative coalitions are perpetuating harmful narratives, accusing the LGBTI community of undermining family values and destabilising society. Similarly, in Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Czechia, Moldova, and Romania, several instances have been recorded where conservative groups have weaponized discriminatory narratives against LGBTI people during election periods.

Despite these challenges, efforts to combat hate speech have gained momentum. Civil society organisations and state bodies in Latvia, Moldova, Spain, and Romania are increasingly addressing the issue through regulatory frameworks and judicial action.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Bias-motivated violence against LGBTI people remains alarmingly on a steep increase across Europe, with incidents reported in the vast majority of examined countries.

Throughout the year, both public and private authorities in Finland, Germany, The Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal have released reports highlighting a significant increase in crimes motivated by perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, and/or gender expression. Furthermore, in Belgium, France, and Moldova, attacks on LGBTI people are increasingly documented, particularly in urban areas where visibility is higher. An extremely worrying trend has also emerged in Belgium, Croatia, France, and Turkmenistan, where perpetrators use fake profiles on popular dating apps to lure victims into ambushes. In Turkmenistan, authorities have gone further, using these apps to entrap LGBTI people and coerce them into providing information about others within the community.

## EDUCATION

LGBTI people face significant discrimination and hostility in educational settings across Europe, with challenges reported in Albania, Armenia, Denmark, France, Italy, and Spain. In seven countries across the region, 'anti-propaganda' laws have been increasingly weaponised, restricting or entirely preventing the inclusion of LGBTI issues in educational curricula and awareness-raising initiatives.

In addition, attempts to introduce legislation excluding LGBTI topics from sex education were recorded in Bulgaria, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Romania, Russia, Slovakia, and Turkey, with Turkish authorities going as far as removing references to "gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity," from their Physician's Oaths. Nonetheless, there has been progress in the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in educational programmes in Czechia, Serbia, Slovenia, and Switzerland.

## EMPLOYMENT

Discrimination in employment continues to pose significant challenges for LGBTI people across Europe. This is being reported in many countries, where many LGBTI employees conceal their identities at work to avoid prejudice, with little to no recourse for addressing workplace discrimination.

Broader labor market discrimination is reported in Albania, Andorra, Georgia, Montenegro, Romania, and Russia, where systemic barriers persist. However, positive developments have emerged in countries such as Germany and Luxembourg, that have made meaningful strides in enforcing workplace protections and fostering inclusive policies. In Luxembourg, civil society organisations have played a pivotal role by developing a guide to improve understanding and communication between trans employees and their employers, helping to bridge gaps and promote equality.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Equality and anti-discrimination protections for LGBTI people vary widely across Europe. Despite these disparities, there has been notable progress in strengthening institutional commitments to LGBTI equality. Countries such as Belgium, Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, and Sweden have implemented more comprehensive approaches through the development of LGBTI action plans and policies aimed at addressing legislative gaps.

However, the effectiveness of anti-discrimination laws is often hindered by gaps in enforcement and prevailing societal attitudes. These barriers leave many LGBTI people without full access to legal protections or equal opportunities, underscoring the need for stronger implementation measures to ensure genuine equality. Moreover, the introduction of legislative proposals targeting alleged 'LGBTI propaganda' in seven countries across the region has further intensified these critical challenges. Proposed measures such as imposing administrative and criminal penalties on individuals advocating for LGBTI rights, creating governmental databases to identify and classify LGBTI people, and establishing monitoring systems to scrutinise the international connections of NGOs underscore alarming threats to fundamental freedoms.



## FAMILY

The legal acknowledgment of same-sex relationships and family rights remains highly inconsistent across Europe. This year, progress has been noted in some countries. In Albania, the first strategic litigation case for the legal recognition of a lesbian couple was filed in 2024, seeking marriage rights through the Civil Registry Office. In Kosovo, Prime Minister Albin Kurti announced plans to introduce legislation on same-sex partnerships as part of the country's bid to join the Council of Europe. Latvia also marked a milestone with the registration of its first same-sex couple under its new civil union law.

However, efforts to advance same-sex marriage rights have faced resistance in several countries. In Latvia and Romania, attempts to legalise same-sex marriage were blocked by political opposing forces. In more alarming developments, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey implemented legal reforms aimed at codifying LGBTI-phobic interpretations of family structures into their legislative frameworks, signaling a troubling entrenchment of discriminatory ideologies.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

While attacks on LGBTI Pride marches are increasing, the number of these marches is also growing, highlighting a stark contrast between rising hostility and a surge in LGBTI activism. Despite at least eight attacks being recorded across the region throughout the year, and counter-demonstrations taking place in countries such as Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Serbia, and Switzerland, 2024 saw a significant rise in such events. Cities like Pula (Croatia) and Kyiv (Ukraine) hosted their first Pride marches, underscoring the continued expansion of LGBTI visibility and advocacy across the region.

Despite facing bans, attacks, mass detentions, police obstruction, and targeted opposition, Turkish activists, community members, and allies continued to demonstrate resilience by organising and participating in Pride events across the country.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND EXPRESSION

The ability of LGBTI organisations to operate freely and of LGBTI people to express their views varies significantly across Europe, reflecting differing levels of support and acceptance for LGBTI advocacy. A notable trend is the adoption of foreign agents laws modeled after Russia's law, which increasingly stigmatise and suppress LGBTI organisations. In Bulgaria, Georgia, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, and Montenegro, proposed foreign agents laws pose a direct threat to civil society by labeling organisations that receive foreign funding as foreign-influenced, effectively targeting those advocating for LGBTI rights.

The European Union took a stance against such measures. In April 2024, the European Parliament adopted a resolution condemning Georgia's proposed 'foreign agent' law, warning of its dangers to civil society and LGBTI advocacy. The EU's annual Enlargement Package also raised concerns over the Georgian government's democratic backsliding and its impact on human rights defenders, including LGBTI groups. Meanwhile, the European Commission took legal action against Hungary's so-called 'Child Protection Act', arguing before the Court of Justice of the European Union that it violates EU laws by restricting LGBTI content in education and media. Eleven Member States intervened in support of the Commission's case, highlighting widespread EU opposition to the law and its broader implications for fundamental rights. Additionally, the European Commission questioned Bulgaria's 2024 law banning "LGBTQ+ propaganda" in schools and is currently assessing whether it breaches EU principles of equality and non-discrimination, with potential infringement proceedings under consideration.

Alongside these developments, restrictions on freedom of expression have intensified in several countries. In Hungary, further legislative bans have been imposed on educational materials and media content related to LGBTI identities, effectively erasing representation under the guise of child protection. Similar rhetoric has been used to justify censorship measures elsewhere, contributing to an increasingly hostile environment for LGBTI voices in public discourse.

However, positive developments have also been recorded where freedom of expression was upheld. For instance, in Poland, the Supreme Court dismissed cassation appeals in cases involving activists accused of offending religious feelings by using rainbow-halo images of the Virgin Mary, reinforcing the principle that such symbolic expressions are protected under the right to free speech.

## HEALTH

Across the region, one of the most significant challenges LGBTI people face is limited access to trans-specific healthcare. Issues related to this type of care have been reported in Andorra, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Moldova, Romania, Russia, and the United Kingdom. In many of these countries, legislation that ensures access to gender-affirming care for both minors and adults is either lacking or actively being restricted.

Indeed, following the publication of the Independent Review of Gender Identity Services for Children and Young People (commonly, the Cass Review), attempts to introduce legislation aiming to restrict the access of minors to trans-specific healthcare has been recorded in Austria, France, Ireland, Poland, and the United Kingdom, with varying degrees of success.

However, positive developments have been noted in some countries. In Albania, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Czechia, Kyrgyzstan, and Malta, protocols are increasingly being developed to support trans and non-binary patients, marking progress in improving access to trans-specific healthcare and healthcare services for gender-diverse people. Furthermore, total or partial bans on blood donations from LGBTI people were lifted in Czechia, Estonia, and Iceland.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

Bodily integrity is frequently compromised for LGBTI people due to inadequate healthcare or exposure to harmful medical practices. In countries such as Iceland and Portugal, significant progress has been made with the enactment of legislation banning conversion practices. However, reports of such practices continue to surface in countries like Albania, Armenia, Czechia, Greece, Kazakhstan, and Romania.

In addition, persistent issues related to the imposition of 'intersex genital mutilation' (IGM) have been recorded across the region. In Denmark, the Committee Against Torture (CAT) has expressed concern over the continued use of unnecessary and irreversible surgeries on intersex children, performed without their consent. Similarly, in Austria, IGM remains a concern, with more than 1,000 intersex children expected to undergo surgeries annually. In Romania, corrective surgeries on intersex children are still present, with no regulations in place to prohibit such interventions.

At the European level, efforts to combat harmful medical practices continued. The Council of Europe's Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity, and Inclusion (CDADI) advanced work on a draft Recommendation on the rights of intersex people, addressing concerns around non-consensual medical interventions. Meanwhile, the PACE Equality and Non-discrimination Committee held hearings on banning conversion practices, reinforcing the growing European consensus that such practices violate fundamental rights. The European Commission has also continued to urge Member States to take action against harmful practices affecting LGBTI people, including conversion therapy and IGM, as part of the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy.

## FOREIGN POLICY

European countries have demonstrated varying levels of commitment to incorporating LGBTI rights into their international relations, with some taking active steps to promote these rights, while others have shown resistance or reluctance.

While Spain and Germany stand out for their proactive approaches to LGBTI advocacy, by increasing funding for LGBTI-related projects and passing legislation aimed at prosecuting international crimes against LGBTI people, other actors have lagged behind.

In June, Italy refused to support a European Union letter condemning LGBTI discrimination in Hungary, despite it being backed by 37 diplomatic representatives. Additionally, the final communique of the G7 summit, hosted by Italy, diluted its commitment to LGBTI rights, highlighting the country's reluctance to take a firm stand on certain LGBTI-related issues.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS & FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

Across the region, freedom from torture, cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment continues to be a significant concern for LGBTI people, with numerous reports of abuses recorded in Armenia, Belarus, Poland, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, and

Turkmenistan. For instance, in Turkmenistan, LGBTI people face serious violations at the hands of law enforcement, including torture and extortion, often aimed at forcing confessions or revealing their sexual orientation and gender identity. Similarly, in Belarus, trans activists have reported severe mistreatment, such as beatings and the use of stun guns upon arrest and during detention, with some coerced into making false confessions.

Human rights defenders advocating for LGBTI rights face some of the highest risks, including intimidation, harassment, and violence. In Georgia, the introduction of the “Transparency of Foreign Influence” law has empowered authorities to take direct action against non-compliant organisations, often employing tactics of intimidation and harassment. In Montenegro, LGBTI human rights defenders have been targeted with death threats, yet many are reluctant to report such threats due to a lack of trust in authorities’ ability to offer protection.

In Turkey, LGBTI rights activists continue to endure police repression, including arrests and the disruption of Pride events. The harassment is further exacerbated by legal restrictions on freedom of assembly, which severely limit their ability to organise and advocate for LGBTI rights. Overall, human rights defenders have been under attack in several countries, including Albania, Andorra, Belarus, BiH, Romania, Russia, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan, reflecting a widespread pattern of repression against those working to advance LGBTI rights.

The combination of increasing public scrutiny and impunity for attacks has placed LGBTI human rights defenders at greater risk. A lack of accountability encourages further harassment and violence, forcing many into increasingly unsafe conditions.

## HOUSING

The housing access for LGBTI people, especially trans people, continues to present significant challenges across Europe. Rising rents and the broader housing crisis have made it increasingly difficult for young LGBTI people, particularly those rejected by their families due to their gender identity, to secure stable housing.

In Albania, BiH, Italy, and Malta, while progress has been made through the adoption of legislation recognising sexual orientation and gender identity as eligibility criteria for social housing, and the creation of shelters and welcome centers, housing remains a challenge for vulnerable LGBTI people. Similar issues have been recorded in Hungary, Lithuania, Romania, and Turkey, where LGBTI people face significant barriers to securing safe and stable housing.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

While some countries in the region have made strides toward greater accessibility and inclusivity, others continue to maintain restrictive practices or have even rolled back their legislation on gender recognition. Countries such as Germany and Sweden have experienced a progressive shift towards more inclusive mechanisms for legal gender recognition based on self-determination rather than medical diagnoses.

However, in countries such as Italy, Lithuania, Montenegro, and the Netherlands, procedural obstacles persist. For example, while Montenegro has made some progress by introducing a draft law that would allow legal gender recognition based on self-determination, the requirement for sterilisation remains a significant barrier for trans people seeking to amend their gender marker.

In other countries, legal gender recognition processes have become increasingly difficult. Hardships have been recorded in Belarus, BiH, Bulgaria, Georgia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Slovakia, and Uzbekistan, where restrictive practices continue to undermine the rights of transgender people seeking legal recognition of their gender identity.

Following publication of the UK Cass Review, efforts to restrict trans healthcare for minors have emerged in Austria, France, Ireland, Poland, and the UK.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The region has witnessed mixed developments in sexual and reproductive rights, with both progress and setbacks. In Slovenia, a positive development occurred when the Constitutional Court ruled that restricting access to biomedical-assisted reproduction to only heterosexual couples and single women was unconstitutional. In Montenegro, a discriminatory restriction that prevented LBTQ women from accessing reproductive treatments was lifted after

the Ombudsperson's decision on discrimination. France also made significant strides, with the French Congress constitutionalising the right for women to have a voluntary termination of pregnancy and clarifying that this right must also extend to any person who has started a pregnancy, including trans men.

However, challenges remain. In Albania, a new draft law on sexual and reproductive health has faced criticism for restricting access to Reproductive Medicine and Assistance (RMA) to heterosexual couples and single women and limiting surrogacy to married heterosexual couples who cannot conceive naturally. Additionally, in Italy, the Prime Minister condemned surrogate parenthood as "inhuman," leading to the adoption of a law that places surrogacy under Italy's list of crimes covered by universal jurisdiction.

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

The analysis of public, cultural, and political life across the region revealed positive developments in countries like Denmark, Estonia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Sweden, which have launched new LGBTI action plans aimed at improving representation and inclusion. France, the host of the 2024 Olympics, also showcased LGBTI identities in both its opening and closing ceremonies. While this move earned widespread praise, it also provoked considerable backlash, with conservative sectors of society and politics voicing hate and threats.

Political hostility toward LGBTI people has intensified in countries like Azerbaijan, Hungary, Montenegro, Russia, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Slovakia. This hostility is exemplified by actions such as the Slovakian Ministry of Culture's decision to cut funding for LGBTI initiatives and the removal of a gay diplomat from his UN post in 2024.

## **PUBLIC OPINION**

Public opinion on LGBTI issues across the region presents a complex and varied landscape, with notable progress reported in three countries, while attitudes have worsened in four others. In Ukraine, there has been a notable increase in support for LGBTI rights, with recent surveys revealing that 70.4% of Ukrainians back equal rights for LGBTI people, and younger generations show greater openness toward LGBTI communities. This mirrors a broader trend of shifting attitudes in some parts of the region, where public opinion on LGBTI issues has become more favorable, especially among younger, educated populations, as seen in countries like Bulgaria, Croatia, Estonia, and Hungary.

However, in other countries such as Georgia, Cyprus, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, and Romania, progress has been slower, with LGBTI issues remaining more polarised. For example, research in Moldova found that only 9% of respondents held a positive view of LGBTI people.

## **POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT**

The treatment of LGBTI people by police and law enforcement across the region varies significantly, with significant instances of discrimination and abuse recorded in countries such as Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, and Turkmenistan.

In many of these countries, law enforcement remained a major source of harassment for LGBTI people. Police raids on private homes and businesses, particularly targeting sex workers and LGBTI community members, are routinely reported. These raids often involve severe physical abuse, including forced medical examinations, as well as extortion for money or information from victims.

In Russia, the criminalisation of LGBTI identities has fuelled widespread discriminatory practices by law enforcement. Police have documented exploiting the vulnerability of LGBTI people for personal gain, including extortion, intimidation, and sexual violence. Furthermore, police raids on LGBTI spaces are used to enforce the criminalisation of the LGBTI movement as extremist. These abuses are compounded by systemic failures of the law enforcement system, including arbitrary detentions and the seizure of people.

In contrast, some countries have made positive strides in improving police conduct toward the LGBTI community. In Ukraine for instance, the National Police has collaborated with human rights organisations to foster more inclusive policing practices and combat hate crimes, marking a significant move toward more inclusive and supportive law enforcement.



# EUROPEAN UNION

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In July, the Advocate General (AG) of the CJEU issued an [opinion](#) in the Mousse (C-394/23) case, stating that it is not “necessary” under the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and that it is therefore unlawful for the French national rail service, SNCF, to force customers to choose between the civil titles “Mr” or “Ms” when purchasing train tickets. The AG also stated that processing data on civil titles creates a risk of discrimination on the grounds of gender identity for trans and non-binary people.

## ASYLUM

In May, the European Parliament and the Council formally [adopted](#) the new Pact on Migration and Asylum. Among other obligations for Member States, the Pact addresses the need to protect fundamental rights of vulnerable groups, such as LGBTI asylum seekers, through screening procedures with preliminary vulnerability checks and strengthened safeguards in the Reception Conditions Directive.

In June, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) published a [report](#) on Asylum, presenting a comprehensive overview of key developments in asylum in 2023. It highlights practical steps to implement such safeguards, including improved country of origin information related to SOGIESC-based persecution and specialised training for national authorities to handle LGBTI cases with sensitivity and fairness.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In February, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) addressing the overall rise in hate speech and hate crimes across the EU, with particular attention to vulnerable groups, including LGBTI people. The resolution highlighted the significant impact of hate speech on LGBTI individuals, especially trans and intersex persons, and called for harmonised EU-wide measures to combat such bias-motivated attacks. It also urged Member States to strengthen legal frameworks and enhance protections for all communities affected by hate speech and hate crime.

In June, the European Union adopted the [EU AI Act](#), establishing a pioneering framework for AI regulation. It began to enter into force gradually, categorising AI into high-risk, unacceptable risk, and general-purpose AI models. The Act includes provisions to prevent AI systems from being used in ways that could lead to discrimination or the spread of hate speech, and protect vulnerable people from AI-driven biases.

On the 27 November, the European Parliament held a plenary debate on anti-LGBTI legislation and the need for protecting a discrimination-free EU. During the debate there were a [number of instances](#) of discriminatory speech from some MEPs which were largely condemned by the debate’s Chair, who also stated they would investigate the respective MEPs for lack of compliance with the Parliament’s Standards of Conduct.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In May, the European Parliament and the Council adopted the [Directive](#) on combating violence against women and domestic violence. The Directive establishes the obligation for the Member States to pay due regard to intersectional discrimination, specifically mentioning sexual orientation, recognising a heightened risk of gender-based violence for victims of such discrimination, as well as establishing the intention to punish the victim for their sexual orientation and gender among grounds of aggravating circumstances. It recognises specific protection and support that lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or intersex people should receive, as well as preventive measures that the States should focus on to protect them.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In May, the European Parliamentary Research Service published a [briefing](#) on the implementation of the 2020-2025 EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy. The briefing expressed concern over persistent discrimination and violence, highlighting issues such as gaps in family recognition and legal protections across Member States. It urged further action to address these disparities,

particularly through strengthened anti-discrimination frameworks and better data collection to inform policy changes. The European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the implementation of the Strategy in February.

In August, Bulgaria passed a law banning “LGBTQ+ propaganda and promotion” in schools, prompting significant public outrage and protests. The European Commission [responded](#) by requesting clarification from Bulgaria regarding the [legislation’s compliance](#) with EU principles of equality and non-discrimination. Equality Commissioner Helena Dalli emphasised the EU’s [commitment](#) to combating discrimination as outlined in the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy, while the European Parliament’s LGBTI Intergroup called for decisive action, describing the law as a direct assault on the LGBTIQ+ community. The Commission is currently assessing whether the law violates EU standards, with potential infringement procedures being considered.

## FAMILY

In 2024, the Council of the EU [continued negotiations](#) on the draft regulation for the cross-border recognition of parenthood, which had been supported by the European Parliament’s non-binding position in December 2023, including a policy debate among Ministers in June. While no final agreement was reached by the end of 2024, the regulation remains a critical step towards ensuring that parenthood established in one Member State is recognised across the EU. Once adopted, this regulation will provide essential protections for rainbow families, safeguarding children’s rights to healthcare, education, and free movement, and addressing inconsistencies that continue to create significant challenges for LGBTI families across the Union.

In December, the Court of Justice of the EU [held a hearing](#) in *Wojewoda Mazowiecki* (C-713/23), challenging Poland’s refusal to recognise a same-sex marriage certificate from Germany. The case could establish a key precedent for the freedom of movement and legal recognition of same-sex couples in Member States lacking legal frameworks for such unions. The Advocate General’s opinion on the case is expected in April 2025.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In November, the Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) [held a hearing](#) in the infringement case C-769/22, initiated by the European Commission over Hungary’s anti-LGBTI legislation introduced in 2021 and censoring inclusive sex education, equating LGBTI “lifestyles” to paedophilia, blocking adoption for LGBTI couples and restricting content in media and advertising. Eleven Member States intervened at the hearing in support of the Commission’s position that Hungary has seriously and blatantly violated core EU values and other EU law provisions by passing legislation that stigmatises the LGBTI community under the guise of “child protection”. The Advocate General of the CJEU is expected to deliver her opinion on the case on 5 June 2025.

## DATA COLLECTION

In May, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) [published](#) its third LGBTIQ survey, which revealed that while discrimination against LGBTIQ people has decreased slightly since 2019, violence and harassment have sharply increased, particularly against trans and intersex individuals. The survey highlighted alarming rates of bullying in schools, with two-thirds of respondents reporting harassment during their education, and found that over half of respondents faced harassment in daily life, reflecting persistent challenges despite some progress. Almost two-thirds of survey respondents (63%) said that they often or always encounter online statements calling for violence against LGBTIQ people, references to ‘LGBTIQ propaganda’ or ‘gender ideology’, references to LGBTIQ people posing a sexual threat or a threat to ‘traditional values’, considering LGBTIQ people to be ‘unnatural’ or mentally ill, and other forms of hatred.

## FOREIGN POLICY

In November 2024 the European Commission published its annual [Enlargement Package](#). Following the 26 October elections in Georgia, the ruling party decided to suspend EU accession negotiations until 2028. There have been large protests in response to both this decision, the disputed election results and the ongoing crackdown on opposition, civil society and human rights defenders, including LGBTI. As Montenegro starts to close chapters of its accession negotiations, the EU insists on the implementation of European court judgements, including the case law of the ECtHR, which is particularly relevant as regards standards for legal gender recognition and equality for rainbow families.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In May, the European Parliament's LGBTI Intergroup published five [briefings](#) summarising its work from 2019 to 2024. The briefings highlighted key achievements, including advancing LGBTI rights within the EU, addressing discrimination, and advocating for equality globally. They also outlined priorities for the next legislative term, reinforcing the Intergroup's role as a critical driver of institutional support for the LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy and related initiatives.

On IDAHOBIT, the Belgian presidency of the EU Council organised an international [conference](#) on LGBTI equality in Brussels. During the event, Member States signed a declaration committing to respect, implement, and defend the human rights of LGBTI people. This declaration reaffirmed their dedication to building an 'Equality Union' and advancing equality across the European Union.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In February, the European Parliament adopted the anti-SLAPP Directive which sets minimum standards for protecting public watchdogs against abusive litigation in the form of SLAPPs (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation). The Council [adopted](#) it in March, and now Member States are transposing the Directive into national legislation. The Coalition Against SLAPPs in Europe (CASE), of which ILGA-Europe is a member, is now working at national level to ensure effective transposition of the Directive and further [recommended measures](#).

In July, the European Commission [published](#) its annual rule of law report, for the first time including accession countries Albania, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In September, the Advocate General of the CJEU issued an [opinion](#) in the Deldits (C-247/23) case, urging Hungary to correct the gender marker of a trans refugee in its asylum registry under the EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The opinion clarified that proof of surgical intervention cannot be required to rectify gender markers in national registries. A final CJEU decision is expected in 2025, potentially influencing legal gender recognition policies across the EU.

In October, the CJEU [ruled](#) in case C-4/23 Mirin that Romania must recognise the gender and name changes of a British-Romanian trans man who obtained legal gender recognition in the UK. The Court affirmed that refusing such recognition violates EU principles of free movement and right to private and family life, setting a precedent for mutual recognition of legal gender recognition decisions across Member States.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In June, elections for the European Parliament resulted in the selection of 705 MEPs for the 2024–2029 term. 164 MEPs, comprising nearly a quarter of the new Parliament, signed ILGA-Europe's [pledge](#) to protect LGBTI rights, committing to advancing equality and combating discrimination across the EU.



# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

In January, the new [Expert Committee on SOGIESC](#) (ADI-SOGIESC), housed in the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity, and Inclusion (CDADI), formally started its work; this new structure represented a significant increase in the budget from the Council of Europe dedicated to work focused on LGBTI issues. ADI-SOGIESC held its first meeting on 14 May in The Hague, a joint meeting with the European LGBTI Focal Points Network and the EU LGBTIQ Equality Subgroup on 16 May in The Hague, and its second meeting on 29-30 October in Strasbourg.

In January, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) elected Michael O’Flaherty to a six-year term as the [new Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (Commissioner); he took office on 01 April, succeeding Dunja Mijatović in the role.

In March, Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo of Monaco was [appointed](#) General Rapporteur on the rights of LGBTI people in PACE (PACE General Rapporteur).

During 2024, ADI-SOGIESC conducted a review of the implementation of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2010)5 on the rights of LGBT people (CM/Rec(2010)5), collecting input from member States and civil society about the state of play in Council of Europe States. For the first time, optional questions on gender expression and sex characteristics were included in the review.

## ASYLUM AND MIGRATION

In [June](#), PACE adopted a report on human-rights compliant asylum procedures with specific mention of asylum-seekers experiencing systemic marginalisation, including LGBTI asylum-seekers.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) recommended that [Malta](#) improve access to information on asylum on SOGIESC grounds.

On 12 November, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in [M.I. v. Switzerland](#) that the rejection of a gay man’s asylum application and his expulsion to Iran would expose him to a risk of ill-treatment contrary to ECHR Article 3. The Court rejected the views of the authorities that the applicant could continue to live his private life in ‘a discreet manner’ upon his return.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The Council of Europe project “Combating hate speech in sport” held a [meeting](#) on 18-19 January in Madrid to discuss the future Strategy for Combating Hate Speech in Sport and the Action Plan for Spain 2024-2026, and included participation from LGBTI sports organisations.

ECRI recommended that [Andorra](#) work to combat online hate speech, including against LGBTI persons; that [Estonia](#) protect the ground of gender identity; that [San Marino](#) protect the grounds of gender identity and sex characteristics in hate speech legislation; and that [Serbia](#) conduct a comprehensive study on hate speech, including targeting LGBTI persons.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

During the year, the European Court of Human Rights delivered a number of judgments reiterating Council of Europe States’ positive obligation under ECHR Articles 3 (prohibition of torture and ill-treatment), 8 (right to private and family life) and 14 (prohibition of discrimination) to effectively protect LGBTI people from hate crime. On 11 April, the Court ruled in [Karter v. Ukraine](#) that Ukraine violated ECHR Articles 3 and 14 by failing to effectively investigate two verbal and physical attacks of the applicant, involving homophobic slurs. On 18 July, the Court ruled in [Hanovs v. Latvia](#) that Latvia violated ECHR Articles 3 and 8 taken in conjunction with Article 14 by failing to effectively investigate and punish a homophobic attack. The Court emphasised that this fostered a sense of impunity for hate-motivated offences and normalise hostility towards LGBTI people. On 3 December, the Court ruled in [Yevstifeyev and Others v. Russia](#) that Russia violated ECHR Article 8 together with Article 14 for failing to respond adequately to verbal assault and physical threats motivated by homophobia against the applicants.



In July, ECRI recommended [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) fully investigate the violence against LGBTI persons which took place in Banja Luka in March 2023.

On 3 October, PACE adopted a [report and resolution](#) on Preventing and combating violence and discrimination against lesbian, bisexual and queer women in Europe, the first LBQ-focused resolution to be considered by the Assembly.

The Council of Europe co-organised a [regional conference](#), together with the EU, on 5 to 7 November in Sarajevo titled “Spaces and services to protect LGBTI communities”, which focused on safety and security of LGBTI people and countering anti-rights actors in the region.

On 4 December, ADI-SOGIESC and the Parliamentary Platform for the Rights of LGBTI People of the Parliamentary Assembly held a [joint event](#) titled “Conference on Violence and Discrimination against LBQ Women in Europe and Actions to Protect their Rights”, focused on the rights of LBQ women, with interventions from the PACE Secretary General, the Commissioner, and the PACE General Rapporteur.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

The Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity, and Inclusion (CDADI) continued its work to develop a draft Committee of Ministers Recommendation on the equality of rights of intersex people, with the Drafting Group meeting on 21-22 March and 3-4 September.

On 5 December, the Equality and Non-discrimination Committee of PACE [held a hearing](#) for the report in development titled For a ban on so-called conversion therapies in Paris.

ECRI recommended that [Malta](#) increase support to intersex persons and their families and provide appropriate training to healthcare professionals.

## EDUCATION

In March, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) released a [factsheet](#) on combating racism and intolerance in and through education, which specifically mentions the need to address anti-LGBTI bullying in schools and to provide students with all necessary information to live according to their SOGI. In August, ECRI recommended that [San Marino](#) and [Serbia](#) work to increase access to information on LGBTI issues and tackle anti-LGBTI bullying and harassment in schools, respectively.

## EMPLOYMENT

On 7 May, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in [A.K. v. Russia](#) that a teacher’s dismissal from her teaching position on the sole basis of her sexual orientation violated her right to private life and was discriminatory.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

At the January session of PACE, 20 members signed a [written declaration](#) encouraging the government of Armenia to ensure that LGBTI people are protected in their forthcoming anti-discrimination legislation.

In March, the Council of Europe adopted its next [Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029](#), which includes a strong elaboration of whom the Strategy is targeted to protect, including LGBTI people and LGBTI women specifically, as well as the first-ever paragraph on LGBTI men.

On 03 December, ADI-SOGIESC held an expert meeting to discuss the development of a study on gender expression as a protected ground.

## FAMILY

On 17 February, the CHR [wrote on X, welcoming](#) the adoption of marriage equality in Greece.

ECRI recommended that [Andorra](#) and [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#) create a legal framework for the recognition of same-sex relationships.

On 11 July, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in [Savinovskikh and Others v. Russia](#) that Russia violated the right to private and family life of a trans man and his two foster children by terminating the foster care agreement on grounds of his gender identity and transition.

On 19 September, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in [Formela and Others v. Poland](#) that Poland violated the right to respect for family life of same-sex couples by refusing to register their marriages contracted abroad. This judgment confirmed the obligation on all CoE Member States to establish a legal framework providing for the recognition and protection of same-sex unions.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSEMBLY, AND ASSOCIATION

The President of PACE, on 16 April, [requested an opinion](#) from the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) on the compliance with Council of Europe standards of the Georgian draft law on Transparency of Foreign Influence. On 17 May, the Commissioner issued a [statement](#) highlighting that Georgia's new foreign agent law was likely to target LGBTI NGOs first, amid a rise in violence and discrimination against LGBTI people across Europe. On 21 May, the Venice Commission issued an [urgent opinion](#), strongly recommending repeal of the law.

On [17 April](#), PACE adopted a broad resolution on freedom of assembly and expression of LGBTI people, which also calls for Council of Europe Member States to ban conversion practices, repeal "anti-propaganda" laws, combat SLAPPs, protect Pride marches and LGBTI demonstrations, combat hate speech and hate crimes and ensure accountability of perpetrators, support comprehensive sex education programmes, offer humanitarian visas to LGBTI activists fleeing persecution, train law enforcement to protect LGBTI communities, and guarantee access both to legal gender recognition and marriage for same-sex couples. As part of the development of this report, in January, the Commissioner and the PACE General Rapporteur on the rights of LGBTI people had an [exchange of views](#) on freedom of assembly and expression for LGBTI people.

On 12 August, the Commissioner [wrote on X](#), calling on the Bulgarian parliament to not adopt a proposed anti-propaganda law targeting LGBTI issues.

On 6 September, the Commissioner wrote a [letter to the Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia](#) urging the Parliament not to adopt the proposed anti-LGBTI law and to curtail anti-LGBTI rhetoric coming from members of the Parliament. In October, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRA) [adopted a declaration](#) on the worsening situation, including specifically for LGBTI people, in Georgia.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

On 25 April, the Committee for the Prevention of Torture released an [extract](#) of its 2023 Annual report focused on the protection of the rights of trans prisoners.

## HEALTH

In May, ECRI released a [factsheet](#) on tackling racism and intolerance in healthcare, which includes a series of LGBTI-specific recommendations, including to ensure access to trans-specific healthcare, ensure that same-sex couples do not face health-related problems, and to prohibit medically unnecessary treatments on intersex children.

On 11 July, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in [W.W. v. Poland](#) that Poland violated the right to private life of a trans

woman by denying her access to hormone therapy in prison. The Court found that the refusal lacked reasonable justification and failed to prioritise the applicant's physical and mental health, emphasising the necessity of ensuring access to gender-affirming healthcare for trans individuals in detention.

In September, CDADI [published its third thematic review](#) of the CM/Rec(2010)5 focused on the health of LGBTI people.

On 29 August, "Empower and Embrace", a project supported by the Council of Europe, held a [training](#) to empower mental health professionals in Bosnia and Herzegovina working with LGBTI patients.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

On 27 March, the Commissioner released a [statement](#) condemning intimidation and harassment of LGBTI people in Georgia.

On 05 April, the Committee of Ministers [adopted](#) a Recommendation on countering the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs), which notes the specific risk for those marginalised based on their SOGIESC and the need for differentiated risk assessment and response.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

On 15 May, to mark IDAHOT+, 32 member States signed a [joint ministerial declaration](#) calling for renewed commitment to protecting the rights of LGBTI people through Council of Europe, UN, and EU mechanisms, as well as via national level action. At the IDAHOT+ Forum, the Commissioner gave an [opening keynote speech](#) at the IDAHOT+ Forum, and Bjørn Berge, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, gave a [keynote speech](#) also during the Forum. On 17 May, the PACE General Rapporteur [issued a statement](#) to mark IDAHOT+, calling for urgent action to protect the rights of LGBTI people.

The Commissioner gave a keynote speech at the closing session of [the EuroPride Human Rights Conference](#) in Thessaloniki, Greece, in June.

## INTERSECTIONALITY

In February, the Commissioner released a [Human Rights Comment](#) on protecting the rights of sex workers, which outlined the vital importance of decriminalisation. The comment particularly highlighted the plight of sex workers who are facing multiple or intersecting forms of discrimination such as migrants, racialised groups, trans people, and those with disabilities or long-term illnesses. The Commissioner stressed that policy measures must address the unique discrimination faced by sex workers, considering intersecting factors such as ethnic origin, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, migration status, and/or disability.

CDADI commenced a process to develop a study on the feasibility of policy and law targeting intersectional discrimination; the [working group for the study met](#) on 12 April.

In September, the PACE Committee on Equality and Non-discrimination [adopted a report and resolution](#) on Protecting the human rights and improving the lives of sex workers and victims of sexual exploitation. The report received oppositional amendments upon going to plenary, and was returned to Committee for further work.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

On 14 March, the Commissioner [released Issue Paper](#) on human rights and gender identity and expression, which lays out a thorough and clear explanation of the application of the human rights framework with respect to trans and non-binary people and the grounds of gender identity and expression.

On 16 April, the PACE Platform on the rights of LGBTI people [hosted a panel](#) on violence and discrimination against trans people, the first panel of its kind in many years.

During the year, the European Court of Human Rights delivered several judgments reiterating Council of Europe States' positive obligation under ECHR Article 8 (right to private and family life) to establish a legal framework for a quick, transparent, and accessible legal gender recognition procedure. In July, the Court revised its judgment in the case of [Y.T. v. Bulgaria](#), declaring the application inadmissible due to the applicant's failure to inform the Court of his success in achieving LGR through another court during the case. Despite this decision, the Court reaffirmed Bulgaria's obligation to establish a legal framework for a quick, transparent, and accessible LGR procedure, as outlined in earlier judgments. The lack of such a system remains a significant barrier for trans people in Bulgaria, where LGR has effectively been banned since 2023. In November, in [E.G. and Others v. Hungary](#), the Court reiterated its previous rulings and ruled that Hungary did not provide quick, transparent, and accessible procedures for LGR.

ECRI recommended that [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), [Liechtenstein](#), and [San Marino](#) adopt LGR frameworks in line with human rights standards and that San Marino develop guidelines for the provision of trans-specific healthcare. ECRI also recommended that [Andorra](#) reform its LGR procedure to be human rights compliant.

In September, the [Committee of Ministers](#), in its role supervising the implementation of judgments from ECtHR, noted concern with the adoption of an anti-LGBTI law in Georgia and called on authorities to implement the [A.D. and Others v. Georgia](#) decision by implementing a framework for LGR. ECRI also called on [Lithuania](#) to implement the judgement in [L. v. Lithuania](#).

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

The Conference of INGOs conducted a survey on the stigmatisation of NGOs in the Council of Europe region and released its [report](#) in March.

ECRI reviewed its priority recommendation for Cyprus, finding that while Cyprus had indicated its willingness to work on a national LGBTI strategy as recommended in 2023, a strategy had yet to be adopted. ECRI also noted the continued "state of danger" for LGBTI persons in [Hungary](#) and called on Hungary to rescind restrictive legislative measures. ECRI also called on the [United Kingdom](#) to implement its 2018 LGBT action plan and on [Lithuania](#) to create a taskforce to commission a study on the situation of LGBTI persons and consider developing an LGBTI equality strategy.



# UNITED NATIONS

The UN Special Procedures mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (UNSP on SOGI) presented two thematic reports (see also under Freedom of Expression, Assembly and Association, and under Participation in Public, Cultural, and Political Life) and conducted country visits to [Albania](#) and [Poland](#) in 2024.

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

During its Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Cyprus was [recommended](#) to take steps to reduce discrimination in access to public services against LGBTI people.

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) [recommended](#) Azerbaijan to ensure full inclusion of LGBTI persons with disabilities in healthcare, legal, and social services.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH AND VIOLENCE

During their UPR, [Monaco](#), [Cyprus](#), [North Macedonia](#), and [Slovakia](#) received recommendations to strengthen protections against hate speech and discrimination targeting LGBTI people. Monaco was urged to carry out awareness-raising campaigns on LGBTI-phobic hate speech, legal provisions, and reporting procedures. Cyprus was encouraged to take effective measures to prevent and sanction hate speech, combat discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and develop programmes to raise awareness and address hatred and violence. North Macedonia was recommended to amend its Criminal Code to explicitly include sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, and sex characteristics as protected grounds and to strengthen protections for LGBTI people and Roma against hate speech. Slovakia was advised to adopt a comprehensive action plan against hate speech, violence, and discrimination towards LGBTI people, while also being urged to prohibit the involuntary sterilisation of trans women as a precondition for legal gender recognition.

The Human Rights Committee (CCPR) recommended [Iceland](#), [France](#), [Greece](#), and [Malta](#) to strengthen legal protections against hate speech and hate crimes, with Iceland urged to tackle online hate and anti-LGBTI rhetoric; Greece to address discrimination and derogatory speech against intersex people; France to improve data collection and law enforcement training; and Malta to enhance enforcement, particularly for cases targeting racialised LGBTI people. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) and Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) urged [Romania](#) and [Italy](#) to combat hate speech and discrimination, with Romania advised to implement intersectional strategies and effective reporting mechanisms, and Italy to address hate speech in media and online spaces and ensure accountability for perpetrators.

Committee Against Torture (CAT) and CCPR called on [Turkey](#) and [Azerbaijan](#) to thoroughly investigate hate crimes, prosecute perpetrators, and provide effective remedies for victims. CAT also urged [North Macedonia](#) to explicitly criminalise hate speech and hate crimes in its Criminal Code and Azerbaijan to criminalise them under national law.

CESCR and CEDAW recommended [Poland](#) and [Estonia](#) to strengthen legal protections, with Poland urged to criminalise hate crimes and incitement to hatred based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and Estonia to enhance protections against hate crimes and harassment targeting LGBTI women while ensuring better access to justice and victim support services.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and CEDAW called on [Georgia](#) and [Tajikistan](#) to protect LGBTI people from discrimination and violence, with Georgia urged to safeguard LGBTI children and families from hate crimes, and Tajikistan to ensure access to support services for LGBTI victims of gender-based violence.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In April, the Human Rights Council adopted the first-ever [resolution on Combating discrimination, violence and harmful practices against intersex persons](#). The resolution calls for the Human Rights Commission (HRC) to pay increased attention to the situation of intersex persons and to create opportunities to exchange best practices in addressing human rights violations against them.

CAT and CRC recommended [Finland](#), [Austria](#), and [France](#) to prohibit non-consensual medical interventions on intersex children, with Finland urged to ensure compensation and rehabilitation for victims and Austria to establish independent oversight of medical decisions. Additionally, CAT recommended [France](#) to ban all forms of conversion practices and ensure survivors have access to remedies and support. CCPR and CDESCR recommended [Iceland](#) to fully prohibit unnecessary medical interventions on intersex children and ensure access to legal remedies and support services. CRPD recommended the [Netherlands](#) and [Belgium](#) to explicitly ban unnecessary medical procedures on intersex children, with the Netherlands urged to improve support for intersex people and their families, and Belgium to provide legal remedies and support services. CAT called on [Austria](#) to provide compensation and support for intersex people affected by harmful medical procedures and.

During its UPR, Slovakia was [recommended](#) to prohibit the involuntary sterilisation of trans women as a precondition for legal gender recognition.

CCPR recommended the [United Kingdom](#) to prohibit conversion practices across all regions, including Northern Ireland.

## DATA COLLECTION

During UPR, [Cyprus](#) and [Malta](#) were recommended to increase collection of disaggregated data to combat hate speech and discrimination based on sexual orientation, age, disability, ethnicity, and religion. [The Netherlands](#) and [Sweden](#) received similar recommendations on intersectional data collection from CRPD and [France](#) from CCPR.

## EDUCATION

During its UPR, Cyprus was [recommended](#) to take steps to reduce discrimination in education against LGBTI people. CCPR recommended [Croatia](#) and [Serbia](#) to strengthen anti-discrimination measures in schools, with Croatia urged to include teacher training and mandatory diversity education, and Serbia to combat discrimination and prejudice through inclusive education programs. CRC recommended the [Russian Federation](#) to ensure LGBTI children have access to inclusive and non-stigmatising education and to establish legal frameworks protecting them from bullying and harassment in schools. CDESCR recommended [Romania](#) and [Ireland](#) to improve legal protections for LGBTI people in education.

CRC and CDESCR recommended [Armenia](#) and [Iceland](#) to strengthen anti-bullying policies in schools to protect LGBTI children from harassment.

CRC [recommended](#) Bulgaria to implement inclusive education policies and ensure meaningful participation of LGBTI children in decisions affecting them.

## EMPLOYMENT

On 18 July, the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises presented its [report](#), 'Protecting and respecting the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons in the context of business activities: fulfilling obligations and responsibilities under the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights' to the UN General Assembly.

During its UPR, Cyprus was [recommended](#) to take steps to reduce discrimination in employment against LGBTI people. CDESCR and CCPR recommended [Greece](#), [Ireland](#), [Sweden](#), and [Romania](#) to strengthen anti-discrimination measures for LGBTI people in employment, with Greece urged to improve inclusion policies to address systemic discrimination, Ireland to take targeted measures to reduce inequalities, and Sweden to enhance protections for transgender people in the labour market, including recruitment and wage equality. CDESCR recommended [Kyrgyzstan](#) to introduce anti-discrimination protections in employment.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

On 23 October, the mandate holders of the UNSPs on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) and human rights defenders [wrote](#) to the government of Bosnia and Herzegovina regarding their concern related to the Bill, 'Law on Amendments of the Criminal Code of Republika Srpska', which would remove "gender identity" as an explicitly stated protected ground.

The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls released an LGBTI-inclusive [guidance document](#) on 31 October.

During their UPR, [Monaco](#), [Malta](#), [North Macedonia](#), and [Slovakia](#) received recommendations to strengthen legal protections against discrimination and violence targeting LGBTI people. Monaco was urged to adopt legislation prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and introduce legal norms to protect the rights of the LGBTI community. Slovakia was advised to intensify efforts to implement its Anti-discrimination Law, and adopt a National Action Plan for LGBTI equality.

CCPR recommended [Croatia](#) to integrate explicit LGBTI protections into national strategies on discrimination and gender equality and urged [Turkey](#) to amend anti-discrimination laws to explicitly include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds. CESCR called on [Poland](#) to adopt comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation explicitly protecting LGBTI people and recommended [Ireland](#) to ensure that sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics are explicitly included as protected grounds. CRC advised [Armenia](#) to adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law with explicit protections for LGBTI children.

CEDAW recommended [Estonia](#), [Montenegro](#), and [Greece](#) to strengthen protections for LGBTI people, with Estonia and Montenegro urged to explicitly include LGBTI women in anti-discrimination laws and policies, and Greece to fully implement its National Strategy for LGBTIQ+ Equality, ensuring targeted protections for those facing intersectional discrimination. CRC also urged [Estonia](#) to include sexual orientation and gender identity in its anti-discrimination laws.

CRPD called on [Belgium](#), [Sweden](#), and [Azerbaijan](#) to strengthen protections for LGBTI people with disabilities, with Belgium urged to ensure accessible reporting mechanisms, Sweden to strengthen intersectional policies; and Azerbaijan to incorporate explicit protections against intersectional discrimination into its legal and policy frameworks.

CRC recommended [Bulgaria](#) and [Lithuania](#) to protect LGBTI children from discrimination, with Bulgaria urged to address bullying and violence in education, healthcare, and social services, and Lithuania to integrate explicit anti-discrimination measures into child protection policies and enhance monitoring and enforcement of protections.

CCPR urged [Malta](#) to accelerate the adoption of the Equality Bill to establish a comprehensive anti-discrimination framework. CESCR recommended [Albania](#) to fully implement anti-discrimination measures by increasing public awareness, allocating resources, and strengthening accountability mechanisms.

## FAMILY

During their UPR, [Monaco](#), [Cyprus](#), and [Slovakia](#) received recommendations to strengthen legal recognition and rights for same-sex couples. CESCR recommended [Albania](#) and [Poland](#) to establish legal recognition of same-sex partnerships, with Albania urged to extend spousal benefits and Poland to ensure equal rights, including parental rights. CCPR called on [Serbia](#) to fully recognise the rights of same-sex couples and guarantee legal protections in areas such as property, pensions, and inheritance.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSEMBLY, AND ASSOCIATION

On 18 April, the UNSP on SOGI presented his [report](#) on Protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in relation to the human rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association, to the UN Human Rights Council.

On 16 September, the mandate holders of the UNSPs on education, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, privacy, and SOGI [wrote to the government of Georgia](#) to express concern about the bill 'The Law of Georgia on Family Values and Protection of Minors' (an anti-propaganda law), calling for the bill to be defeated in Parliament.

On 14 October, the mandate holders of the UNSPs on SOGI, education, freedom of opinion and expression, freedom of peaceful

assembly and of association, the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, human rights defenders, and privacy wrote to the government of Bulgaria regarding the ‘Law on Amendments and Supplements to the Law on Preschool and School Education’ (an anti-propaganda law), calling for the government to clarify how it would ensure protections of human rights and compliance with international human rights obligations. The UN Human Rights Office had issued a statement reacting to the same legislative process on 16 August.

On 18 December, the mandate holders of the UNSPs on human rights in the Russian Federation, freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, privacy, SOGI, and discrimination against women and girls wrote to the government of the Russian Federation regarding amendments increasing the punishments for violators of existing anti-propaganda laws targeting LGBTI persons and issues.

CCPR recommended Serbia, Turkey, and Kyrgyzstan to safeguard the rights of LGBTI people to peaceful assembly, expression, and association, urging Serbia to prevent violence and intimidation, Turkey to guarantee these freedoms, and Kyrgyzstan to repeal laws restricting freedom of expression

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

On 29 October, the UNSP on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation released a thematic report to the UN General Assembly, which included a section on the dire situation of LGBT persons in the country.

CAT recommended Türkiye and North Macedonia to address violence against LGBTI detainees, with Türkiye urged to investigate sexual violence and harassment in detention facilities and North Macedonia to adopt a national strategy and ensure independent investigations. It also urged Azerbaijan to take effective measures to prevent violence and discrimination against LGBTI people.

## HEALTH

On 14 March 2024, the UNSPs focused on the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, SOGI, and discrimination against women and girls released A Guide on the Human Rights of Sex Workers, which makes specific mention of the risks faced by trans women.

During their UPR, Cyprus, North Macedonia, and Slovakia received recommendations to strengthen protections against discrimination and improve access to healthcare for LGBTI people. Cyprus was urged to take steps to reduce discrimination in employment, housing, education, public services, and healthcare. North Macedonia was recommended to ensure uninterrupted access to gender-affirming healthcare, aligning it with principles of depathologisation, non-discrimination, and international human rights standards. Slovakia was advised to create protections for LGBTI people and human rights defenders to guarantee full access to healthcare services, including gender-affirming medical care.

CESCR recommended Ireland, Greece, Sweden, and Romania to strengthen protections for LGBTI people in healthcare, with Ireland and Greece urged to address inequalities in healthcare alongside employment protections, and Romania to improve legal protections in the healthcare system. CEDAW also called on Greece to improve inclusion policies in healthcare settings to address systemic discrimination. CEDAW recommended Montenegro to train medical professionals on inclusive healthcare for LGBTI women. CRC urged Estonia to ensure inclusive access to healthcare for LGBTI children, particularly focusing on mental health support.

## HOUSING

During its UPR, Cyprus was recommended to take steps to reduce discrimination in housing against LGBTI people. The CESCR recommended Romania to improve legal protections for LGBTI people housing.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

During its UPR, Slovakia was recommended to create protections for LGBTI people and LGBTI human rights defenders to



ensure the full exercise of their rights. CAT [recommended](#) Turkey to end the criminalisation of LGBTI activism and ensure that LGBTI organisations and activists are protected from harassment and arbitrary detention. CEDAW [recommended](#) Tajikistan to protect the rights of LGBTI activists and organisations by ensuring they can operate freely without fear of repression.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

For IDAHOT+, on 17 May, 40 UNSPs and the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights released a [statement](#) on the need to redouble efforts to end discrimination based on SOGI and calling on State “to uphold the inherent dignity of all persons, without distinction, by addressing the root causes of discrimination and violence”.

On 19 July, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk and UNAIDS Executive Director Winnie Byanyima released a [statement](#) on the impact of criminalisation on the lives of LGBTI people, calling for global removal of punitive laws targeting LGBTI persons.

On 23 September, Volker Türk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, gave a [speech](#) to the Summit of the Future regarding increasing threats to the rights of LGBTI people.

On 10 October, United Nations Special Procedures (UNSPs) on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI); extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions; torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; freedom of opinion and expression; human rights defenders; violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; discrimination against women and girls; arbitrary detention; and the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran released a [joint statement](#) calling for the abolition of the death penalty and for decriminalisation of same-sex conduct.

The Working Group on discrimination against women and girls published a [guidance document](#) on Gender equality and gender backlash on 31 October, which addresses attacks on LGBTI human rights defenders by anti-gender movements and is designed to inform member States about recent developments in terms of “gender” and human rights.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

During 2024, the UNSP on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, made several statements, without the support of other UNSPs, regarding legal gender recognition (LGR). Regarding [Germany](#), she said that the self-determination-based LGR framework in the country failed to include “safeguards to prevent abuse of the process by sexual predators... including in single sex spaces”.

During their UPR, [Monaco](#), [Cyprus](#), [North Macedonia](#), and [Slovakia](#) received recommendations to improve LGR processes for trans people. Monaco was urged to permit trans people to change their gender on identity documents and public records. Cyprus was recommended to introduce a transparent self-identification process for LGR, free from medical or diagnostic requirements, and to adopt legislation allowing legal name and gender changes for people over 18 while advancing towards a law guaranteeing the right to gender identity. North Macedonia was advised to adopt and implement a quick, transparent, and accessible administrative procedure for LGR based on self-determination, adopt a gender equality law aligned with EU and UN standards, and ensure adequate funding for LGR procedures. Slovakia was urged to refrain from any legislative attempts to restrict LGR.

CESCR recommended [France](#), [Albania](#), [Romania](#), [Sweden](#), and [Kyrgyzstan](#) to improve LGR and access to gender-affirming healthcare, with France urged to simplify LGR procedures and ensure timely access to care, Albania to establish an accessible procedure, Romania to adopt a system that does not require gender reassignment surgery, Sweden to remove discriminatory barriers in healthcare, and Kyrgyzstan to eliminate restrictions, including the minimum age requirement for gender-affirming care.

CCPR recommended [Greece](#), [Croatia](#), [Serbia](#), and the [United Kingdom](#) to improve LGR processes, with Greece urged to align legal and medical classifications with WHO standards, Croatia to ensure gender-affirming healthcare is covered under

mandatory health insurance, Serbia to simplify LGR by removing unjustified requirements, and the UK to eliminate psychiatric diagnosis and other intrusive conditions, ensuring a quick, transparent, and accessible procedure. CAT recommended [Finland](#) to extend legal gender recognition to trans children and ensure accessibility for those of sufficient age and maturity. CEDAW urged [Montenegro](#) to remove forced sterilisation as a requirement for LGR and called on Greece to adopt a clear legal framework that does not require medical procedures.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

On 29 August, the mandate holders of the UNSPs focused on sexual orientation and gender identity; the right to freedom of opinion and expression; the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; human rights defenders; and discrimination against women and girls [wrote to the government of Kazakhstan](#) with concern about denials of requests to hold LGBTI-related marches and peaceful public assemblies and police raids on private LGBTI events.

On 15 July, the UNSP on SOGI presented a [report](#) on Electoral participation and protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity to the UN General Assembly. OHCHR [promoted this report](#) again on 04 November.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The CEDAW [recommended](#) Tajikistan to implement capacity-building programs for law enforcement and the judiciary on LGBTI rights.

## PUBLIC OPINION

CRC recommended [Georgia](#) and the [Russian Federation](#) to implement public awareness campaigns promoting equality and non-discrimination, with Georgia focusing on sexual orientation and gender identity and the Russian Federation on respect for LGBTI children, their families, and communities. CCPR [recommended](#) Serbia to intensify efforts to combat discrimination and prejudice against LGBTI people through public information campaigns.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

On 14 September, the mandate holders of the UNSPs focused on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences; sexual orientation and gender identity; torture and other cruel and inhuman or degrading treatment; and promotion of truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-recurrence [wrote to the government of Ukraine](#) regarding a draft bill on victims of sexual violence in the context of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, making specific note of the needs of victims with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.

For World Contraception Day (26 September) and International Safe Abortion Day (28 September), the mandate holders of the UNSPs on the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, discrimination against women and girls, and SOGI released a [joint statement](#) calling for respect for the reproductive choices of women and girls in all their diversity, trans men, and gender diverse persons.

## SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

On 16 July, the UNSP on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, published a [report on gender and peace and security and their intersection with trafficking in persons](#). The report highlights how gender shapes the experience of conflict for LGBTI persons, often with an impact on the protection of their rights.

CESCR [recommended](#) Ireland to ensure the full inclusion of LGBTI people in social protection policies, particularly those from disadvantaged or marginalised backgrounds.

# OSCE

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) reported 9,891 hate incidents in 2023, based on civil society and international organisation submissions. Among them, 1,632 incidents were anti-LGBTI, making up a significant proportion of all recorded bias-motivated crimes. Data showed that 56% of anti-LGBTI hate crimes involved physical violence, while 38% targeted property. Official data from 48 participating States showed gaps in prosecution, with 30 states submitting police records on bias-motivated crimes, but only a few distinguishing hate crimes from hate speech. ODIHR urged states to improve hate crime legislation, enhance data collection, and train law enforcement on victim support.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The 2024 OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Gender Report highlighted growing restrictions on civil society organisations (CSOs) advocating for gender equality. It condemned the weaponisation of sexual violence in conflict zones and the persistent lack of legal protections for LGBTI people. The Assembly called on participating States to strengthen anti-discrimination frameworks, protect human rights defenders, and ensure meaningful political participation for women and LGBTI people.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

In April 2024, the Georgian parliament abolished mandatory gender quotas for parliamentary candidate lists, reversing previous commitments to gender equality in politics. The OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) assessed this negatively, warning that the move risks further marginalising women in political life. The percentage of women candidates dropped from 44.3% in the 2020 elections to 29% in 2024, with only three out of 18 party lists led by women. OSCE called for urgent action to restore effective measures ensuring equal political participation.



# ALBANIA

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Amidst public consultations for a new draft law on sexual and reproductive health, the Pro-Family and Pro-Life Coalition launched a disinformation campaign against the LGBTI community. The Coalition falsely claimed that surrogacy provisions are part of an agenda to infiltrate Albanian families. Members asserted that the “aggressive gay agenda” aims to take babies from mothers and give them to trans men, accusing the LGBTI community of “playing with the blood of Albanian babies.”

On May 21st, Albania’s “Alliance Against Hate Speech,” issued a statement expressing concern over the recent surge in hate speech targeting the LGBTI community and human rights defenders. The statement noted that social and media platforms were rife with offensive language, derogatory comparisons and threats, affecting not only the IDAHOT 2024 campaign but also unrelated events. The Alliance underscored that respecting the rights of any community does not undermine the rights of others and urged responsible institutions to address hate speech, especially when propagated by public figures or those in positions of power, as it can cause significant harm.

On May 23, the Pro-Family and Life Coalition organised the “Manifesto of Life” rally following a symbolic marriage ceremony of two women at the Tirana Municipality. At the rally, the coalition began collecting signatures for a ‘Pro-Family’ petition. Participants falsely claimed that the LGBTI community aims to depopulate the country and impose hormone replacement therapies on children. The coalition filed a criminal complaint against the mayor of Tirana, seeking to open a criminal investigation. They accused him of abuse of duty, alleging that he had used his position to improperly promote the LGBTI agenda.

Aleanca LGBT has taken proactive measures against hate speech spearheaded by the anti-LGBTI movement by lodging a series of seven complaints for incitement of hatred before the Prosecutorial Services of Tirana and one discrimination and hate speech complaint before the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination.

In October, the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network (BIRN) reported the worsening of prejudice against LGBTI people due to the rise of discriminatory comments from politicians in Albania. BIRN reported that Adriatik Lapaj, leader of the minor Shqipëria Behet party, reignited a public debate on same-sex marriage and adoption by posting discriminatory comments on Facebook in early October.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

An annual questionnaire by Aleanca LGBTI revealed that 42%

of the LGBTI respondents personally experienced violence or discrimination in the past year. Notably, 71.3% of these incidents were linked to their being LGBTI. Likewise, 32% of respondents were acquainted with another LGBTI person who faced similar issues. Despite the provisions put in place by the law “On Protection from Discrimination”, public education on protection against discrimination remains notably low. Over 63% of respondents were unaware of the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination’s existence. Equally noteworthy, 85% of respondents who encountered discrimination never lodged a discrimination complaint with the Commissioner’s office.

In May, a trans woman was attacked by a group of men near Tirana municipality.

Also in May, a group of minors threw stones at the representative of the LGBTI Alliance in Tirana. A participant in Tirana Pride 2024 faced similar violent behaviour.

A couple of lesbian activists faced stoning attacks twice near their neighbourhood. Despite filing official complaints, the victim’s efforts to seek justice were unsuccessful.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

The situation for intersex people in Albania remains uncertain, as the country lacks legislation that enforces a comprehensive ban on non-consensual and non-therapeutic surgeries on intersex infants and precise data regarding the number of intersex babies born is unclear. While a series of laws mandates that individuals undergoing surgical interventions must provide expressed consent, intersex infants often undergo such procedures at a very young age, before they have the legal capacity to give consent. Surveys conducted by Aleanca LGBTI between 2020 and 2024 revealed that approximately 2% of respondents, out of around 420 surveyed, reported having been subjected to non-consensual interventions as infants.

## EDUCATION

Data from Aleanca LGBTI’s annual questionnaire revealed that LGBTI people frequently encounter obstacles in accessing education due to their sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics, with 30% of those unable to complete compulsory education citing discrimination and economic challenges as significant factors. The questionnaire identified educational settings as primary sites of discrimination against LGBTI people, with approximately 63% of respondents believing that teachers and school principals remain uninformed about LGBTI issues, despite efforts to train educational staff under the National Action Plans (2016-2024).

Over the past five years, Aleanca LGBT documented 25 cases of individuals leaving education due to bullying and societal pressure, with 80.2% of LGBTI victims never reporting discrimination out of fear of exposure and further mistreatment. Sex education that omits the existence of LGBTI people and doesn't provide any supportive information leaves them with fragmented knowledge on relevant issues. 93% of respondents confirmed that their school curricula lacked accurate LGBTI-related information.

## EMPLOYMENT

Aleanca LGBT reported that about 70% of respondents to its annual questionnaire found themselves uninsured and in unstable economic situations. The Labour Code, amended in December 2015, prohibits discrimination in employment and professions based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI). Despite these legal protections, in 2024 a significant 57.8% of respondents reported never having been formally employed under a legal contract, while one-third are currently unemployed, which indicates systemic barriers and discrimination within the workforce. Furthermore, 26.7% of those currently employed reported experiencing harassment and prejudice in the workplace due to their SOGI. Notably, 71.3% of these incidents were linked to their being LGBTI, highlighting the ongoing discrimination and hostility faced by LGBTI workers.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Recent misinformation and hate speech targeting the LGBTI community in Albania contributed to increased incidents of discrimination and harassment. Many LGBTI people face hostility in the workplace, schools, and within their families, resulting in social isolation leading to mental health challenges like anxiety and depression. The pervasive fear of public exposure forces many LGBTI people to hide their identities, denying them the basic freedom to live authentically.

## FAMILY

On May 19, two lesbian women held a symbolic marriage ceremony on the terrace of Tirana City Hall, marking the first unofficial same-sex marriage in Albania. The couple had previously submitted a marriage declaration request to the Office of Civil Status, citing their constitutional right to marry as per Article 53, despite the Family Code reserving this right for heterosexual couples. The ceremony, officiated by British Methodist Church pastors, sparked a surge of hate speech from the Pro-Family and Life Coalition and various religious organisations. In September, Aleanca LGBTI started the first strategic litigation case concerning the legal recognition of a lesbian couple by filing a request for marriage before the Civil Registry Office. The case was presented before the Administrative Court of First Instance in December.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## HOUSING

To address the economic precarity faced by LGBTI people in the country, sexual orientation and gender identity have been recognised as eligibility criteria for social housing.

The law on social housing ([Law no. 22/2018, "On Social Housing"](#)) establishes a framework for providing affordable housing to vulnerable populations, including the LGBTI community. It aims to ensure access to housing, particularly for individuals facing discrimination, such as trans people, who are disproportionately affected by housing issues. Between 2019 and 2024, for instance, 22 trans women were evicted from their homes solely based on their gender identity. Many LGBTI individuals view the capital city as the only place where they can live free from violence, leading to increased demand for housing there. However, a significant barrier to accessing social housing is the lack of trust in the system, as concerns about compromised confidentiality during the application and assessment process deter many from applying. The effectiveness of this legislation is further undermined by the absence of essential bylaws, which complicates proper implementation. As highlighted by an [article](#) on portavendore.al, many institutions continue to rely on outdated provisions from previous laws when applying the current legislation, thus hindering progress and reinforcing legal gaps that continue to restrict the LGBTI community's access to adequate housing.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In July, the United Nations Independent Expert on Protection Against Violence and Discrimination based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity emphasised the need to address legislative gaps by establishing a straightforward and affordable administrative procedure for legal gender recognition. Additionally, he recommended taking steps to make schools safe and inclusive environments for all children and called for improvements in the processes for reporting, documenting, and investigating bias-motivated crimes.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Despite numerous recommendations directed at Albania, a legal framework for gender recognition remains absent in the country. This deficiency leaves many trans people without essential documentation that accurately reflects their gender identity, perpetuating discrimination and stigmatisation while also limiting access to healthcare and other critical services. The Ministry of Health and Social Protection introduced a new Medical Protocol on Hormonal Treatment for Trans People, but effective implementation necessitates further capacity building among medical professionals to ensure they can provide appropriate support to trans people.

In September, Aleanca LGBTI commenced a strategic litigation case seeking legal recognition of a trans woman's gender identity before the Civil Court of First Instance of Tirana. Simultaneously, Ylberofilia, in collaboration with the Albanian Committee of Helsinki, continues to advocate in court for the right to amend personal information on identity cards.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

A new draft law on sexual and reproductive health was criticised by activists as its provisions restrict access to Reproductive Medicine and Assistance (RMA) to heterosexual couples and single women and render surrogacy available only for married heterosexual couples who cannot conceive naturally.



[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG)



# ANDORRA

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech, especially against trans people, remains a concerning issue in Andorra, with governmental bodies often contributing to or spreading bias-motivated speech.

The Comú (city hall) of Escaldes-Engordany, invited the Spanish journalist [Maricel Chavarria](#) to a [conference](#), qualifying her as an expert in inclusive language and feminism. Nonetheless, Chavarria aligns herself with trans exclusionary radical feminism perspectives, as indicated by [interviews](#) she gave to several [newspapers](#) and a [video](#) uploaded on the official Escaldes-Engordany's YouTube channel. The City Council of Escaldes-Engordany responded to [concerns raised by Diversand](#) LGBTI association by stating that Chavarria's views were personal opinions and did not constitute hate speech. The Area of Equality Policies opened a discussion about the conference, but it clarified that it has no jurisdiction over the actions of Escaldes-Engordany's city hall, as the decision was within the municipality's autonomy.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

According to [Law 6/2022](#), this year, businesses and civil society organisations were bound to implement protocols for the effective implementation of the right to equal treatment and opportunities, as well as for the establishment of guarantees of nondiscrimination. Nonetheless, the law is built on the notion of gender, not gender identity, and defines gender as "the cultural and social construct that, based on biological differences, assigns different emotional, intellectual, and attitudinal characteristics to men and women," stating that "based on these biological differences, gender shapes social relationships and power dynamics between men and women." The omission of gender identity results in a gap in explicit protections for trans people in the scope of this law.

## HEALTH

Despite the Government's promise of implementation by late 2023 or early 2024, mechanisms to access transition-related healthcare in Andorra are still not operational. The envisioned mechanisms include establishing a circuit with reference doctors, endocrinologists, and mental health professionals trained in trans healthcare, but these processes have not yet been finalised or accredited by the CASS system.

By December 2024, no specific regulations for gender-affirming care had been published, but the Health Ministry had sent an almost finished draft to Diversand in November 2024. Emphasising the need for more specialised trans healthcare, Diversand [suggested](#) that those interested might start their transition abroad, although this is not yet officially facilitated by the Andorran healthcare system.

The organisations have also reported cases of trans people undergoing hormone replacement therapy without professional supervision due to the lack of official measures to access these treatments. After long negotiations between the Health Ministry and Diversand, the Health Ministry affirmed its intention to allow trans people to access transition-related healthcare without psychological evaluation. However, as of 2024, these changes have not been implemented due to delays in finalising the necessary regulations. In one of the meetings between the Health Ministry and Diversand, the Health Ministry affirmed that people younger than 16 won't have access to gender-affirming care. This sudden change was likely caused by the publication of the Cass Review in the UK and the reaction to it by neighbouring countries like France.

## HOUSING

Andorra is currently facing a challenging housing crisis, with [rising rents](#) that have rendered housing [emancipation](#) increasingly unattainable, resulting in many people living in overcrowded conditions.

In December 2023, a movement advocating for decent housing emerged, culminating in one of the largest [demonstrations](#) in the country's history. This mobilisation, which continued to gain momentum throughout 2024, marked a significant turning point as civil society, including the LGBTI movement, came together to demand urgent measures to address the housing crisis. Although the government is attempting to implement [measures](#) to address the situation, these efforts have largely proven [inadequate](#). According to Diversand, the overall housing crisis disproportionately impacts LGBTI people, particularly those whose families do not accept their identity. Trans people, in particular, are at heightened risk, as the lack of supportive family environments exacerbates the challenges they face in securing safe and adequate housing.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The Department of Equality Policies and Diversand launched a [visibility campaign](#) on IDAHOBIT (May 17).

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Feminist LGBTI activist Vanessa Mendoza Cortés, who faced defamation charges from Andorran authorities over a report highlighting the lack of access to abortion in the country, was [acquitted](#) on January 17. She was accused of defaming her country after having presented a report on the situation of abortion in Andorra to the 74<sup>th</sup> session of the UN CEDAW committee.

## **SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS**

Abortion, even in instances of maternal risk, foetal abnormalities, or rape, remains outlawed in Andorra.

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

In the last week of October, Diversand participated in Andorra's Associations Fair, one of the biggest civil society events in the country, for the second time.



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# ARMENIA

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In July, a café owner publicly outed a gay customer in front of other customers, subjected him to insults, and ultimately denied him service, forcing him to leave the establishment. The individual reported the incident to law enforcement, but the ensuing criminal investigation did not address the element of discrimination based on sexual orientation. The details of the case were brought to light by Pink NGO, which documented the incident and will include its details in its [annual report](#) in early 2025.

## ASYLUM

In January, an Armenian court [examined](#) a claim against the Armenian Migration Service's decision to reject the asylum application of a man who fled the republic of Chechnya after being tortured over his perceived homosexuality. The court ruled that LGBTI people are not safe in Chechnya and Russia, consequently granting him asylum and [refugee](#) status in Armenia and rejecting Russia's request to extradite him.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In alignment with the ongoing trend observed in recent years, in 2024, the LGBTI community was subjected to political manipulation by the opposition to the the Government. The discourse centred [around proposed constitutional changes](#). Another instance of discriminatory rhetoric transpired in Parliament during [discussions](#) regarding [amendments](#) to the law against domestic violence, specifically concerning the definition of the term "partner."

Another surge of hate speech focused on Diana Ghzroyan, who represented Armenia at the "Miss Trans Star International 2024" beauty contest. Her participation incited a [wave](#) of derogatory and degrading remarks, which included threats and incitements to violence and discrimination based on her gender identity. Vahe Yeghiazaryan, who had attacked a trans woman during a livestream two years prior, directed explicit threats toward Ghzroyan and, in the aftermath of the murder of Georgian trans activist Kesaria Abramidze, certain offenders have made comments suggesting that Ghzroyan could be the next target. Despite the serious nature of these threats and the condemnations issued by non-governmental organisations, no criminal investigations have been initiated to examine the criminal elements of these messages or to hold the offenders accountable.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In January, the Court of General Jurisdiction of Ararat and Vayots Dzor [overturned](#) the prosecutor's decision not to pursue charges against a father who had abused his son due to his sexual orientation.

The court found the investigation inadequate, deeming it a violation of the victim's rights. The court also ruled that the constitutional prohibition against discrimination, which includes "personal or other social circumstances," extends to sexual orientation, affirming its protection under the Constitution.

In February, two individuals attacked a gay man, an American citizen, with the explicit intention to physically harm him because of his perceived sexual orientation. For the first time in Armenian history, the investigative body [acknowledged](#) hatred as a biased motivation during the criminal proceedings when determining the charges against the offenders. Initially, the preventive measure imposed on the offenders was a signature requirement to ensure they did not leave the country. However, one of the offenders continued to engage in criminal activities despite this measure, leading to the escalation of the preventative measure to formal arrest.

In June, a trans woman and sex worker was attacked in her own apartment by a client, as documented by the Right Side NGO.

## EDUCATION

Throughout 2024, LGBTI people reported multiple incidents of persistent violence and degrading treatment in educational settings. In one case, a lesbian teenager endured ongoing abuse at her college and youth centre due to her sexual orientation. The hostile environment forced her to transfer between educational institutions multiple times to continue her education safely. In another case, a gay student experienced relentless bullying from both teachers and peers. To avoid the harassment, he lied to his mother to skip school, a situation that persisted for ten years before he finally reported the abuse. Further information about these incidents among others, will be available in Pink NGO's annual report in early 2025.

## EMPLOYMENT

In June, human rights defender Anahit Manasyan delivered the [opening speech](#) at the concluding conference of the "Decent Work Now" program, which focused on addressing critical labour rights issues, including the protection of vulnerable groups such as LGBTI people.

A trans asylum seeker faced repeated refusals for employment at various establishments due to their gender expression. Although some employers initially agreed to hire them, they later withdrew their offers without providing any explanations upon noticing that the gender marker on the person's identification documents had not been updated, according to Pink NGO. The case has been documented by the NGO as part of its documentation of discrimination based on gender identity and expression.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

After ongoing advocacy efforts from HR activists, Ministry of Justice has in 2024 provided a new draft for an anti-discrimination law that broadly defines discrimination. However the draft still omits references to sexual orientation and gender identity and instead of setting up the Equality Body as an independent body, foresees it to operate under the Ombudsman's office, which diminishes its authority and the legal weight of its decisions. Another critical gap in the draft law is the lack of legal competence granted to public organisations.

By the end of the year, at least 57 cases of discrimination, violence, and hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity were reported by LGBTI people. Violations recorded included instances of torture and inhumane treatment, such as conversion practices, domestic violence and breaches of privacy, robbery and extortion, and educational discrimination, including bullying and neglect by teaching staff. Notably, many of these discrimination cases entailed blackmail incidents targeting LGBTI people. Throughout the year, at least five hate crime cases were reported to Pink NGO, in which perpetrators extorted individuals by threatening to expose their sexual orientation or gender identity to family members or co-workers. In some instances, these crimes were perpetrated by the victims' partners, who exploited their personal vulnerabilities for financial gain.

In September, ECOM published its 2024 analysis of Armenia's national legislation concerning sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) and HIV, offering a range of recommendations for the Armenian government. The suggestions include adopting a comprehensive anti-discrimination law that defines discrimination, its types, and explicitly lists SOGI as protected grounds. It also urges amendments to various legal acts and norms to explicitly prohibit discrimination based on SOGI, as well as revisions to hate crime regulations in the Criminal Code to include SOGI in the list of protected characteristics.

## FAMILY

In April, Armenia's parliament passed amendments to strengthen the country's domestic violence law, including the recognition of "partners" in civil unions and extending protections to LGBTI people. Each year, approximately 50% of the documented cases of discrimination and human rights violations against LGBTI people reported by Pink NGO involve domestic violence, encompassing physical, emotional, economic, and other forms of violence perpetrated by family members. Despite the prevalence of these cases, only a small number of people choose to report the incidents to the police, with currently only one case having reached the domestic courts. The changes came into force in July, criminalising domestic violence and recognising children

who witness such violence as victims. Since then, at least two cases of partner abuse and violence have become known, in which those affected chose not to report these incidents to law enforcement agencies out of a desire to avoid further harm and mistreatment.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

Two cases involving attempts of conversion therapy were documented in the past year by Pink NGO.

In the first instance, the mother of a teenage girl forcibly took her to both a psychologist and a neurologist in an effort to change her sexual orientation after the girl came out to her. One of the psychologists disclosed details about the girl's sexuality to her mother, while the neurologist promised to "treat" her. In another case, a gay person sought psychological counselling but encountered a psychologist who encouraged him to pursue experiences with women. The individual was able to promptly terminate the counselling sessions due to this inappropriate guidance. In both situations, those affected chose to report their experiences only to Pink NGO's social workers, declining to approach other specialists or authorities.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In January, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe issued a written statement regarding anti-discrimination legislation in Armenia. In the statement, the Assembly urged the Armenian Government and Parliament to include protections based on sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sex characteristics in their proposed draft 'law on equality'.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Police and law enforcement are not the first and often desirable point of contact for individuals who faced violence or other violations of their rights. For more information, see sections Family, Equality and Non-Discrimination and Freedom from Torture.



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# AUSTRIA

## ASYLUM

In March, Austria denied the asylum claim of Gao Yi, a trans woman and founder of the Chinese Peaceful Revolutionary Party, a political unit that opposes the current Chinese government.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In May, Manfred Haimbuchner, the leader of the Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) in Upper Austria, made remarks about gender diverse people as part of his opening speech at a 5,000-people party event. Haimbuchner mocked gender-diverse people and implied they do not belong in politics.

In September, the Freedom Party (FPÖ) won the parliamentary elections with 28.8% of the vote, making it the largest party for the first time. Led by Herbert Kickl, the FPÖ is staunchly opposed to what it terms the “transgender brainwashing” of society and seeks to stop taxpayer funding for what it calls “queer experiments”. Prior to the election, representatives of the party expressed a clear willingness to promote legislation enshrining a binary understanding of gender in the country’s constitution.

Three Austrian soccer players have been removed from the national team due to their participation in an anti-gay chanting incident. The incident, reported by Outsports, showed the players and staff chanting derogatory remarks that translate to “we are not little ass-loving violets.”

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Starting in October, the “QueerFacts” training workshops will expand to Carinthia, Upper Austria, and Vorarlberg. Originally launched by the RosaLila PantherInnen association in collaboration with HOSI Vienna, HOSI Salzburg, VIMÖ, Verein Amazone, and INSIEME Kärnten, these workshops have been conducted in Styria, Salzburg, and Vienna. Their goal is to prevent extremism and sexism by fostering discussions on queer topics in educational institutions.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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”.

## HEALTH

In February, Federal Chancellor and ÖVP leader Karl Nehammer proposed a ban on hormone treatments for patients under the age of 18 without medical justification. The ban was part of the ‘Austria Plan’ of reforms, intended to be implemented by 2030, which

became part of the ÖVP manifesto for the national elections 2024. Civil society organisations expressed their disappointment in the proposal, asking the ÖVP to reject it in favour of more inclusive legislation. A group of CSOs responded to the proposal by addressing an open letter to Nehammer, denouncing the dangers of such measures and advocating for legislation that respects trans identities. The proposal has not gained significant traction yet.

In May the Vienna Labour and Social Court sentenced the social health insurance ÖGK to pay a share of the costs for a laser beard epilation for a trans woman. There was already a similar judgement in 2022, but the ÖGK refused to move forward with the payments as long as it was not sued. Nonetheless, since the ÖGK did not raise an objection against the decision, it will have no general validity and those concerned by the issue in the future will still have to face individual judicial proceedings to be awarded similar benefits.

The Ministry of Health issued an e-learning tool for healthcare professionals to support LGBTI-inclusive healthcare. The e-learning tool was developed by Gesundheit Österreich GmbH and was awarded the Pride Biz Research Prize, a biannual prize for outstanding research on LGBTIQ+ subjects in business and society.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

The Association of Intersex People of Austria (VIMÖ) submitted an alternative report to the United Nations 8<sup>th</sup> Periodic Report of Austria by the Convention Against Torture (CAT). The report revealed that over 1,000 children and adolescents with variations of sex characteristics - corresponding specific DSD diagnoses - are discharged from hospitals annually. This means that a large number of these children can be expected to undergo operations classified as Intersex Genital Mutilation (IGM) every year.

VIMÖ was invited to speak in front of the Committee for Children’s Rights at the Federal Council alongside paediatric endocrinologist Dr. Stefan Riedl, who opposes a ban of IGM. After the hearing, the motion for a resolution titled “protect children’s rights of intersex children and adolescents - ban medically unnecessary operations” by the Federal Councillor Daniela Gruber-Pruner of the SPÖ and colleagues was discussed in the Council. Upon discussion, the motion was postponed by the governing parties, ÖVP and the Greens.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In March, Austria set up a compensation fund of 33 million euros to provide financial compensation to LGBTI people who faced prosecution because of their sexual orientation under the discriminatory provisions that remained in force until the early 2000s.

In May, the United Nations CAT advocated for legal measures to prohibit unnecessary medical treatments on intersex children, compensation for those affected, and the creation of counselling and support structures. These recommendations align with those formulated in 2015, which already called on Austria to protect intersex individuals from harmful interventions.

In September, GREVIO issued its evaluation report on combating violence against women in Austria, offering specific recommendations to the country. The report included a recommendation to gather data on “forced sterilisation,” in response to which Austria announced that the feedback would serve as a catalyst to gather data on the prevalence of forced sterilisations and forced abortions in the country.



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# AZERBAIJAN

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In April, Azerbaijani author Nazli Chalabi published an LGBTI-themed novel titled Blue Fear, which is available for sale on the Azerbaijani market.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In March, following a yearly Women's Day march where protesters requested effective access to trans healthcare, the government-affiliated Real TV channel aired a report targeting LGBTI people with discriminatory hate speech.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In March, the murder of a trans woman in Baku was met with a police response that lacked a comprehensive investigation process, sparking community-wide requests for a thorough examination.

## EDUCATION

A new policy on equality, diversity, and inclusion was adopted by various universities in Azerbaijan, explicitly including sexual orientation and gender as grounds for protection. The policy aims to ensure clear, fair, and accessible services at university, guarantee that people are treated equally, receive the respect and dignity that they deserve, and that their diversity is acknowledged.

## FAMILY

In May, a woman from Krasnoyarsk forcibly transported her 18-year-old daughter to Baku, confiscating her documents, phone, and antidepressants after she revealed her sexual orientation. Her current whereabouts are unknown.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In April, the ECtHR issued a ruling on several applications against Azerbaijan concerning LGBTI rights. These applications stemmed from events in September 2017, when Azerbaijani police arrested multiple LGBTI people under various pretexts, leading to their mistreatment, illegal detention, and discrimination. In 2019, Azerbaijan acknowledged the violations and offered compensation through a unilateral declaration. However, the applicants expressed dissatisfaction, citing inadequate compensation and acknowledgment. The ECtHR reviewed the government's submission and removed 19 applications from its list, stating that further examination was unnecessary given the government's admission and compensation offer.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

On 7 February, snap presidential elections took place in Azerbaijan. Understanding the importance of LGBTI

representation and active engagement in such important electoral events, Nafas facilitated the involvement of LGBTI people in the monitoring of the elections, contributing to the fight for both electoral transparency and LGBTI political representation.

Despite the intention to foster inclusivity in electoral processes, the efforts of LGBTI observers were met with backlash from local media, which accused them of staging provocations and smearing the election process. An article published by Axar.az released four hours before the election, warned about "groups planning to sabotage election day," while singling out Nafas as one of the leaders of such groups. On 9 February, in another article published by Musavat, Nafas was exclusively targeted and accused of being "the main interlocutors for smearing the election process." Following the backlash similar events occurred during the parliamentary elections which were held on September 1.

Although there was no such plan of observation by any LGBTI groups in the country, an article titled "Rainbow" Observers - What and Who Do They Serve? was published on the Azvision media platform just days before the election and warned against the same scenario.

## PUBLIC OPINION

In June, discussing the package proposal being considered by the legal committee of the Georgian parliament on the outlawing of alleged 'LGBTI propaganda', a well-known Azerbaijani lawyer, Akram Hasanov expressed his support for more prohibitive norms against LGBTI rights. Hasanov claimed that "Azerbaijan should refer to Georgian practice in this matter" and advocated for a similar approach to be implemented worldwide.

In July, Georgia's anti-LGBTI draft law caused political discussions in Azerbaijan, with pro-government media contributing to the creation of an unofficial network of public officials and relevant figures in the Azerbaijan context who share a same opposition to LGBTI rights.

In September, discussing Georgia's anti-LGBTI draft law being adopted in the 2nd hearing by the Georgian parliament, a well-known Azerbaijani sociologist, Elchin Bayramli, expressed his support. Bayramli, while advocating for legislative and policy measures to counter so-called "LGBTI propaganda," proposed harmful actions targeting LGBTI people, including identifying and forcibly confining them. He also claimed that LGBTI advocacy was directed and financed by Azerbaijan's "enemies" in global circles.



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# BELARUS

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The state-run Belarusian television channel aired an episode of the youth talk show 'Yes, But' which discussed potential punishments for non-normative sexual orientations and gender identities. The program equated LGBTI identities with paedophilia and labelled LGBTI community practices and identities as "a weapon in the hands of the West and the United States" and "a danger to Belarusian statehood."

Belarusian state media is often characterised by the presence of incorrect and offensive language, as well as hate speech, with half of public communications in 2023 containing harmful language and signs of discrimination towards minorities like LGBTI people. An increase in the use of hate speech in state propaganda against the LGBTI community has been recorded by TG House in Belarus in 2024. State media often portrayed LGBTI people as criminals or a threat to traditional values, using discriminatory language, reinforcing stereotypes, and justifying repressive laws and actions against LGBTI people and organisations.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In February, Prosecutor General Andrei Shved announced that the Prosecutor General's Office plans to introduce a law imposing administrative penalties for "LGBTI propaganda". The draft law has not been tabled yet.

Activist reports indicate that at least ten trans people left Belarus last year due to discrimination and repression. Further information about the context is reported under Legal Gender Recognition and Police and Law Enforcement.

## FAMILY

A new concept of National Security has been adopted, emphasising the protection and promotion of the traditional family, defined strictly as a union between a woman and a man by birth.

A trans man from Belarus reported having to flee the country after his son started experiencing bullying at school due to his father's gender identity, and he was subjected to an investigation that could have resulted in the loss of parental rights due to his gender expression.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In March 2024, the Central District Court of Minsk declared the informational materials of TG House, a trans-led organisation, including its online resources and social media accounts, as extremist. This marked the first instance in Belarusian history where an LGBTI organisation was officially labelled that way.

The court's decision highlights the increasing pressure on the LGBTI community and the State's efforts to suppress any forms of association and expression related to the protection of the rights of sexual and gender minorities.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## DATA COLLECTION

In Belarus, escalating repression has made accessing information about LGBTI issues increasingly difficult. The government's crackdown has silenced independent voices and dismantled third sector organisations. As reported by TG House Belarus, those who attempt to gather data or advocate for LGBTI rights face significant risks, including arrest and imprisonment.

According to recent data, 40% of LGBTI people reported their mental health as “bad” or “very bad,” a significant 88% are seriously considering emigration and, among those who left Belarus since 2020, over 70% cited political repression as their primary reason for departure.

Human rights defenders report that from 2023 to 2024, LGBTI people have emerged as a new subject of state repression in Belarus.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In April, police officers assaulted trans activist Yulia who was subsequently forced to flee the country after being subjected to relentless pressure and threats.

A trans woman reported to TG House that, before managing to flee the country, she was subjected to severe abuse during detention. She described being beaten and having to endure stun gun torture, as security forces mocked her gender identity and coerced her into making false confessions.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In March, the HRC passed a resolution calling for the immediate establishment of a group of independent experts to oversee the human rights situation in Belarus.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Monitoring conducted by TG House from 2019 to 2024 has highlighted systemic issues within the Gender Transition Commission in Belarus, revealing a significant increase in rejection rates for gender transition applications. Notably, during the first commission meeting in 2024, 80% of applicants were denied. The monitoring also uncovered widespread procedural inconsistencies, lack of transparency, and discriminatory practices, including arbitrary criteria for decision-making. These barriers have forced many trans people to abandon their efforts or seek assistance abroad, exacerbating the challenges faced by the trans community in accessing legal gender recognition. TG House also documented a case in 2024 where a trans man in Belarus faced coercion from officials to abandon his gender transition. He reported significant pressure, including threats of losing access to essential documents and social services.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In February, amendments were made to Decree No. 355, expanding the military’s authority to use weapons, allowing for more arbitrary use of force against civilians and diminishing institutional safeguards.

In February, a trans woman was detained multiple times for “harbouring” an LGBTI person from Ukraine.

During her detention, law enforcement officials forced her into confessing on camera and circulated the video, as well as details about her gender transition and intimate photos.

In April, the House of Representatives passed the draft Law “On Amendments to Laws on the Investigative Committee.” The draft law aims at granting the Investigative Committee the authority to access personal data from information resources and systems without individuals’ consent.

In September, a recent wave of arrests targeting the LGBTI community in Belarus was recorded by TG House, with at least eight trans people being detained since August.

Throughout the September, authorities intensified the crackdown which began in late August, leading to an estimated 15-20 LGBTI people being detained across multiple cities. Among the detainees, trans people were primarily charged with hooliganism, while others faced criminal charges related to the dissemination of pornography. Many of them cited instances of beatings, psychological intimidation, and verbal abuse during detention. TG House clarified the information regarding the total number of detentions, reporting that, in 2024, at least 32 LGBTI activists were detained. According to the organisation, activists consistently reported threats, public shaming, and surveillance, as part of a broader campaign to suppress dissent and align with the state’s promotion of so-called “traditional values.”

In November, Polityvazynka and TG House reported the case of Evgeniya, a trans woman who experienced significant violence when security forces raided her apartment. As part of the testimony, the organisations reported that police forces found her in her underwear and mocked her, asking, “So are you a woman or a man?” before forcing her to record a video while they ridiculed her gender identity, expressing uncertainty about which cell to place her in due to her gender identity.



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# BELGIUM

## ASYLUM

In September, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe indicated that the Belgian authorities are struggling to provide dignified accommodations for people during their asylum procedures, forcing many to sleep on the streets. This situation particularly affects single men, including those from the LGBTI community. When asylum seekers do receive shelter, their basic safety needs—especially those of LGBTI people—are often inadequately addressed in the main reception centres. Additionally, LGBTI asylum seekers frequently find themselves placed alongside individuals from their countries of origin, which can pose challenges as many have fled their home countries due to anti-LGBTI laws or hostile environments, making their circumstances in these communal settings more complex.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In April, a coalition of human rights organisations issued an open letter urging the revision of Article 150 of the Constitution. Article 150 of the Belgian Constitution notably governs the prosecution of “press offenses,” requiring that such cases be judged by a jury in a “court of assizes”, with the exception of cases of hate speech based on racism and xenophobia, which are handled directly by criminal courts. The proposal of the coalition aims to broaden the scope of the law by including LGBTI-phobic hate speech in the list of press crimes prosecutable by criminal courts, thereby subjecting it to the same legal framework that governs racist and xenophobic speech.

Leading up to the national and regional elections in June, Vlaams Belang, a political party in Belgium, actively promoted anti-LGBTI rhetoric through hate speech and bias-motivated discourse. Party chairman Tom Van Grieken remarked that “LGBT rights are acquired rights” and stated that “Vlaams Belang does not believe that there are genders”. Van Grieken further justified ridiculing people for expressing their gender identity and asserted that proposals for legislative changes to gender markers in official documents should not be part of governmental discussions. In their program, Vlaams Belang articulated their opposition to what they termed “gender madness” in early education, specifically targeting toddler, primary, and secondary schools. In their 2023 brochure titled *Cultuurstrijd* (Culture Battle), they described the teaching of gender theories as “confusing, dangerous, and pedagogically irresponsible.”

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

According to European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) LGBTIQ survey, in Belgium, 15% of LGBTI respondents reported being assaulted in the five years prior to the survey. Over the past year, 6% experienced assault, and more than half reported being harassed.

In May, the Brussels Criminal Court sentenced a man to one year in prison and to pay €5,000 in compensation for harassment with aggravating circumstances relating to discrimination against Samantha Warginaire, a trans woman from Brussels and candidate for regional elections.

In June, the Liège Assize Court handed Jérémy Davin a 30-year prison sentence for the homophobic killing of 43-year-old Mbaye Wade. Wade was fatally stabbed fifteen times at his residence on September 17, 2020, allegedly as an act of vengeance following a previous encounter. The aggravating circumstance of homophobia was retained by the jury against Davin, who identified as bisexual and was deemed by the court to have been influenced by ‘internalized homophobia’ in his actions.

In late August, Grindr issued a warning to its users about the risk of homophobic violence following a shooting in Ixelles. The incident, which left a 57-year-old man dead and his son and wife injured, occurred after the son was lured into a fake date arranged through the dating app, where the attackers had set up the meeting to ambush him. Several other complaints were lodged with the Brussels police regarding homophobic attacks. According to *Le Soir*, the attacks followed a consistent pattern with victims being contacted through a popular dating app using a fake account to arrange meetings before ambushing them.

In September, the Bruges Criminal Court sentenced a couple to 15 years in prison for multiple terrorism-related offences. According to judge Amélie Van Belleghem, there were concrete and elaborate plans to carry out attacks in various locations in Antwerp, including the Jewish neighbourhood, an LGBTI bar, a police station, and a NATO building.

## EDUCATION

In January, a student at Université libre de Bruxelles publicly criticised the institution on social media following a transphobic incident in the Solbosch campus restrooms. The student notably criticized an alleged gap between the university management’s declared commitment to trans rights and the actual experiences of students.

In May, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) LGBTIQ survey published a report highlighting a troubling rise in school bullying towards LGBTI pupils, with 67% of Belgian respondents experiencing harassment or mockery.

## EMPLOYMENT

In February, Belgium introduced a new Criminal Code that removes the distinction between discrimination based on ‘racial’ criteria and other grounds, including sexual orientation,



in employment and goods and services. This means that discrimination against individuals based on sexual orientation is now treated with the same legal seriousness as discrimination based on race, ensuring equal protection under the law.

## FAMILY

The legislation regarding surrogacy remains unclear, leading to discrimination against same-sex families, as the absence of a clear legal framework leads local administrations to employ different methods/practices concerning the registration of children born through surrogacy.

The current adoption procedure allows the child's birth families to specify that they refuse their child to be adopted by same-sex couples, which constitutes clear discrimination.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## HEALTH

In the Namur province, a new [consultation service](#) will be established by the Willy Peers centre to better support trans people undergoing transition processes. This initiative addresses the region's previous lack of tailored support for trans people and aims to meet their specific needs by offering comprehensive care, including psychological, social, and medical support, with on-site hormonal treatment available for those who need it.

The city of Verviers, in collaboration with Maison Arc-en-Ciel de Verviers and the local associative network, has introduced its first free [public sexual health products dispenser](#). The municipality plans to add ten more units throughout the city and nine additional locations across Wallonia to enhance accessibility.

At [the end of 2023](#), the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (RIZIV) launched a call for hospitals to apply as centres for trans-specific care. [Several gender-specific teams](#) have already been established. This will make psychosocial support more financially and regionally accessible.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In February, Ecolo-Groen submitted a [proposal](#) of a bill to protect intersex children from unnecessary medical interventions. The proposed legislation mandated that any treatment or procedure

on individuals with variations in sexual characteristics must be preceded by explicit, informed consent from the person concerned, in line with patient rights. Nonetheless, the proposal did not make it to the parliament before the June election cycle.

In February, the Flemish Parliament [voted](#) unanimously to provide better support and care for intersex people by establishing a Flemish centre of expertise for intersex people capable of providing appropriate information, awareness-raising and training to professionals.

## DATA COLLECTION

A [survey](#) conducted by the FRA on equality and non-discrimination for LGBTI people revealed persistent concerns about discrimination, harassment, and hate crimes. 11% of Belgian respondents had frequently or constantly contemplated suicide over the past year. Furthermore, 53% of respondents avoid public displays of affection like holding hands, and 27% steer clear of certain places due to fear of attack.

The Prisme Federation Association [reported](#) that in 2024, out of a total of 262 municipalities in Wallonia, only 113 participated in its yearly awareness campaign inviting the municipalities to raise the rainbow flag and distribute rainbow pins to their citizens. The number showcased a slight reduction compared to 2023, when 144 out of the 262 municipalities took part in the initiative. Çavaria reported that, in Flanders, all municipalities raised the rainbow flag as part of an initiative of the 'rainbow houses' (LGBTI community Centres)

During 2024, the Transgender Infopoint at Ghent University Hospital carried out the third instalment of the [Belgian TGNB Study](#), with the publication expected for 2025. [This survey](#), commissioned by the Institute for the Equality of Women and Men, seeks to assess the current living conditions of trans and/or non-binary people and to identify their experiences of discrimination over the past two years.

## FOREIGN POLICY

The Belgian presidency of the EU Council organised an international conference on LGBTI rights in Brussels on May 17th.

## HOUSING

A team from the Institut de la Décision Publique, in collaboration with the Prisma Federation and the Walloon Region, is conducting [exploratory research](#) on the risks of precarious health and housing for LGBTI people in Wallonia. The goal of the research is to assess the current situation in the region and to develop recommendations for improving the support provided by the Walloon public authorities in addressing the specific needs of LGBTI people.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The Belgian LGBTI organisations Prisme, Çavaria, and RainbowHouse Brussels received accreditation under a new framework introduced by the federal government. Accreditation is necessary for accessing subsidies. This accreditation follows a bill amending anti-discrimination legislation, which allows umbrella organisations and associations to apply for recognition every five years. The first accreditation cycle began on January 1, 2024, and will end on December 31, 2028. These organisations were recognised and can now apply annually for subsidies from the Minister (or the Secretary of State) to support their activities. The financial support is intended for the structural operation of the organisations and the implementation of work programs focused on federal policies to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Institute for Gender Equality released an awareness-raising [report](#) to encourage trans and non-binary people to exercise their human rights by putting them in contact with competent actors and service-providers.

As part of the Walloon Plan for the inclusion of LGBTI people for 2022-2024, Wallonia launched an awareness campaign developed by the SPW IAS in close collaboration with the Prisme Federation on the [discrimination](#) and [violence](#) experienced by LGBTI people. The campaign aimed to highlight many organisations and support structures available for victims or witnesses of violence or discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression.

In May, in celebration of the IDAHOBIT, the Museum of Walloon Life launched a [collection](#) of objects, archives, photos, and testimonies related to the history of LGBTI movements in Wallonia. This social history museum committed to tracing the evolution of Pride marches, queer culture, sexual orientations, and gender identities within its collections.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

(See more under 'Family')

## PUBLIC OPINION

In September, the Université Libre de Bruxelles released the findings of their [2023 Report on Anti-Gender Campaigns in Belgium](#), highlighting a trend of anti-LGBTI rhetoric and bias-motivated violence across Belgium. The report detailed how opposition to sex education and LGBTI topics has intensified, resulting in demonstrations, media interventions, lobbying and even political vandalism.

In July, Vice-Prime Minister David Clarinval took to social media to [endorse](#) a book noted for its conspiratorial, hateful, and

unscientific ideological remarks against trans and non-binary people.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Circular [COL13/2013](#) setting out guidelines for public prosecutors, labour auditorates, police forces and inspectorates was amended in March. The reviewed Circular improves the recording of complaints relating to discrimination thanks to a new classification system that identifies several social phenomena to which offences may be linked, including homophobia.



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# BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Throughout the year, 11 cases of hate speech based on SOGIESC were documented by the Sarajevo Open Centre (SOC). Out of these, four were related to pre-election hate speech that targeted the LGBTI community. One of the most notable cases involved the Central Election Commission fining Milorad Dodik, the President of the Republika Srpska (RS), for hate speech directed against the LGBTI community.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Throughout the year, eight instances of bias-motivated violence were documented by SOC, but only two of them were reported to the police/prosecutor's office. Out of these 8 documented cases, two took place in educational settings.

## EDUCATION

There is currently no system to monitor and respond to incidents of anti-LGBTI bullying in the education system put in place by law, as documented in a recent ECRI report.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Although the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina already recognises sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics in national anti-discrimination provisions, its implementation is inconsistent at the entity, district, and canton levels, which have yet to align with state-level legislation. Civil society organisations have underscored the need for incorporating these national measures at the local level, stressing that while the state Action Plan to Improve the Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of LGBTI People in Bosnia and Herzegovina for the period 2021-2024 took effect in 2021, its formal adoption did not occur until the summer of 2022, resulting in a limited implementation timeline of less than 18 months. Recognising the urgency of the situation and the challenge of achieving the plan's goals within such a short period, the BiH Council of Ministers, upon the recommendation of the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, has extended the Action Plan's implementation period to the end of 2025.

Enhancements to the judicial information system now allow for the comprehensive collection of data on discrimination cases within BiH courts, including details regarding the relationship between victims and perpetrators in instances of gender-based violence.

## FAMILY

Same-sex partnerships still cannot be legally registered in the country. The Federal Ministry of Health is intentionally blocking the appointment of their expert as part of the Inter-Ministerial Working Group for drafting the Law on Same-Sex Partnership

of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This blockade has been ongoing since June 2023.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In June, Sarajevo hosted its fifth Pride march, with hundreds of participants marching through the city centre. The event saw the participation of Bosnian public figures and LGBTI rights advocates from abroad. No political or national symbols were allowed at the rally.

Emerging legal frameworks addressing freedom of assembly gained significant traction across multiple cantons in 2024. According to the cantonal governments, these new laws have been carefully aligned with international and European Union standards, underscoring a commitment to uphold global human rights principles. For instance, in September 2023, the Government of the Una-Sana Canton introduced the Draft Law on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly, which was formally adopted in January 2024. Similarly, the newly established Government of the Zenica-Doboj Canton oversaw the adoption of its own Law on Peaceful Assembly. Meanwhile, the Central Bosnia Canton is actively engaging the public in discussions about its proposed law on this topic. In Canton 10, updates on the adoption of the Law on Peaceful Assembly have also been published. Notably, these legislative efforts specifically focus on protecting the fundamental right to freedom of assembly, while the regulation of public events will be addressed by separate legislation.

## HEALTH

In February, Bosnia and Herzegovina released its first thematic report examining LGBTI people's access to healthcare. The report acknowledged some progress in improving the legislative and institutional framework for recognising and protecting the rights of LGBTI persons within the health sector. However, it also identified numerous shortcomings in both regulatory frameworks and practical implementation, resulting in inadequate recognition and fulfilment of LGBTI people's rights to access health services. LGBTI people often remain overlooked in the healthcare system, as they are not widely recognised as a vulnerable social group. Many healthcare professionals reflect the dominant societal attitudes, which can result in substandard care for LGBTI patients. Moreover, medical curricula, training programs, and educational materials generally fail to address the specific needs and challenges of LGBTI people or provide guidance on how to support them. The report further noted the absence of specialised health services for trans people and highlighted that the process for legal gender recognition is both inefficient and potentially degrading, lacking respect for rights related to self-determination, privacy, and bodily integrity. In the area of mental health, existing strategic documents in Bosnia and Herzegovina fail to acknowledge the

inequalities faced by LGBTI people due to stigma, pathologisation, and broader determinants such as public policies and societal attitudes.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

ECRI recorded conflicting information concerning the extent of medically unnecessary surgeries carried out on intersex children. ECRI particularly noted that in BiH no official guidance or rules exist to regulate the issue, leaving it up to individual medical professionals to decide on the matter.

## HOUSING

In April 2024, the first Safe House for LGBTI people was opened in the capital city of Sarajevo.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In April, the ECRI published the report for its sixth monitoring cycle, encouraging authorities to provide a legal framework affording same-sex relationships recognition. The report also asked to guarantee a quick, transparent and accessible process based on clear, precise and foreseeable legal provisions by which transgender persons can obtain legal gender recognition.

In October, in response to the proposal of law on Amendments of the Criminal Code of Republika Srpska (see also under Police and Law Enforcement), the United Nations Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders addressed an open letter to the national authorities. In their letter, the UN bodies argued that the proposed removal of the term 'gender identity' from the Criminal Code could lead to the removal of human rights protections for vulnerable people, in violation of BiH's human rights obligations.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The Draft Law on so-called "Foreign Agents" was withdrawn from the official procedure within the National Assembly of RS in May 2024. The draft law was proposed in September 2023 and if adopted, would require non-profit organisations that receive funds from abroad to register as "agents of foreign influence" and be barred from political activity. It is not clear if adoption of this law will happen in the future.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The Federal Ministry of Health is blocking the process on the improvement of the legal gender recognition provisions in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, though they received five letters from various governmental institutions.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In March 2024, the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina amended its Criminal Code to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected characteristics against hate speech. These changes aim to address discrimination in the region, but their implementation will require an adjustment period, including educating relevant institutions. This move has intensified pressure on the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to update its own Criminal Code to ensure consistency and avoid legal uncertainty regarding the sanctioning of hate speech.

In July, the Republika Srpska Government proposed replacing the term "gender identity" in the draft amendments to the RS Criminal Code with the more ambiguous term "other personal characteristic." Earlier in April, the Council of Europe released a report on trans rights, highlighting the importance of explicitly including gender identity and gender expression in anti-discrimination legislation. However, the RS Government's move reflects a broader resistance to acknowledging gender identity in the region. The National Assembly of the Republika Srpska adopted the amended Draft Law of the Criminal Code in November.



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# BULGARIA

## ASYLUM

The Bulgarian Supreme administrative Court refused to recognise the same-sex marriage entered into by Russian-Belarusian asylum-seekers. Subsequently, the Belarusian citizen was refused international protection, although his married spouse was granted refugee status.

Bulgaria continues to reject requests for asylum by LGBTI people coming from Russia and Belarus.

Bulgaria unlawfully detains LGBTI asylum-seekers coming from Palestine in closed detention centres.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The Bulgarian musician and performer, Mila Robert was subjected to [online harassment and death threats](#) after her performance at the Sofia Pride 2024 concert, during which she removed her dress in the colours of the Bulgarian flag to reveal another dress with a rainbow flag.

Following Single Step's campaign for data collection on the experiences of LGBTI high school students, the organisation has been a [target of focused attacks](#), which led to several institutional checks against the foundation. Kostadin Kostadinov, leader of Vazrazhdane (Revival) party, threatened to revoke the foundation's licence to work with minors.

The Administrative Court of Sofia [ruled](#) that the statements made by the VMRO Party against the LGBTI community after the movie 'Snake' was shown at the Sofia Pride Film Fest in 2021 constituted hate speech and discrimination.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In 2024, no criminal proceedings were initiated based on the sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) amendments in the Penal Code introduced in 2023.

## DATA COLLECTION

In June, GLAS foundation released a report assessing the economic cost of homophobia in Bulgaria. The report underscored how the full enjoyment of rights of LGBTI people is often associated with higher levels of economic development and wellbeing.

In November, a [survey](#) conducted by the Single Step Foundation on the experiences of Bulgarian LGBTI students aged 14-19 revealed that two out of three students (67.6%) were verbally harassed in the past year because of their sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression and nearly one-quarter (23.8%) were physically bullied. 12.2% of students had been assaulted at school, including being punched, kicked or attacked with a weapon.

## EDUCATION

In August, a new law was introduced banning the representation of LGBTI identities in schools. The legislation, spearheaded by Kostadin Kostadinov, chairman of the Vazrazhdane (Revival) party, sparked significant controversy as civil society organisations underscored that the legislation would negatively impact children and adolescents by increasing bullying and legitimising discrimination by other students, and even teachers. Kostadinov defended the law by stating that "LGBT propaganda is anti-human and won't be accepted in Bulgaria."

## FAMILY

The appeal by two Bulgarian women, Boyana and Anelia, to have both their names listed as parents on their Austria-born child's Bulgarian birth certificate was upheld by the Administrative Court of Kardzhali. The Court overturned the municipality's earlier refusal to issue the certificate and instructed its issuance, citing Bulgaria's obligations under the CJEU's "Baby Sara" ruling (C-490/20), which requires member states to recognise the parental rights of same-sex couples as parents.

The Bulgarian Migration Directorate continues to refuse visas for the third country family members of Bulgarian citizens, contrary to the Coman ruling of CJEU.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In June, the city of Varna organised its first [Queer Festival](#) with the support of the European Union.

In June, concurrently with the human rights rally and LGBTI pride march organised by the Sofia Pride organisation, conservative groups have led rival [demonstrations](#) to advocate for traditional family values.

In August, the far-right Revival party proposed a [foreign agent law](#) targeting human rights NGOs and civil society, echoing efforts previously overturned in 2022. The proposed law, along with the previously introduced education law banning the representation of LGBTI identities in schools, closely mirrored Russian legislation that criminalises the LGBTI community. In late September the proposal was [rejected](#) by the Bulgarian Parliament's Committee on Culture and Media.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In the [Baby Sara](#) case, the LGBTI organisation Deystvie submitted a formal complaint to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), arguing that the treatment faced by the child, whose birth certificate was denied by Bulgarian authorities, amounts to inhuman and degrading treatment.

## HEALTH

Due to the lack of implementation of the [CJEU Pancharevo ruling](#), tens of children are left without access to public healthcare in Bulgaria.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Following amendments to the Pre-School and School Education Act, criminal and data protection proceedings were launched against the Single Step Foundation, charging them with educational efforts that support non-traditional sexual orientations and gender identities.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In July, the European Court of Human Rights overturned the [decision](#) on the revision of the Y.T v Bulgaria case, emphasising that Bulgaria is obliged to set up a robust legal framework for legal gender recognition. Nonetheless, there remains a total ban on legal gender recognition in Bulgaria.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In September, the National Film Centre stopped the LGBTI-themed Bulgarian-Spanish film 'Luben' from [participating in the Golden Rose Film Festival](#) in Varna. This happened against the backdrop of criticism from the pro-Russian Vazrazhdane party, which called the film "homosexual propaganda", claiming that a violation of the law was committed in its making because of the involvement of an actor who was underage at the start of filming.

## PUBLIC OPINION

A [national survey](#) by the Alpha Research agency, commissioned by the GLAS Foundation, established an improved attitude of Bulgarian citizens towards LGBTI people. The survey indicated an overall increase of respondents declaring interest in receiving better information on LGBTI topics and a decline in the acceptance of harmful stereotypes about LGBTI people. For example, 36% of people were reported disagreeing with the idea that homosexuality and trans identities are mental disorders.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement has been cooperating with NGOs to strengthen the investigation of SOGIESC motivated crimes. As part of this initiative, 55 investigative police officers from across the country and 10 prosecutors from the Sofia Regional Prosecution were trained by Deystvie on these matters.



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# CROATIA

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

The Municipal State Attorney's Office in Zadar has charged a 66-year-old man with violating human rights and fundamental freedoms for refusing to honour an accommodation reservation made by a Brazilian gay couple. According to the indictment, the incident occurred on August 5, 2018, when the man cancelled the couple's booking at his property in Zadar, citing their sexual orientation as the reason.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In 2024, attacks by the anti-gender movement and the spread of disinformation continue to escalate. The public sphere is saturated with actors promoting false information, further fueling hostility.

A recent example involves Croatian politician Pavle Kalinić, who presented inaccurate data regarding the number of minors starting the transition process, contributing to the ongoing dissemination of misleading narratives.

In November, a session titled "Gender Ideology in Croatia and its Consequences: Myth or Reality" was held in the Croatian Parliament, moderated by MP Igor Peternel from the Home and National Gathering (DOMINO) party. Panelists included Prof. Dr. Marina Katinić Pleić, Prof. Dr. Zorana Kušević, Dr. Herman Vukušić, and Darko Pavičić, speakers who have been actively spreading misinformation and harming the trans community. No representatives of LGBTI human rights organisations were invited to speak. The session was live streamed via YouTube.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In June, in Pula, the inaugural Pride march organised by Proces, faced challenges despite receiving support by private security and the local police. The day before the march, unknown individuals disrupted volunteers at the Karlo Rojc Community Centre who were preparing banners. Additionally, in the village of Punta, derogatory signs were displayed, while an unidentified person removed a rainbow flag from the yard of the community centre on Gajeva Street, leaving it on the ground before fleeing. The Istrian Police Department has confirmed it will investigate the matters and identify the perpetrators. The city's mayor reaffirmed the commitment of the administration to the protection of LGBTI rights.

A gay couple was assaulted at Bačvice beach in Split. In a video they described how, after being harassed by a group of children and teenagers, they were approached by a man who punched one of them and rammed his head into a tree. Following the attack, the Split police department announced that it had undertaken a formal investigation and arrested the perpetrator. Between August and September, Zagreb Pride received six reports on homophobia-motivated attacks against gay men in Split and in Zagreb. In three of these cases the attacks were

premeditated traps on dating applications that resulted in bashing and theft by a group of younger men. Only one of these attacks has been reported to the police, mostly due to fear and lack of trust in the law enforcement bodies by LGBTI people.

At the end of 2023 two sixteen-year-olds were arrested for their involvement in the preparation and planning of terrorist attacks against LGBTI people and venues, and in September of this year, they were convicted.

## EDUCATION

The Zagreb Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences announced the intention to launch a new study program focusing on gender studies in late 2025.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In the European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Award, a competition among 70 regions and cities in the European Union, the city of Zagreb was awarded the golden prize for the European Capital of Inclusion and Diversity for 2024. Zagreb Mayor Tomislav Tomašević emphasised the city's commitment to inclusivity and highlighted Zagreb's dedication to fostering an inclusive society across all areas of life.

The Zagreb City Assembly has adopted the City Program for the Equality of LGBTIQ+ Persons (2024-2026), marking the first time a public authority in Croatia has introduced an LGBTI-focused strategy. The program was developed by a dedicated commission that included representatives of civil society organisations and experts. Its implementation will be monitored over the next two years.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

This year, Croatia recorded a total of four Pride marches, including the first in Pula, the 23rd in Zagreb, the 13th in Split, and the second in Karlovac.

In June, the 23rd Zagreb Pride received support from politicians and local officials, including Zagreb's Mayor Tomislav Tomašević and proceeded without disturbances.

In October, the fifth Pride Ride took place in Zagreb, receiving support from local officials and the city administration. It proceeded without disturbances.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In March, President Zoran Milanović held a meeting with representatives from kolektIRV, the Association for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Trans, Intersex, and Gender Variant Persons, who presented the campaign "I am like you." The campaign highlights the needs and problems of gender-

diverse persons, with an emphasis on the right to easy access to health services.

In May, the city of Rijeka announced that it would once more display the LGBTI flag on the municipal administration building to mark International Day against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia.

In June, representatives of local governance like the mayor of Zagreb, Tomislav Tomašević, deputy-mayor Luka Korlaet, and the president of the city assembly Joško Klisović, as well as politicians from the Možemo! and the SDP parties, joined the Zagreb pride parade.

In June, Parliament approved a report from the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality highlighting the extent of both physical and psychological violence against LGBTI people. According to the Ombudsperson, some media still perpetuate negative stereotypes, undermine the rights of LGBTI people, and contribute to an intolerant and hostile environment. Such portrayals, the Ombudsperson argues, foster a sense of exclusion and impede LGBTI people's ability to fully exercise their rights.

The UN Human Rights Committee published its findings on Croatia, expressing concerns about the ongoing prejudice, discrimination, and hate crimes against LGBTI people. The Committee's observations highlight a troubling absence of targeted goals and activities in national strategies and policies designed to prevent and address discrimination against LGBTI persons. As part of its concluding observations, the Committee urged Croatia to integrate specific measures into national strategies and action plans to combat discrimination, prejudice, and hate crimes against LGBTI people. Furthermore, the Committee asked Croatia to ensure their active involvement in the development and implementation of these measures.

In July, a roundtable organised by the Možemo! Parliamentary Club was held in the Croatian Parliament, focusing on the theme "Anti Gender Movements and Violence Against Women".

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

2024 marked the 10th anniversary of the Regulation on legal gender recognition, with official data available from the implementation of the regulation until the end of 2023. According to the data, fewer than 200 people have completed the process and, while requests for legal gender recognition are being processed, the procedures remain lengthy, burdensome, and often exceed legal time limits.

The Constitutional Court dismissed the request of the U ime Obitelji organisation to review the constitutionality of the Law on Civil Registries and the associated Regulation on legal gender recognition.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

At present, the acceptance of new samples for the storage of sperm and eggs is not feasible, and there is insufficient information available regarding the causes and potential solutions to this issue.

In September, as members of the ultraconservative network Vision Network gathered for a private conference in Zagreb, a protest was held in the city's European Square by the fAKTIV – Feminist Collective to challenge the agenda of the Network. The protestors criticised the group's opposition to abortion, same-sex marriage, divorce, and contraception with the slogan: "Not in our city, we know your agenda."

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In April, Zagreb Pride released a list of well-known and previously out orouted LGBTI candidates for the Croatian Parliament. This action led many other local LGBTI organisations to publicly disassociate themselves from such a decision, criticising the unauthorised disclosure of private information.

## PUBLIC OPINION

The first survey on attitudes toward trans people in Croatia, carried out by kolektIRV, revealed that 38% of citizens would accept a trans person as a close family member, while only 11% hold negative views; however, 62% believe society perceives them negatively.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Višnja Ljubičić, Croatia's ombudsman for gender equality, has criticised President Zoran Milanović's statement that the Minister of Economy might be gay and sought an expert opinion from the Personal Data Protection Agency on the legality of the president's comment. The ombudsman highlighted that disclosing one's sexual orientation without consent could lead to severe consequences, which led to the request for clarification on whether such disclosure violated privacy protections.

In March, following the murder of a 20-year-old woman by her former partner, Croatia's parliament amended its criminal code to classify the killing of women due to their gender as a distinct crime. This makes Croatia the third EU country, after Cyprus and Malta, to officially recognise femicide as a separate offence.



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# CYPRUS

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In May, on the occasion of a televised political debate, Elam leader, Christos Christou insinuated that Diko leader Nicholas Papadopoulos might engage with LGBTI 'parties' with the objective of discrediting his opponent's stance.

Accept-LGBTI+ documented the case of a trans woman in Famagusta who allegedly endured persistent physical and verbal assaults. The perpetrators spray-painted threatening graffiti targeting her identity outside of her home.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

During a meeting of the House Human Rights Committee, representatives of an LGBTI organisation expressed concern over the rise in reported hate incidents targeting the LGBTI community in Cyprus.

## EDUCATION

In February, a children's book, which had been donated to a local kindergarten by the school's parent's association, was subjected criticism because some illustrations featured two women embracing a child and two men holding another child. The backlash against these depictions led to the book being withdrawn by the school itself. Amidst criticism by prominent LGBTI organisations, the Ministry of Education distanced itself from the removal of the book from the school catalogue, pointing instead to a decision allegedly taken by the parent's association of the school.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In February, Deputy Government Spokesman Yiannis Antoniou expressed that LGBTI rights, including same-sex marriage and adoption, are not currently prioritised in either the political or social spheres in Cyprus. Antoniou acknowledged that while there might be discussions in the future, the stagnation of past efforts—such as in enabling adoption for LGBTI couples and advancing measures previously championed by President Christodoulides during his campaign—highlight the slow pace and complexity of reforms in this area.

## FAMILY

In January, the archbishop of Cyprus stated that LGBTI marriages infringe on God's predicaments, expressing support for the Church of Greece's opposition to LGBTI marriage and childbearing. This followed the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece's unanimous decision to strongly oppose the Greek government's proposed bill on same-sex marriage and adoption.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

June 1 marked the tenth year anniversary of the Cyprus Pride march, with the participation of foreign diplomats under the 'Diplomats for Equality' banner.

## FOREIGN POLICY

The Queer Cyprus Association, in collaboration with Accept LGBTI Cyprus, announced the "Come Out 4 Europe" pledge prepared by ILGA-Europe to the European Parliament candidates. As a result of these efforts, 19 out of 45 candidates signed the "Come Out 4 Europe" pledge.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In February, Cyprus refrained from congratulating Greece following its landmark legislation on same-sex marriage, a significant omission considering the close ties between the two nations.

In May, the Cyprus chapter of Diplomats for Equality released a joint statement from 26 diplomatic missions based in Cyprus in anticipation of Pride Month and the 2024 IDAHOBIT. The statement urged Cyprus to consider amending legislation to allow same-sex couples in civil unions the right to adopt, and expressed hope for progress on legal gender recognition and same-sex marriages entered into abroad.

In October, the Cyprus Council of Ministers approved the creation of a National LGBTI Strategy aimed at combating discrimination, ensuring equality and safety, and building an inclusive society for LGBTI people. The Commissioner for Citizens' Rights, Panayiotis Palates, was appointed to coordinate the preparation and implementation of this strategy. Following the Cabinet meeting, Palates announced that an inter ministerial committee would oversee the strategy's development. Palates explained that the National Strategy would align Cyprus' legislation with European Union standards.

## PUBLIC OPINION

A poll by a research company GPO revealed that a majority of Cypriot citizens oppose both same-sex marriage and same-sex adoption rights. According to the data, 32.2% of respondents strongly support same-sex marriage, while 16.9% are likely in favour, 5.4% are likely against, and 42.9% are firmly opposed. On same-sex adoption, only 16.3% are firmly in favour, 11.9% are likely in favour, 9.5% are likely against, and a significant 60.2% are firmly opposed. The poll further underscored that the proposal of a national referendum on these matters had 36.1% of respondents in favor or likely supportive of the idea, while 60.9% were likely or firmly against it, and 3% being undecided.

# NORTHERN CYPRUS

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Several same-sex couples reported difficulties accessing basic services, particularly around residency and 'legal' documentation. A same-sex couple contacted Queer Cyprus about a residence permit for a non-Cypriot partner. The couple reported that the officer dealing with their case requested additional, previously unrequired documents, citing a recent system change as the reason when justification was requested.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Widespread online hate speech continued not to be effectively investigated.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Both the Pride March on 17 May and the United Pride March on 7 September were targeted by groups of underage boys who threw stones at participants in the presence of police officers. Despite witnessing the attacks, the officers remained passive and did not intervene.

## EDUCATION

The "[Rainbow Education Programme for Psychological Counsellors and Guidance Professionals](#)" series was held in collaboration with the Cyprus Turkish Psychological Counselling And Guidance Association (KT-PDR) and the Cyprus Turkish Teachers' Trade Union (KTÖS) at the Cyprus Turkish Secondary Education Teachers' Union (KTOEÖS) Office in Nicosia in March within the scope of the Rainbow Project funded by the European Union under the Aid Programme for the Turkish Cypriot community and implemented by the Queer Cyprus.

## FAMILY

Reports to the Queer Cyprus' Solidarity Line highlighted ongoing cases of family and social pressure against LGBTI people. A lesbian woman was subjected to intense scrutiny and control by her parents after they accessed her private messages without consent, demanding that she distance herself from her partner. Similarly, trans people faced rejection and threats from their families, further perpetuating a culture of fear and marginalisation.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In May, on the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Interphobia, and Transphobia, the yearly [Pride march](#) of Northern Cyprus took place, seeing the participation of local leaders.

In September, the "[United by Pride](#)" event organised by the Queer Collective CY, with the participation of Accept LGBTI Cyprus, African LGBTIQ+ Community Cyprus, LGBT Filipinas, and Queer Cyprus Association held two parallel Pride marches. The third edition of the initiative represented not just a celebration of diversity, it also emphasised the urgent need for cooperation, solidarity, and action, particularly in a politically divided Cyprus.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## HEALTH

Access to healthcare remains precarious for the LGBTI community, particularly those living with HIV. One person who tested positive for HIV was unable to complete their education and left the island due to inadequate healthcare services and unresolved residency status, raising concerns about the availability of HIV treatment in the region.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

A case was recorded of a trans man who successfully updated his Turkish and southern Cyprus identification documents in line with his gender identity but faced difficulties with northern Cyprus documents. The case underscored how the lack of harmonisation between jurisdictions creates significant challenges for trans individuals seeking legal recognition.



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# CZECHIA

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Numerous instances of bias-motivated speech continued to be recorded across public debate. For instance, the SPD party circulated leaflets to mailboxes prior to elections in which the party promised to “give more to families, take it away from the deviants” by taking away money from “LGBT activists so that they do not destroy family values”.

After the Constitutional Court’s decision to repeal a regulation that required a surgical procedure as a prerequisite for legal gender recognition (see also under Legal Gender Recognition), some politicians published transphobic statements. Among them was the Minister of Justice, who claimed that his goal is “to prevent men from giving birth”. Following the Constitutional Court’s decision and the subsequent debate about legal gender recognition two round tables were organised in June and October by organisations and politicians.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The government approved a proposal for an amendment to the Criminal Code, which would bring fundamental changes in the area of protection against bias-motivated crimes. The bill is about to be debated in the Parliament. The subject of the proposal is the extension of the list of bias-motivated factors for hate crimes to include disability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. At the same time, the proposal entails an extension of the offences for which prejudicial motive will be taken into account as a circumstance for the application of a higher penalty rate.

The Constitutional Court’s ruling weakened the position of “particularly vulnerable victims” (including victims of hate crimes) by concluding that it is possible to revise this status repeatedly during the proceedings, which means an uncertain legal position for many.

## EDUCATION

As part of the revision of the framework on educational programs, primary school students will be introduced to the history of the women’s and LGBTI rights movement. The curriculum will encompass topics such as the women’s struggle for political and social rights and the efforts of marginalised groups to attain equality, particularly in family law. This proposal has garnered support from Minister of Education Mikuláš Bek, a member of the STAN party. In reaction, actors have begun encouraging parents to request the exclusion of their children from any instruction related to LGBTI topics, even providing template forms for these requests. The case of a mother addressing a letter to her daughter’s school, requesting her daughter to be exempted from lessons about LGBTI and gender topics, sparked particular debate, leading to heated exchanges on social media. One school director publicly supported this initiative, assuring parents that their children would be exempt from discussions surrounding

“LGBTI, gender ideology, or similar subjects.” However, the Czech School Inspection, the state education supervision authority, has clarified that such exclusions contravene the fundamental principles of the education system.

In September, Marie Pošarová, a deputy from the right-wing party Freedom and Direct Democracy (SPD), proposed adding a new item to the agenda of the Chamber of Deputies titled “We reject the promotion of LGBT in schools and kindergartens.”

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In June, the Old Catholic Church in the Czech Republic announced its intention to comply with an amendment to the Czech Civil Code, which will define a partnership as a permanent union between two individuals of the same sex, effective January 1, 2025, (see also under Family). In May, the Synodal Council, the church’s governing body, expressed its readiness to permit the celebration of church blessing ceremonies for same-sex partnerships, thereby enabling these partnerships to be recognised as church marriages under Czech law.

## FAMILY

The equal marriage bill remained a contentious issue in the Czech Parliament throughout 2024, gathering significant public support. This was highlighted by a petition that garnered 170,000 signatures in favour of marriage equality; endorsements from 30 childcare professional organisations; an open letter to all Members of Parliament from children raised in rainbow families; and a letter to the Prime Minister signed by 119 companies, 27 university student associations, and youth organisations from most political parties represented in Parliament, alongside support from over 1,700 teachers. Despite this strong public backing, the Parliament did not pass the equal marriage bill. Instead, it enacted legislation that establishes a new legal framework for same-sex couples, termed “partnership.”

President Pavel, who has publicly advocated for equal marriage, signed this new partnership law, which will take effect on January 1, 2025. The partnership status will confer all the rights and obligations associated with marriage and will be treated the same as marriage under legal regulations, with the exception of joint adoptions. Nonetheless, the law allows for successive adoptions, meaning that one partner can adopt a child while the other partner can co-adopt.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## HEALTH

The Department of Sexology at University Hospital Brno established a gynaecological outpatient [clinic](#) specifically for trans people, marking it as the first facility of its kind in the Czech Republic. The clinic aims to provide a comfortable, gender-inclusive, and welcoming environment for patients undergoing transition.

From July, men who have sex with men no longer face a blanket [exclusion](#) from donating blood. This change resulted from the Society for Transfusion Medicine revising its guidelines in collaboration with the Ministry of Health. According to Health Minister Vlastimil Válek from the TOP09 party, the new methodology emphasises individual risk assessments related to sexual activity for each prospective donor, without considering gender or sexual orientation as criteria.

The Standards of Care for Trans and Gender Diverse People, Version 8, published by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health (WPATH), was translated into Czech and released by the National Institute of Mental Health in partnership with the Transparent team. Although this document is non-binding, it represents the first officially published comprehensive guidance for healthcare professionals working with trans patients.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In October a [lecture](#) on "curing" homosexuality took place in the church of St. Lawrence in Řečkovice, Brno. The event featured Victor Novitchi, a Moldovan man, who shared his personal story of how he supposedly "cured" himself of homosexuality. Parish priest Michal Seknička introduced the event by comparing the healing process to the resurrection of Jesus Christ, implying a divine transformation.

The lecture was part of a wider effort by conservative fringes, backed by financial support, to promote conversion therapy practices for LGBTI people.

## DATA COLLECTION

The "Do you know your rights?" [survey](#) highlighted rising discrimination and harassment directed at LGBTI people, and reported that 42% of Czech respondents reported facing discrimination or harassment in the past year, marking a notable increase from previous years. The survey was [conducted](#) by Queer Geography and the Prague Pride association in collaboration with the Faculty of Law of Charles University and the Slovenian human rights organisation Legebitra, who examined the experiences of nearly 1,900 LGBTI people in the Czech Republic and over 300 in Slovenia.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The Constitutional Court has [repealed](#) a regulation that mandated surgical procedures, including sterilisation and genital transformation, as prerequisites for legal gender recognition for trans people. The court found that these legal requirements violated the fundamental rights of trans people, specifically their right to bodily integrity and personal autonomy, as well as their human dignity.

However, the court has postponed the enforceability of this decision until July 1, 2025, allowing the Czech government time to incorporate the ruling into law. Meanwhile, the trans organisation Transparent has [reported](#) that the government is falling behind in this process and may be exploring methods to circumvent the ruling and implement alternative restrictions on legal gender recognition.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

During the Senate debate on the bill introducing same-sex partnerships (see also under Family), a group of senators proposed [amendments](#) that aimed not only to restrict the rights of same-sex partners but also to limit the reproductive rights already established for women and opposite-sex couples. For instance, one proposed amendment would have required a married woman to obtain her husband's consent to access assisted reproduction services. Additionally, another amendment would have imposed a fine on women who failed to identify a man deemed to be the father on their child's birth certificate. Ultimately, these amendments were not approved by the Senate.

The Ministry of Justice, alongside a working group, has presented initial analyses and proposals concerning the institution of surrogacy. Although a bill has yet to be introduced in Parliament, current indications suggest that surrogacy will be available exclusively for heterosexual couples.



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# DENMARK

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

During Copenhagen Pride week, former minister of equality Marie Bjerre from the Venstre Party published an opinion piece in a major Danish newspaper which presented trans and intersex people as posing a threat to the achievement of gender equality in the country. As part of the publication, Bjerre misrepresented trans and intersex people, in stark contrast with Danish governmental policies on LGBTI topics. Soon after the publication the Government reorganised its internal roles, leading to Bjerre's reassignment to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and allowing her to avoid the need to respond to public criticism by LGBTI organisations.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In July, a migrant trans woman was murdered in a hotel room in Copenhagen.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In its [2023 Concluding Observations](#) on Denmark's eighth periodic report, the Committee Against Torture (CAT) expressed concern over the unnecessary and irreversible surgeries performed on intersex children without informed consent. The committee recommended that Denmark enforce existing legislation that prohibits irreversible surgeries on intersex children for cosmetic reasons and conduct studies to better understand the issue. Doctors have used the existence of legislation against plastic surgery on children under 18 to assert that surgeries on intersex children are already prohibited. However, this is not the case as these surgeries are often categorised as necessary for the child, despite clear and repeated [documentation](#) to the contrary.

The UN has further [recommended](#) that "all persons who experience severe pain and suffering as a result of unnecessary medical procedures conducted without their consent should have access to effective remedies." Additionally, the UN urged that "the State party should also ensure that all intersex persons receive the same level of specialised care, regardless of their conformity with the gender they were assigned at birth." Despite these recommendations, no legislative improvements have been noted.

In December, Rigshospitalet was reported to the police over regulatory breaches in a research project involving boys under two years old. The project, which was stopped by the Danish Medicines Agency, revealed serious procedural failures, including the use of expired drugs and lack of parental consent. This incident raised further questions about oversight and transparency in medical practices affecting children.

In March, Denmark signed a [UN draft resolution](#) aimed at combating discrimination, violence, and harmful practices against

intersex people. However, no concrete steps have been taken to implement the commitments outlined in this resolution so far.

## EDUCATION

A [study](#) by the National Research and Analysis Centre for Welfare (VIVE), commissioned by the Ministry of Children and Education, revealed that LGBTI students are twice as likely to exhibit severe anxiety and depression compared to their non-LGBTI peers. The study also found that 40% of LGBTI students aged 15 to 25 reported [self-harm](#) in the past year, a rate two to three times higher than that of their classmates. Nonetheless, the study's methodology considered the LGBTI community as a cohesive group and therefore did not allow for analyses of intersectional aspects like gender, class, ethnicity, and migration status.

A [follow-up report](#) conducted by VIVE for LGBT+ Denmark revealed discrepancies in the wellbeing of LGBTI students across Denmark on the basis of their region of residence, with LGBTI students in the capital reporting higher wellbeing compared to their counterparts in other areas of the country. Additionally, the report highlighted a significant gap between the negative experiences faced by trans students in educational settings, as well as their self-perceived quality of life, compared to cis students.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The non-binary musician Freja Kirk [was greeted](#) by homophobic chants at a school concert.

## FAMILY

Starting in February, public fertility clinics in Denmark began offering [intrafamilial egg donations](#) to couples where both have a uterus by setting up a system in which one partner donates an egg, which is then fertilised with donor sperm and implanted into the other partner's uterus.

In February, the Danish government, along with most opposition parties, reached an [agreement](#) regarding surrogacy that aims to simplify the recognition of parenthood for Danish parents utilising surrogacy, whether domestically or abroad. A corresponding bill was presented in a [public hearing](#). Under the new framework, the requirement for second-parent adoption will be eliminated, with the primary focus being the child's benefit from the recognition. A bill is currently being drafted, and the law is expected to take effect on January 1, 2025.

In August the Government held a [public hearing](#) on a draft bill regarding partner egg donation. Since 2017 women can donate an egg to their female partner, but only if the partner could not get pregnant with their own eggs. The new bill lifts this restriction.

In August, the Danish Government issued a [press release](#) outlining the willingness to take steps towards enhancing opportunities for LGBTI families, recognising diverse family structures and extending some legal consequences of parenthood to more than two persons. Former Minister for Equality Marie Bjerre announced eight initiatives aimed at supporting families with three or four parents, emphasising the need for legal recognition and involvement in parenting.

In September, the [amendments](#) to the Children’s Act took effect, incorporating provisions for home insemination. This change allows couples to conceive privately, outside of fertility clinics, and facilitates the registration of both parents upon the child’s birth. The updated framework maintains the 2013 model, involving three parties: the birthing individual, their female partner, and the sperm provider. The birthing individual is automatically acknowledged as the legal parent, while decisions regarding the second legal parent—either the female partner or sperm provider—are made in advance. This amendment [eliminates](#) the necessity for second-parent adoption for rainbow families in Denmark. Furthermore, despite the continued use of gendered language in the Children’s Act, trans parents are now recognised according to their legally-recognised gender at the time of the baby’s birth.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In September, the Danish government extended the [funds](#) allocated to Global Focus’s ‘Claim Your Space’ Mechanism. The Mechanism, which will now receive 15 million DKK until 2026, aims to provide rapid financial support to civil society and human rights defenders at risk.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In September, Denmark [celebrated](#) the 10th anniversary of a reform that eliminated the outdated requirement for surgical procedures to change one’s legal gender.

In September, Danish media [reported](#) the case of a trans woman who, despite her legal gender recognition, was placed in a male prison and experienced strip searches by male staff. The woman in question, convicted of crimes including rape, challenged her placement in a male ward, citing violations of her privacy and

rights under the European Convention on Human Rights. The Supreme Court ruled that the placement decision, based on her criminal history and risk assessment, did not breach her privacy rights. Furthermore, it determined that strip searches conducted by male staff did not violate her rights, as these actions were consistent with the legal framework, and the gender reassignment law had not retroactively altered the provisions governing such procedures.

Danish civil society organisations have highlighted significant [obstacles](#) and delays in the government’s efforts to regularise legal gender recognition processes for minors, despite ongoing attempts to move forward with these reforms.



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# ESTONIA

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In April, the government of Estonia announced the development of an [action plan](#) for equal opportunities for LGBTI people, focusing on improving their security and ensuring fair treatment.

The plan addresses four key areas: safety, education, health, and employment, with particular attention to the wellbeing of trans people. Minister of Social Protection Signe Riisalo emphasised the plan's goal of fostering a supportive and safe environment for LGBTI people in all areas of life, noting that this is not always the current reality in Estonia.

In June, the Estonian LGBTI Association [expressed support](#) for a draft law aimed at enhancing gender equality and equal opportunities. The draft law seeks to address gaps in the Equal Treatment Act, which does not fully prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity, and the Gender Equality Act, which lacks explicit protections for gender identity, gender expression, and gender characteristics. In September, the government introduced the draft law, initiating formal discussions on its implementation.

## FAMILY

In January, a [law](#) recognising same-sex marriage and joint adoption by LGBTI couples came into effect in Estonia. Initially approved in June 2023, the law also outlines the option for same-sex couples in registered partnerships to convert their status to marriage.

## HEALTH

Since March, Estonian blood centres have updated their [donor selection criteria](#) to allow men having sex with men to donate blood on the same terms as men who have sex with women. Previously, Estonia had reduced the permanent ban on blood donations from men who had sex with men to a 12-month restriction, and later to four months as of 2022.

## DATA COLLECTION

In May, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) released the results of its 2024 "LGBTIQ equality at a crossroads – Progress and challenges" [survey](#). The findings for Estonia revealed that 62% of LGBTI respondents often or always avoid holding hands with their same-sex partner, 40% steer clear of certain locations due to fear of assault, and 48% reported being harassed in the year prior to the survey.

## FOREIGN POLICY

On IDAHOBIT, the Minister for Foreign Affairs Margus Tsahkna [emphasised](#) that human rights must be upheld for everyone,

regardless of sexual orientation. He highlighted that rainbow flags were displayed at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and its global offices to symbolise opposition to discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

## PUBLIC OPINION

The latest [survey](#) by the Estonian Human Rights Centre revealed increasingly positive attitudes toward LGBTI people in Estonia, with notable shifts among non-Estonian speakers. Over half of respondents (56%) consider homosexuality completely or somewhat acceptable, with 64% of Estonian speakers and 39% of non-Estonian speakers expressing this view. However, 38% of respondents still regard homosexuality as somewhat or completely unacceptable, often citing perceptions of it as abnormal, unnatural, or untraditional.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In July, the Estonian Human Rights Centre took up the [case](#) of a Russian trans woman and her partner, advocating for their right to be recognised as a family in Estonia. The Police and Border Guard Board had previously denied recognition, citing the absence of marriage or cohabitation registration in Russia.



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# FINLAND

## ASYLUM

Finland has faced criticism for its handling of a case involving a Russian LGBTI family that was deported despite international protection claims. The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child had previously ruled that Finland violated the Convention on the Rights of the Child by deporting the family in 2017 and failing to provide adequate protection or compensation. In April, the committee's [assessment](#) rated Finland's compliance with its decision as "B", indicating partial implementation, because Finland hadn't compensated the child as mandated by the committee.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In October, a [report](#) by the Police Academy revealed a significant increase in hate crimes targeting LGBTI people in Finland. The report highlighted that 48% of cases involved hate motives related to sexual orientation, while 58% were linked to gender identity and expression. Hate speech, including threats, defamation, and harassment, was the most commonly reported form of hate crime, with assault crimes making up 29% of cases.

## EDUCATION

In August, Finland's government proposed amendments to the Equality Act, aiming to remove the requirement for individual equality planning within early childhood education units, citing reduced administrative burdens as the rationale. Seta [criticised](#) the proposal, highlighting that this change would weaken efforts to combat discrimination and promote equality for vulnerable groups, including LGBTI people and their families. The proposal was part of broader government plans to streamline regulations, but its potential impact on anti-discrimination measures remained a point of contention.

## EMPLOYMENT

A research financed by the Nordic Ministerial Council on the conditions of trans people in the employment sector in Sweden and Finland was presented in October. The results for Finland show that the unemployment rate for trans persons is twice as high as for cis persons and that trans people face greater difficulties in finding employment and experience more bullying in workplaces than cis people.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In the 2024 Finnish elections, presidential candidate Pekka Haavisto faced significant [scrutiny](#) over his sexual orientation. A University of Helsinki [survey](#) conducted prior to the elections revealed that one-third of respondents cited Haavisto's partner, from Ecuador, as a factor influencing their decision not to vote for him in the presidential race.

In August, Finnish media [reported](#) that Foreign Trade Minister Ville Tavio of the Finns Party has prohibited the inclusion of any reference to mentions of LGBTI people and related topics in public speeches written for him.

## FAMILY

Starting in March, new legislation allows parents to [update their parental title](#) (mother/father) on the population information system website based on self-determination.

In June, the government announced a [draft proposal](#) to partially compensate private fertility treatments through public health insurance. However, many rainbow families would likely be excluded from these compensations due to the absence of "medical" grounds to justify treatment. At the beginning of December, the proposal remained stuck in the Parliament's Social Affairs and Health Committee.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In June, the Finnish Parliament's Legal Affairs Committee [rejected](#) a citizens' initiative to ban conversion therapies. The motion was defeated 6-9, and the committee's forthcoming report does not propose new legislation.

## FOREIGN POLICY

In September, Finland [announced](#) it would not participate in the "Alliance for Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Recovery" launched with the goal of ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment are central to Ukraine's recovery efforts. This decision was made by Minister for Foreign Trade and Development Ville Tavio (Finns), who cited the alliance's focus on promoting gender and sexual minorities' rights as a reason for Finland's withdrawal. In response to Tavio's decision, Finland's largest opposition party expressed intentions to seek a vote of no confidence against him. Tytti Tuppurainen, leader of the Social Democratic Party (SDP) parliamentary group, [confirmed](#) that her party planned to submit a motion of no confidence but the motion against Tuppurainen ultimately [failed](#). Finnish President Alexander Stubb also [criticised](#) Tavio's decision, emphasising that Finland's foreign policy should uphold long-standing values, including the protection of gender and sexual minorities.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In March, the Bishops' Conference of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland [endorsed a proposal](#) to add a provision to the church order to recognise two definitions of marriage: one between a man and a woman and another between two people, allowing priests to officiate same-sex weddings. By May, the proposal had [moved](#) to the Church Council of Turku for review. It



is currently under examination by the legal committee, which has requested input from the basic committee.

Helsinki Pride organisers confirmed the participation of members from the Social Democrats, the Swedish People's Party, the Left Alliance, and the Greens in its yearly Pride event. The governing NCP, Finns Party, Christian Democrats, and the opposition Centre Party and Movement Now did not participate.

The Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Transport and Communications have also announced that Pride would not be reflected in their activities or communications.

## **POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT**

In June, the Helsinki Pride march attracted an estimated 100,000 participants. This year's event was notable for the first-time involvement of the Rainbow Police of Finland, an LGBTI police association established in 2020 by current and former police officers and civilian staff.

The state prosecutor requested the Supreme Court's permission to appeal the acquittal of Christian Democrat MP Päivi Räsänen on three counts of incitement to hatred. The charges stemmed from her derogatory statements about homosexuality, for which she was acquitted by the Helsinki District Court.

The District Court of Southern Ostrobothnia fined an individual for making illegal threats and inciting hatred against an LGBTI group on social media in July 2022.



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# FRANCE

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In April, YouTuber Papacito was sentenced to a fine of €5,000 for homophobic insults and incitement to violence against a mayor of a small village in the South-West of France, who had to be placed under police protection.

In April, following the birth of twins to Simon Porte Jacquemus and his husband Marco Maestri, Marion Maréchal, MEP for Reconquête!, challenged the legitimacy of the two fathers' parenthood in a tweet.

In May, trans actress Karla Sofia Gascon filed a complaint for "sexist insult based on gender identity" after Marion Maréchal, the leading European elections candidate for Reconquête!, criticised her win at the Cannes festival, claiming the institution awarded the Best Actress prize to "a man."

In June, a complaint against Father Matthieu Raffray, accusing him of incitement to homophobic hatred and insults, was dismissed without further action. The complaint followed a video where he referred to homosexuality as a "vice" and advocated for conversion therapy.

In June, following a 2020 complaint by the associations STOP Homophobie and Mousse, the Paris Criminal Court fined Florence Besset, the editor of the online newspaper Parole de Dieu, 1000 and the payment of compensation following the newspaper's publication of an article that included biblical statements advocating the death penalty for gay people.

In July, a municipal police officer was convicted of homophobic contempt by the Dijon criminal court for a 2023 incident involving the openly gay mayor of Auxonne. During a building inspection following water damage, the officer greeted the accompanying experts with "hello gentlemen," but then intentionally addressed the mayor with a derogatory "hello ma'am."

In September, French far-right politician Éric Zemmour faced criminal charges for inciting LGBTI-phobic hatred.

In October, the president of the LGBTI association 'Bleus et Fiers' came under threats after he spoke out against homophobic chants that took place during a football match in Paris. Following these incidents, the French Minister for Sports outlined tougher measures against homophobic behaviour during sports games.

In November, boxer Imane Khelif, who had been the target of a hate campaign and discrimination regarding her gender identity, filed a complaint following the leak of her alleged medical reports. The controversy surrounding Khelif began during the Paris Olympics, when conservative groups raised questions about

her gender. (See also under Participation in Public, Cultural, and Political Life.)

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In May, the French Ministry of the Interior released a report showing a 13 percent increase in anti-LGBTI offences in 2023, with crimes such as assaults, threats, and harassment up by 19 percent, totalling 2,870 cases. According to the report, men are predominant among both victims (70 percent) and perpetrators (82 percent), with nearly half of the offenders being under 30 and over a third under 19.

In May, the Calvados criminal court sentenced three men to prison terms ranging from two-to-four years, for attacking three trans sex workers.

In May, three individuals were taken into custody on charges of rape, robbery with extortion by an organised gang, and acts of torture and barbarity for their involvement in the homophobic attack to a 56-year-old man in his Alès home.

In May, three minors were arrested in Barberaz, for a series of thefts and homophobic attacks that occurred last April via the dating app Grindr.

In May, an officer from the Republican Security Company (CRS) number 30 stationed in Châtel-Saint-Germain was sentenced by the Metz Criminal Court to a €500 fine, €1,000 in legal costs, and a citizenship course for making discriminatory and homophobic remarks in front of several of his colleagues.

For IDAHOBIT, the town of Bram repainted its pedestrian crossings with rainbow colours, but one of them was quickly vandalised with black paint.

In June, the Paris Assize Court sentenced three young people, aged 21 to 23, to prison terms of five, seven, and eight years for ambushing two men via dating sites in January 2022.

In June, a bakery in the Montfavet district of Avignon was partially destroyed by arson and vandalised with racist and homophobic graffiti, targeting the 17-year-old Ivorian apprentice baker.

In June, four activists from the far-right student union Groupe Union Défense (GUD), including the son of a former RN elected official, were sentenced for a homophobic attack in the 6th arrondissement of Paris.

On July 2, ten young people, six of whom are minors, were arrested in connection with multiple homophobic attacks that took place in Muret and Seysses, in the Toulouse area, during the last two weeks of June.

On the night of July 8 to 9, singer Simon Vendeme, known for his activism against LGBTI-phobia, was physically attacked in Paris by an unknown intoxicated person.

On July 9, the Reims criminal court sentenced three men for aggravated theft for luring unsuspecting gay men through a dating site before assaulting, threatening, and robbing them.

In July, the Montpellier criminal court sentenced two men and a woman for a lesbophobic attack that took place during the Festival des Fanfares in early June.

In July, two men were sentenced to prison for a series of violent, gunpoint robberies orchestrated through a gay dating app in Guadeloupe. The main suspect, with a prior conviction, received a three-year prison term, while his accomplice was given two years.

In July, France saw two instances of transfemicide within a week, with a 30-year-old Peruvian trans woman and sex worker murdered by a client in her Paris apartment, and a 55-year-old trans woman who was killed with an axe by her partner in Compiègne shortly before.

In September, a man was sentenced to thirteen years of imprisonment for a series of homophobic ambushes in Paris. In the fall of 2022, the accused had trapped four men via dating apps and threatened them with a knife or a cleaver, forcing them to go down to a cellar at his parents' house to rob them.

## EDUCATION

In January, a complaint was filed against the Parisian private school Stanislas, accusing it of homophobic discrimination for expelling a student due to her criticism of homophobia among staff members.

## EMPLOYMENT

In March, France Télévisions was found guilty of failing to ensure workplace safety, wrongful dismissal, and unfair contract practices. The ruling derived from the case of Gaël Giordana, a former employee who was dismissed in summer 2023 after reporting sexual and moral harassment by a colleague.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In January, then-Prime-Minister Gabriel Attal spoke to the National Assembly, highlighting how attitudes have evolved in France and noting that being openly gay and serving as prime minister demonstrates significant societal change.

In March, the Minister for Gender Equality and the Fight Against Discrimination, requested that the Interministerial Delegation for

the Fight against Racism, Anti-Semitism, and Anti-LGBTI Hatred report inflammatory comments to the public prosecutor. Although she did not name the source directly, her request was prompted by recent statements from Father Matthieu Raffray, a Catholic priest who equated the fight against homosexuality with combating other "sins" like gluttony and anger and suggested that homosexuality could be "cured" by resisting "the voice of the devil."

In early May, activist groups called for nationwide protests following the publication of a controversial Senate report on the right of minors to gender care, and of the book Transmania, which critics argue echoes harmful rhetoric against trans people.

In May, the shutters of the Le Trinquet bar in Tardets, Basque Country, were defaced with homophobic graffiti after the bar started hosting events for the Prefosta association, including Bekat'uros day celebrating LGBTI visibility.

In July, the ECtHR dismissed the case of M.A. and Others v. France, ruling that France's criminalization of those seeking to purchase sexual acts did not violate the right to private life under Article 8 of the ECHR, a decision that prompted criticism from human rights groups. (See also under Participation in Public, Cultural, and Political life)

## FAMILY

In January, the Conference of Bishops of France (CEF) advocated for "a broad and unconditional welcome" in response to the Vatican's openness to bless LGBTI people.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In May, the Senate reviewed and approved on first reading a bill by Senator Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio, which proposed banning hormone treatments for minors. After the dissolution of the National Assembly and the reconstitution of the new government, the bill was re-registered at the National Assembly and was sent to the Commission of Social Affairs to be examined before a formal vote in the Hemicycle.

## DATA COLLECTION

A report by SOS Homophobie recorded 2,377 cases of anti-LGBTI discrimination and violence in France, underscoring a worsening environment for LGBTI people, with a rise in online hate, which accounts for 23% of reported cases.

A Médiapart investigation revealed over 300 anti-LGBTI ambushes between 2020 and 2023, highlighting a surge in both the frequency and brutality of attacks targeting LGBTI people.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In March, the National Assembly unanimously passed a [bill](#) in its first reading aimed at recognising and compensating the harm suffered by gay people historically persecuted in France.

In April, the Court of Justice of the European Union [heard a case](#) challenging the French railway company SNCF's requirement for passengers to select "Mr" or "Ms" when buying tickets. Filed by the Mousse Association on behalf of 64 people, the lawsuit argues that this practice violates GDPR and EU non-discrimination laws. In January 2025, the [CJEU ruled](#) that the practice was unlawful, stating that collecting gender markers is unnecessary and potentially discriminatory, setting a precedent for compliance with GDPR across the EU.

The DILCRAH and Sport et Citoyenneté launched the "[For an Inclusive and Respectful Sport - Collection of Good Practices 2024](#)" initiative, a collection of practical measures and recommendations aimed at creating a more inclusive and respectful sporting environment for LGBTI people.

In June, a [poster campaign](#) aimed at combating LGBTI-phobic discrimination in sports was launched by the Lyon LGBTI+ centre, the regional prefecture, the City of Lyon, and the City of Villeurbanne in the Lyon metropolitan area, featuring posters that highlight the harassment faced by athletes.

(See also under Participation in Public, Cultural, and Political Life.)

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In May, about fifty associations and over 140 public figures [wrote](#) to the then-Prime Minister Gabriel Attal to criticise the "deafening institutional silence" amid rising attacks against LGBTI people since the beginning of 2024.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In March, a collective of LGBTI associations [filed an appeal](#) with the Council of State to overturn the circulars which govern the procedures for changing first names and the mention of "sex" on civil status documents. The associations argued that these regulations violate trans people's right to freely define their gender identity.

In November, left-wing parliamentary groups [submitted](#) a bill to the National Assembly aimed at simplifying the process to change gender markers on official documents. Currently, applicants are required to present evidence before a judge, such as written testimonies, to prove that their legal gender does not align with their gender identity. The proposed legislation seeks to decentralise this procedure, allowing individuals to make such

changes directly at town halls, thereby streamlining the process and enhancing accessibility.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In March, the French Congress [approved](#) the constitutionalisation of the right for women to have a voluntary termination of pregnancy, amending Article 34 to guarantee this freedom. While the text only explicitly mentions "women's freedom," the Council of State clarified in December 2023 that this right must be extended to "any person who has started a pregnancy," including trans men.

President Emmanuel Macron, in an interview with Elle magazine, reiterated his [opposition to surrogacy](#), labelling it as "a form of commercialisation of bodies."

In September, newly appointed Prime Minister Michel Barnier [vowed](#) to protect medically assisted procreation, the right to abortion and same-sex marriage. This pledge followed concerns about the appointment of conservative ministers, who were opposed at the time to same-sex marriage and recently to the constitutionalisation of abortion.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

After his [appointment](#) as Prime Minister in January, Gabriel Attal was subjected to waves of [homophobic and anti-Semitic comments](#) on social media.

In January, [Catherine Vautrin](#) was appointed Minister of Labour and [Aurore Bergé](#) as Minister Delegate for Gender Equality and the Fight Against Discrimination. LGBTI activists expressed their concerns about the appointment due to their previous opposition to same-sex marriage and adoption.

In May, the Professional Football League (LFP) [expanded](#) its anti-discrimination campaign by adding the LGBTI flag to the logos of the Ligue 1 and Ligue 2 competitions.

In May, the efforts spearheaded by Pierre-Yves Bournazel, co-president of the Independents and Progressives (GIP) group on the Paris Council, led to the approval of the project for the creation of a [new centre for LGBTI artistic and cultural expressions](#) in Paris.

This year, France welcomed the Olympic games and, despite facing criticism from conservative groups, the [Paris 2024 Olympic Games' opening ceremony](#), directed by Thomas Jolly, achieved global acclaim while also setting a [new record](#) for the number of openly queer athletes participating in the games. For the Games, an area dedicated to LGBTI people and their allies - the [Pride House](#) - was created on the banks of the Seine. Nonetheless, the

opening ceremony garnered a considerable amount of online hatred, eventually leading the Paris prosecutor's office to launch multiple investigations into the hate speech directed at visible LGBTI figures who partook in the ceremony.

In July, the Paris prosecutor's office announced an investigation following a complaint filed by DJ Barbara Butch, who reported receiving lesbophobic, fatphobic and antisemitic insults and threats related to her participation in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games' opening ceremony. The prosecutor's office noted that the national centre for combating online hatred has referred the case to the central office for combating crimes against humanity and hate crimes for an investigation into discriminatory messages based on religion or sexual orientation.

In August, French drag queen Nicky Doll filed a defamation complaint following a wave of online hate due to her performance at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games' opening ceremony on July 26. As reported by Le Monde, the legal action targets anonymous users and British actor Laurence Fox, who labelled her a "paedophile" in a social media post.

## **SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION**

In December 2023, Marseille inaugurated its first LGBTI centre designed to provide support and resources to anyone exploring or questioning their sexual orientation and gender identity.

## **POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT**

In March, multiple LGBTI advocacy organisations called for the repeal of the "surname and first name correspondence table." The organisations argued that the file tracks people who have changed their civil status, including trans people and immigrants, exposing them to risks of outing and discrimination. They highlighted concerns that this file, accessible to police, could lead to outing, discrimination, and violence against trans individuals, as well as the potential misuse of data regarding immigrants who have Frenchified their names.



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# GEORGIA

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

The foreign agents law endangers provision of services to the LGBTI community in Georgia. At the time of writing, none of the LGBTI community organisations have registered as foreign agents, in protest of the law. Therefore, organisations could be fined and might have to file for bankruptcy, which would disrupt the available services. Additionally, the anti-LGBTI law has led to the erosion of trust and safety needed for the LGBTI community to seek out services. Thus, there is a decrease in applications for services, despite the need possibly increasing.

(See also under Equality and Non-discrimination and Freedom of Association)

## ASYLUM

Georgian LGBTI people continued to flee the country in large numbers. Although there are no official statistics, community organisations report that these numbers have significantly increased. However, there is an ongoing concern that Georgia is classified by some EU countries as a 'safe country'.

Following the adoption of the foreign agents law and the anti-LGBTI law, a vast number of LGBTI people have been requesting assistance from Equality Movement's lawyers in obtaining relevant documentation from the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the General Prosecutors Office of Georgia. The documents were obtained for the purpose of seeking asylum in other countries. This trend demonstrates that recent anti-democratic developments in Georgia have markedly accelerated LGBTI migration.

(See also under Equality and Non-discrimination, and Freedom of Association.)

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The spread of misinformation and rhetoric demonising the LGBTI community and instrumentalisation of anti-LGBT propaganda to distance Georgia from the West continued this year. Anti-gender rhetoric also increased this year. In a keynote speech at the ultra-conservative CPAC conference, Irakli Kobakhidze compared liberals to Bolsheviks and said liberals fight Christianity and national identity with "LGBT propaganda". His speech was full of homophobic and transphobic narratives that liberals are against using terms such as "mother" and "father", or "man" and "woman".

The Georgian Elections Observatory (GEO), focusing on fact-checking pre-election narratives, analysed statements made by high-ranking members of the ruling Georgian Dream party. The analysis revealed that 'LGBT propaganda' was framed as being imposed by Western influences and was linked to the perceived threat of national extinction.

In March, the Charter of Journalistic Ethics investigated anti-LGBTI content aired by a national TV channel. The Charter determined that the network violated multiple ethical principles of journalistic ethics by broadcasting biased and one-sided 'expert' opinions to support the government's stance on LGBTI issues.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Just one day after the Parliament of Georgia passed the anti-LGBTI law, a celebrity trans woman, Kesaria Abramidze was found brutally murdered in her apartment. The subsequent investigation pertains to premeditated murder with aggravating circumstances of special cruelty based on gender identity.

In October, a month after Kesaria's murder, renowned trans activist Nata Talikishvili was physically attacked with a brick, resulting in a concussion. Nata Talikishvili is a recipient of Kato Mikeladze's Prize, which is given for defending women's rights.

In the spring of 2024, Tbilisi Pride office was vandalised twice by unidentified persons likely having ties with the Georgian Dream. The attackers threw eggs and left homophobic slurs written in red paint.

## EDUCATION

The anti-LGBTI law restricts education on gender and sexuality by prohibiting information that promotes same-sex relationships, gender transitioning, or non-heterosexual identities in educational institutions. The Venice Commission has condemned this provision as discriminatory, warning that it creates an unsafe environment for LGBTI students and deprives all pupils of comprehensive, age-appropriate sex education. The Commission also noted that the law contradicts the right to education and may increase bullying, harassment, and health risks.

(See also under Equality and Non-discrimination)

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In March, Georgia's ruling party unveiled a proposal for a bill named the "Protection of Family Values and Minors." The law, widely referred to as the anti-LGBTI law by activists, encompasses a broad range of discriminatory provisions. By June, the Georgian Parliament granted preliminary approval to the draft legislation. The law came into force in December 2024 and includes measures that prohibit non-heterosexual people from adopting children, prevent LGBTI people from changing their gender marker on identification documents, outlaw public gatherings that promote same-sex relationships, and prohibit educational institutions from presenting what the government terms "LGBTI propaganda." Additionally, the law bans legal gender recognition, criminalises medical procedures related to transitioning, equates same-sex relationships with incest, and declares May 17 a "Day of

Family Purity and Respect for Parents", a holiday opposing the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, Intersexphobia, and Transphobia (IDAHOBIT). In addition, the law exempts labour relations from anti-discrimination obligations to avoid terminology referring to "biological sex".

## FAMILY

Previously, there was no legal recognition for same-sex couples living together, and the anti-LGBTI law further excludes individuals who have undergone gender transition from any recognition in the context of marriage.

The law also prohibits the adoption or foster care of minors by unmarried couples or single LGBTI people, allowing this only for married heterosexual couples or single heterosexual people. (See also under Equality and Non-discrimination.)

## FOREIGN POLICY

Georgia's foreign policy took a dramatic turn away from the West, culminating on November 28, when PM Irakli Kobakhidze announced a halt to Georgia's European integration process. All key strategic partners repeatedly expressed grave concern over the actions of the Georgian Dream party, which were contrary to the values and principles on which the European Union is based.

According to the enlargement report published by the European Commission, the rate of compatibility of Georgia with the common foreign and security policy of the European Union was significantly low, at 49%. Bidzina Ivanishvili, from the Georgian Dream party, was sanctioned by the United States for "undermining the democratic and Euro-Atlantic future of Georgia for the benefit of the Russian Federation". Josep Borrell, the High Representative of the EU for foreign affairs at the time, called on Georgian authorities to withdraw the anti-LGBT law, as it would "undermine the fundamental rights of the people and increase discrimination & and stigmatisation" and further derail the country from the EU integration path.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

During mass protests against alleged election fraud and the halt to Georgia's European integration, several protesters, including LGBTI people, were subjected to torture and cruel treatment. Police committed human rights violations, including unlawful force, torture, and the targeting of journalists. Detained protesters have testified to widespread abuse. (See also under Police and Law Enforcement.)

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The anti-LGBTI law severely restricts freedom of assembly, effectively outlawing public gatherings such as Pride and IDAHOT events. Before the adoption of the law, Tbilisi Pride had already decided not to hold any events in 2024 due to the increase in homophobic and transphobic speech and violence, promoted and coordinated by the government in the pre-election period. (See also under Equality and Non-discrimination.)

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In May, Georgia's parliament passed the "Transparency of Foreign Influence" law, which requires organisations receiving over 20% of their funding from abroad to register as "organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power." While the law is widely known as the foreign agents law, the 2024 version removed the term "agent" and replaced it with the less controversial-sounding phrasing. The law compels civil society groups and independent media to submit their internal documents for government inspection.

Although Georgian authorities have not yet taken direct action against non-compliant organisations, methods of intimidation and harassment have been used, particularly ahead of the 26 October elections. These tactics included an attempt to block organisations from monitoring the elections, though this was reversed after international backlash.

In June 2024, the bill was signed into law by Speaker of Parliament Shalva Papuashvili, following the legislature's rejection of a veto by President Salome Zourabichvili and the law began to be implemented. The deadline for registration under the law expired on September 2, with only 476 organisations expressing interest in complying, which is approximately 1.5% of all registered CSOs in Georgia. In November, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) registered a case against the law. The passage of the law is part of a broader crackdown on democratic freedoms by the ruling Georgian Dream party, drawing inspiration from a similar foreign agent law introduced in Russia in 2012.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.)

## HEALTH

The [anti-LGBTI law](#) undermines Georgia's efforts to end AIDS and combat other infectious diseases, posing a significant threat to public health. The United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS) has [expressed](#) deep concern, stating that the law exacerbates stigma and hinders LGBTI people's access to essential health services.

The Women's Initiatives Support Group (WISG) launched a study to assess the healthcare needs of trans people. The analysis of numerous individual cases revealed specific issues encountered by trans people in accessing healthcare services and the need for coordinated responses to tackle such shortcomings. Even before the [anti-LGBTI law](#) was [enacted](#), there were cases when healthcare service providers practiced self-censorship and refused to provide services to trans people. (See also under Equality and Non-discrimination.)

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Following the enactment of the [foreign agents law](#), a coalition of NGOs is preparing to challenge the law by filing a lawsuit with the Constitutional Court of Georgia. In addition, they plan to submit a complaint to the European Court of Human Rights, seeking to suspend its implementation. (See also under Freedom of Association.)

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The [anti-LGBTI law](#) has reversed any progress towards legal gender recognition. It particularly targets trans people, prohibiting both surgical and legal gender reassignment procedures, effectively denying them the right to change their gender marker on official documents. (See also under Equality and Non-discrimination.)

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In June, the Venice Commission [declared](#) the legislative proposal for the [foreign agents bill](#) non-compliant with European and international standards. The Commission's [review](#) condemned the draft constitutional law as detrimental and unsatisfactory, asserting that it exacerbates prejudices and stereotypes against LGBTI people.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In October, the [parliamentary elections](#) in Georgia were marked by significant challenges, with international observers noting reports of voter intimidation, particularly in rural areas, and a significant imbalance in financial resources, with the ruling party

enjoying significant advantages. The election sparked numerous protests across the country, driven by frustration over the government's delay in EU accession negotiations and calling for a new parliamentary election, alongside chants against Russian influence. (See also under Freedom From Torture, Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment, and under Police and Law Enforcement.)

## PUBLIC OPINION

The Georgian Dream party lawmakers appealed to the supposedly negative public opinion towards LGBTI people in segments of the Georgian society as a justification for adopting anti-LGBT law. However, the Venice Commission [states](#) that even if the majority was opposed to LGBTQI equality, this could not be invoked to justify discrimination and hate speech. In truth, there is no recent data to measure public opinion towards the anti-LGBT law or LGBTQI people. While the last decade has seen an increase in acceptance of LGBTQI people in Georgia, community organisations fear that the wide distribution of governmental homophobic and transphobic rhetoric could reverse the hard won progress. (See also under Equality and Non-discrimination.)

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Following recent anti-democratic political developments in Georgia, trust in the police and investigative institutions among LGBTI people has significantly decreased, leading many to refrain from reporting incidents to the police.

In November and December, during mass protests against election fraud and the ruling party's halt to Georgia's European integration, police forces and special units carried out brutal arrests and beatings of civilians. Multiple reports state that homophobic language was used by law enforcement while arresting and assaulting the protesters. Additionally, Zviad Kharazishvili, head of the Special Tasks Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA), reportedly publicly disseminated homophobic hate speech. (See also under Freedom From Torture, Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment.)



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# GERMANY

## ASYLUM

In March, the Federal Government released its [fourth biennial report](#) assessing whether countries listed as “safe” for return by the Bundestag still meet safety criteria. Even with deteriorating conditions for LGBTI people in Ghana, Senegal, and Georgia, these countries remain classified as safe, despite escalating violence and discrimination.

In July, a gay Iraqi was deported to the persecuting state due to procedural errors.

Since August, German civil society organisations have been [advocating](#) for a continuation beyond the expected end date of the Reception Program Afghanistan which, since its launch in October 2022, helped rescue thousands of vulnerable Afghans, among them LGBTI Afghans, from Taliban rule.

In September, the right to asylum became a primary [target](#) of a policy framework increasingly undermining fundamental human rights. Germany [announced](#) plans to extend border controls to all its land borders, initially for six months. The measures include detaining asylum seekers at borders while assessing whether Germany is responsible for processing their cases, using tools like the Eurodac fingerprint database.

Since November, LGBTI refugees from Uganda, including those facing the threat of the death penalty for their sexuality, have been increasingly [rejected](#) by German authorities. In one of these cases, a 27-year-old fled Uganda after facing severe persecution, including threats to his life, family, and even being shot. However, BAMF rejected his asylum application, deeming his sexual orientation not credible.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In December, the sedition trial against a preacher from the “Baptistenkirche Zuverlässiges Wort Pforzheim” (BKZW) group [moved](#) to the next stage at the regional court, with the accused appealing the judgment of the Pforzheim District Court. In June 2023, the preacher had made controversial statements during a sermon, which was also shared online, claiming that LGBTI people should be “destroyed by the state” and that they were dangerous. These statements were deemed an attack on human dignity by the Pforzheim District Court, which imposed a fine of 150 daily rates at 40 euros each, resulting in a criminal record for the 32-year-old preacher.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In April, two [bias-motivated attacks](#) were recorded against Afghan trans women. The first incident involved a perpetrator spraying pepper spray in the victim’s face after hurling insults. A week

later, four attackers targeted a group of six trans women, beating and kicking them. In both instances the police responded swiftly, quickly identifying and arresting the perpetrators.

In May, the Ministry of Interior released its yearly [report](#) on politically motivated crimes, underscoring an [increase](#) in the recorded number of crimes motivated by the victims’ perceived sexual orientation and/or gender identity and expression.

Between June and September 2024, the Centre for Monitoring, Analysis and Strategy (CeMAS) [documented](#) a surge in extremist mobilisations against Pride and Christopher Street Day events across 27 German cities, involving violence and intimidation. The Federal Ministry of the Interior reported 22 protests during this period.

## EDUCATION

Since April, discussions have centred on “gender bans” that explicitly prohibit the use of gender-sensitive language at universities and public authorities in various federal states, including Bavaria, Hesse, Saxony, and Saxony-Anhalt. Nonetheless, in May, a [report](#) by the Federal Anti-Discrimination Office (ADS) underscored that under these provisions there is a notable risk that institutions may contravene the prohibition of gender discrimination and infringe upon general personal rights of women, intersex people, and non-binary people. Throughout the year, several states, including Bavaria, Hesse, Saxony, and Saxony-Anhalt, have implemented or announced bans on the use of gender-inclusive language in multiple areas. After [protests](#) erupted at various universities, the Ministry of Science [clarified](#) that the ban would apply only to specific university functions on the basis of the alleged necessity of preserving the capacities of people with learning disabilities or with German as a foreign language.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Germany continues to block the adoption of the EU anti-discrimination directive, despite the federal government’s coalition agreement promising a reform of the national anti-discrimination law.

In May, “Just now. For all,” a [campaign](#) of about 200 non-profit organisations advocating for the preservation of funding for civil society initiatives, appealed to Chancellor Olaf Scholz with a petition to review the 2025 federal budget and the austerity measures proposed by the Ministry of Finance.

The campaign underscored that budget cuts would endanger civil society projects and initiatives throughout the country, causing serious implications on democracy promotion, child and youth services, political education, and voluntary programs.

In December, the Federal Government presented a [report](#) on the progress of the 2022 “[Queer Living](#)” Action Plan’s implementation. The report revealed that nearly two-thirds of the 134 proposed measures have already been implemented or are in progress. Civil society organisations have expressed their [disappointment](#) that key initiatives such as the inclusion of a ban on discrimination based on sexual identity into common law have not been implemented. They also criticised the lack of adequate funding for several measures and called on future governments to prioritize the action plan and fulfill outstanding reform promises.

## FAMILY

In January, the then Federal Minister of Justice Buschmann [presented](#) key points for a [reform](#) of the right of descent, aiming to improve rights for LGBTI families by abolishing stepchild adoptions for two-mother families and introducing parenting agreements. Until September, [no draft was made available](#). In October, a draft was discussed with the Ministries of Justice of the federal states. Following the coalition split in early November, no further steps will be taken on the current measures and legislative reform will now be postponed and addressed in the next legislative period.

In October, Germany’s Federal Justice Minister Marco Buschmann of the Free Democrats (FDP) [announced](#) new plans to reform adoption and family law. The proposed reforms aim to allow adults in unmarried partnerships to adopt a child together and permit just one adult in a marriage to legally adopt a child, addressing gaps in current laws. Currently, both married and unmarried heterosexual and same-sex couples can adopt, but married couples must both legally adopt the child, while only one adult in an unmarried partnership can do so. The proposed reform would allow a more flexible approach, aligning the law with the realities of family life today. No proposal was presented by the time the government coalition broke up in November.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Starting in August, far-right groups and neo-Nazis began organising so-called [counter-demonstrations](#) in response to local Pride marches, with participation varying between 30 and 600 people. The police responses varied significantly, ranging from protecting the Pride marches from counter-protests, to underestimating the threat and failing to provide adequate security. As a result, incidents of hate crimes near Pride marches surged dramatically. For instance, in the period from June to September, the Centre for Monitoring, Analysis and Strategy (CeMAS) recorded right-wing mobilizations against Pride in 27 cities nationwide, some of which included attempted attacks and violence.

## HEALTH

In March, the Federal Social Court released a [written statement](#) for its judgement in case B 1 KR 16/22 R, delivered on October 19, 2023. The ruling restricts the assumption of costs for people wishing to start their medical transition and reduces access to trans-healthcare for non-binary people. In practice, if a person is open about their non-binary identity to the insurance company, the insurance company can, and often will decline to cover the costs.

Three years after the Conversion Treatment Protection Act came into force, conversion therapies are still present across the country. Although the governing parties have recognised the urgent need for reform and promised an amendment in the coalition agreement, the responsible ministries seem to have shelved these measures in this legislative period.

In September, a hearing was held in the Bundestag on the rights of sex workers as part of the efforts of some politicians who are pushing for the introduction of a Nordic model in Germany, which would decrease sex workers’ health and safety.

## FOREIGN POLICY

In June, the Bundestag passed a [law](#) aimed at further developing international criminal law during its second and third readings. This legislation establishes a legal framework for prosecuting international law crimes against lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, and other queer people, empowering the courts to prosecute crimes committed against individuals based on their sexual orientation as violations of international law. Furthermore, the accompanying explanatory memorandum states that bias-motivated violence on grounds of gender identity, specifically those directed at trans and intersex people, can be classified and prosecuted as gender-based crimes.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In January, ZDF, a German public-service television broadcaster, aired a [documentary](#) on the persecution of LGBTI people under the Nazi rule.

In September, Olaf Scholz became the first chancellor in German history to give a [speech](#) on the rights of LGBTI people, opening a queer human rights conference of his own party, SPD.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In April, the Bundestag passed the [Self-Determination Act](#), allowing trans, intersex, and non-binary people to update their gender marker through a simple declaration at the registry office, based on self-determination. This new law [replaces](#)

the Transsexual Act (TSG), which had been criticised for being unconstitutional and requiring lengthy, costly, and demeaning court and medical procedures for gender recognition. Self-determination for people without legal status was not included in the legal frame. In May, following the rejection of a motion appealing to the Conciliation Committee, the law was approved also at the Federal Chamber. On November 1st the law came into effect, formalising a process according to which trans, intersex, and nonbinary people aged 18 and older can alter their records by making a personal declaration, with only a three-month waiting period required. Minors over the age of 14 can also change their gender marker with parental approval or legal recourse, while younger children can have their parents act on their behalf, though the child must be present to provide their assent if they are older than five years old

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In April, an expert commission established by the government presented its final report evaluating the potential legalisation of egg donation and surrogacy. The commission concluded that the legalisation of egg donation is generally permissible; however, it expressed greater caution regarding the legalisation of surrogacy. Additionally, the commission recommended the complete decriminalisation of abortion.

In November, a law which imposes fines for harassment outside abortion clinics, medical offices, and counselling centres, came into force.

## PUBLIC OPINION

The IPSOS Pride Study 2024 revealed that 73% of Germans believe LGBTI couples should have the same rights as heterosexual couples when it comes to adopting children, marking a four percentage point increase from three years ago. The report underscored that Germany, along with France and Poland, has seen a slight positive shift in the acceptance of LGBTI identities in recent years, but only 47% of respondents support laws prohibiting discrimination against LGBTI people, a 3% decrease from 2021.



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# GREECE

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

The marriage equality law (5089/2024) entailed the establishment of a series of guarantees for equal treatment regardless of Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (SOGIESC) in the provision of goods and services, education, healthcare and housing. (See more under Family.)

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In March, a violent mob of about 150 people targeted two trans people in Thessaloniki, assaulting them and hurling bottles. When the two sought refuge in a restaurant, the attackers continued their aggression by banging on the windows and taunting them. The police later apprehended 21 people, including 11 minors, in connection with the attack.

The following day, a group of around 50 masked men attacked demonstrators at a protest organised to denounce the incident and the widespread scope of anti-LGBTI violence.

Several conservative public figures, including politicians (1, 2, 3), artists and members of the Greek Orthodox church (1, 2) engaged in bias-motivated speech against the marriage equality law before and while it was being discussed in the Parliament.

The Orthodox church expressed its official opposition to marriage equality through the Holy Synod of the hierarchy.

In May, transphobic comments targeted Nemo and Bambie Thug, two openly non-binary contestants in the Eurovision Song Contest.

In September, Markos Seferlis, a comedian known for expressing hate against minority groups, attempted to ridicule Nemo in a performance that portrayed non-binary identities as indecisive and a new trend.

Protests titled "Family Pride" were organised in Athens, Thessaloniki and Chania in the summer as counter-protests to Pride, conveying homophobic messages against the right of same-sex couples to marry and adopt. The protest initially expected in Athens was cancelled after the public reacted against it and citizens' groups organised a counter-protest.

In May, two LGBTI-phobic incidents took place at a street party for Athens Pride. Witnesses reported agitators approaching the area and hurling discriminatory statements at the participants as well as spitting on some of them.

In June, a homophobic verbal attack by lawyer Alexis Kougias against Stefanos Kasselakis, the then-leader of opposition party SYRIZA, sparked the intervention of the Supreme Court prosecutor.

The conservative newspaper Estia published a cover article referring to the rights of LGBTI people as "privilege". The article interpreted the 2024 Athens Pride motto, "A law is not enough," which called for marriage equality, as a demand for special privileges.

Shortly after the US elections, Minister for Health, Adonis Georgiadis, blamed the "woke agenda" for "making US politics pathetic" and ex-Prime Minister Antonis Samaras expressed a similar opinion.

## EDUCATION

Sex education material by Rainbow School was removed from the website of the Institute of Educational Policy.

The government did not issue guidelines against bullying in schools on SOGIESC grounds, after backlash by the far-right and the church against the marriage equality law, as described in Law 5029/2023, which is in effect since March 2023.

In October, a middle school teacher in Lavrio who distributed homophobic material to his students as part of their Religious Studies course was suspended.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

After the 2024 European elections and the low electoral results of his party, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis gave a TV news interview claiming that his party suffered political damage due to the marriage equality legislative initiative. Additionally, he noted that no other change will be made regarding family law and specifically on adoption. Instead, he announced wanting to focus on improving societal attitudes towards LGBTI issues rather than on implementing further legislative change.

In November, party Elliniki Lysi ("The Greek Solution") submitted a proposal to repeal the marriage equality law and the legal gender recognition law. In another instance, the party Niki ("Victory") submitted a proposal to "protect the two genders and minors", aiming to "ban gender ideologies and non-traditional sexual orientations", erase the term "gender identity" from the Greek legislation and prevent minors from accessing trans-specific healthcare.

Three associations submitted a petition to the Council of State claiming the marriage equality law is unconstitutional because "it fundamentally modifies the traditional institution of family". The National Commission for Human Rights intervened in favour of its constitutionality. The trial has been postponed to April 11, 2025.

## FAMILY

In February, Greece became the first Orthodox-majority country to legalise same-sex marriage. The bill passed with

the support of 176 out of 300 MPs, also allowing same-sex couples to adopt children and granting equal parental rights to both partners. However, the bill does not include provisions for surrogacy for same-sex couples. Furthermore, while it abolishes the requirement of being unmarried to access legal gender recognition, it does not include any provision to modify a parent's name and gender on the birth certificate of their children after legal gender recognition.

The mother of a trans child was deprived of custody (also here) after a local court ruled that she was trying to "push the child towards female gender expression" instead of "gender neutralisation".

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## HEALTH

In July, it was reported that a Christian organisation made attempts to attract trans women and sex-workers and subject them to conversion practices in Syggrou Avenue in Athens.

In October the SEGM, an organisation of mental health professionals, considered a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Centre (SPLC), organised a conference in Athens leading to opposition by civil society, which denounced the pathologisation of trans identities promoted by the event.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

The film "Lesvia" by Tzeli Chatzidimitriou, a documentary about the lesbian community in Eressos, was released to audiences in Greece and abroad.

In December, the National Museum of Contemporary Arts hosted Maria Cyber's exhibition "Portraits", a moment of lesbian representation and visibility in the arts.

## PUBLIC OPINION

According to the Gender Divide survey, a research project of Eteron in collaboration with the British university King's College

London conducted in June, about 60% of Greek people agree or mostly agree with same-sex marriage and 37% agree or mostly agree with adoption by same-sex couples.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In July, the Athens Appeal Court convicted two men for the 2018 murder of Greek LGBTI activist Zack Kostopoulos. The murderers, aged 65 and 80, were sentenced to six and five years respectively. The court ruled that the older of the two could serve his sentence at home.

In June, the murderer of Anna Ivankova, a trans woman who was killed in Athens in 2023, was convicted to life imprisonment without the recognition of mitigating circumstances.



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# HUNGARY

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Erste Bank set up an [initiative](#) to help trans people whose identity does not align with the name or gender marker listed on their identity documents by providing them the possibility of using a given name chosen from the list of Hungarian first names.

In March, the local community centre in Kecskemét refused to rent rooms to Labrisz Lesbian Association for a movie screening, arguing that Labrisz is an “ideology-based civil society organisation”. Labrisz challenged the refusal in court, and the proceedings are pending.

## ASYLUM

A request for preliminary ruling concerning the applicability of Article 16 of the [GDPR](#) in procedures for changing the gender marker of refugees is pending before the Court of Justice of the European Union. (See also under Legal Gender Recognition.)

The [opinion of the Advocate General](#) was published on September 12, 2024, noting that, according to Article 16 of the GDPR in conjunction with Article 5 (1)(d) of the GDPR, Hungarian authorities are obliged to correct the gender of the applicant, whose data was initially recorded inaccurately.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In April, the organisation Hatvannégy Vármegye Ifjúsági Mozgalom (HVIM, Sixty-Four Counties Youth Movement) made a complaint at the school district about a school psychologist, who is also an organiser of the Budapest Pride, arguing that she should not work with children because she is an LGBTI activist. The school district initiated an investigation and asked the teacher to refrain from her civil society engagement. This process eventually led to the termination of the employment contract by the employee. In addition, HVIM published several videos unlawfully releasing her personal data to the public. Legal proceedings are pending, aimed at holding HVIM accountable for the unlawful release of personal data and the resulting harm.

PM Orbán [delivered a speech](#) at the European Parliament on the priorities of the Hungarian presidency in which he claimed “Illegal migration has led to increasing anti-semitism, violence against women and homophobia”.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In May, a group of men physically assaulted a bar’s patron after discovering his sexual orientation. Criminal proceedings have been initiated, but the perpetrators have so far not been identified as they fled the scene after the incident.

In July, two gay men were physically and verbally assaulted in Siófok. A criminal proceeding is pending but the perpetrators have not been identified so far.

## DATA COLLECTION

In line with guidance by Eurostat, the Hungarian Central Statistical office started to collect data on sexual orientation discrimination as part of its Statistics on Income and Living Conditions survey.

## EDUCATION

Due to the so-called child protection law, which requires all educational projects, including activities in schools, to be registered with a public body, an EU-funded project aimed at making schools and workplaces more inclusive for LGBTI people using informal education methods, could not implement planned in-school sessions. However, the registration process has yet to be established, and organisations running the EU-funded project have taken legal action against the Ministry of Education for failing to register the program, with the court case still ongoing.

## EMPLOYMENT

In June, the Parliament adopted a new [package](#) of child protection laws that - among others - introduced psychological assessment and background checks on foster parents and all staff working in child protection services. The legislation also deemed anyone with ‘sexual deviances’ as unfit for these roles. Concerns have been raised about the questionnaires used in the assessments, which include questions about intimate partners and social activities, potentially leading to the exclusion of individuals with non-heterosexual orientations.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Gergely Gulyás, head of the Hungarian government office, [confirmed](#) that Hungary would not alter its policies criticised by the European Union for infringing on LGBTI rights and asylum seekers’ rights.

## FAMILY

On judicial review, six decisions declaring people unsuitable for adoption in recent years with reference to their sexual orientation and/or the fact that they live with a same-sex partner, were overturned. However, the guardianship authorities have so far failed to implement the judgments, forcing clients to repeatedly judicial review. Although LGBTI people are not explicitly excluded from individual adoption, guardianship offices either discourage them, or refuse their suitability for adoption based on discriminative grounds.

In January, the National Tax Authority [issued a statement](#) confirming that de facto children also inherit without the duty to pay inheritance tax. In practice, this means that children of de facto partners are to be treated equally as the children of spouses or registered partners.

In February, Hungary's Constitutional Court confirmed the refusal to register a child adopted abroad by a same-sex couple. Despite attempts to have the adoption registered and the child naturalised as Hungarian, the court upheld the rejection, citing that the matter is res iudicata considering that the applicant started a fresh procedure after getting divorced from his same-sex partner.

In May, the Hungarian State Treasury updated the childcare fee application forms to clarify that same-sex registered partners are also eligible to claim its benefits.

In May, a woman co-parenting three children with her same-sex partner—one being her biological child and two her partner's biological children—applied for family allowance (családi pótlék) for all three. Her request was denied, with authorities arguing that she has no legal relationship with her partner's children, despite the law stating that registered partners should be treated the same as spouses. The case is the subject of ongoing legal proceedings.

In July, the website [csalad.hu](http://csalad.hu) containing detailed information on all family support schemes was amended, clarifying that registered partners are to be treated in the same way as married couples for the purposes of family allowance (családi pótlék).

In October, child welfare authorities have once again rejected the suitability for adoption of a gay applicant, despite a previous court ruling that had annulled a discriminatory decision from the District Guardianship Office. The court had ordered the guardianship authority to begin a new procedure, emphasizing that the authority should send the applicant's case to the Minister for Children and Youth Policy for final approval. However, despite these clear instructions from the Metropolitan Court of Budapest, the guardianship authority issued another negative decision. While it acknowledged that the applicant met all criteria, the authority continued to raise concerns about the applicant's sexual orientation, citing a restrictive interpretation of family roles and the absence of a maternal role model.

## FOREIGN POLICY

In January, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán asserted that Hungary's economy is robust enough to function independently of EU funds. He downplayed concerns that the country's access to these funds is contingent upon adherence to the rule of law.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

On May 11, the Prizma Trans Community successfully organised the second Trans Pride in Budapest. The event took place without any counter-demonstration and welcomed around 250 participants.

In June, the 29th Budapest Pride Festival took place, with organisers pledging to continue their opposition to the government's anti-LGBTI policies. Although the event faced minor provocations, Budapest Mayor Gergely Karácsony, alongside representatives from the liberal Momentum party, the socialist-democrat DK party, and U.S. Ambassador David Pressman, spoke on stage.

In July, a municipality-affiliated venue in Debrecen, with the assistance of Hungarian Civil Liberties Union, attempted to block the second Pink Piknik, an LGBTI event, organised by CivisColors. However, the event proceeded without difficulties. The police were cooperative and professional.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In December 2023, the Act on the protection of national sovereignty was passed. In February 2024, the Sovereignty Protection Office was set up with the ability to carry out investigations relating to 'any activity that is foreign-funded and that may influence the outcome of elections, the will of voters or supports such activities'. In October, the European Commission decided to launch an infringement procedure against Hungary, identifying that the law violates several fundamental rights enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights: the right to respect for private and family life, the freedom of expression and information, the freedom of association, the right to legal professional privilege, as well as the presumption of innocence, which implies the right not to incriminate oneself.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## HEALTH

Hungarian authorities started to enforce existing criminal sanctions on unauthorised trade of medications against people ordering PrEP online. Access to PrEP in Hungary is very limited as the medication can only be prescribed by a few specialists and users need to pay the full list price, which is four-to-five times higher than abroad.

Following the ban on legal gender recognition in 2020, access to trans-specific healthcare has become significantly more difficult, and was only offered one by a public hospital and private health provider outside the capital. In August, the hospital cancelled a trans patient's appointment, arguing the hospital is no longer treating patients with a 'transsexualism' diagnosis. Legal proceedings are being considered.

The Hungarian LGBTI Medicine Society launched a campaign for health professionals to wear a rainbow pin to communicate to patients that they are LGBTI inclusive. Nearly 400 professionals participated in the initiative.

The LGBTI Section of the Hungarian Psychological Association published the Hungarian version of the American Psychological Association's Guidelines for Psychological Practice with Sexual Minority Persons and held several training sessions for professionals on its implementation.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The European Parliament decided to challenge the European Commission's decision to release €10 billion in frozen assets to Hungary. The Parliament argued that the release was a concession to blackmail by Hungary, which had threatened to block EU accession talks with Ukraine, undermining efforts to address Hungary's deteriorating rule of law, including issues related to academic freedom and LGBTI rights.

In November, the Court of Justice of the European Union held a hearing in the infringement case brought by the European Commission against Hungary's legislation that restricts minors' access to information about the LGBTI community, deeming the law discriminatory and in violation of EU law, including Article 2 of the Treaty of the European Union. The procedure has been supported by 15 EU Member States and the European Parliament.

The UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief made an official visit to Hungary. As part of the visit, the Rapporteur also met with LGBTI activists discussing how religious teachings are instrumentalised to undermine LGBTI rights and the various forms of exclusion suffered by LGBTI believers and clergy.



## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

This year, 30 applications, representing over 88 clients, were submitted in 2024 before the European Court of Human Rights to reinstate legal gender recognition (LGR) in Hungary.

On June 3, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) held a hearing in the Deldits case (C-247/23). The case emerged from a request for preliminary ruling concerning the applicability of Article 16 of the GDPR in procedures for changing the gender marker of refugees. In September, the Advocate General of the CJEU stated that Hungarian immigration authorities must correct the gender marker of a trans person in national registers upon request, if it was incorrectly recorded. The trans man in question requested that his gender marker and name be updated in the national register under Article 16 of the EU GDPR, to reflect his gender identity.

In September, the Committee of Ministers issued decisions calling on the Hungarian government to adopt a quick, accessible and transparent procedure for LGR.

In October, the Budapest Court suspended the procedure concerning the applicability of Article 16 of the GDPR to correct the gender marker of a trans person of Hungarian nationality until the Deldits case is decided.

In November, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that Hungary violated Article 8 of the Convention on account of the lack of a regulatory framework on LGR, ensuring the right to respect for the private life of three Hungarian trans persons.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In June, Dávid Bedő from the Momentum Movement disclosed that the Speaker of the Hungarian Parliament blocked the approval of a conference focused on fundamental human rights, which would have included members of an LGBTI organisation.

In September, Válasz Online reported that high-ranking members of the ruling Fidesz party are aware of video and photo recordings showing Gergő Bese, a Catholic priest with close ties to the Orbán government, attending LGBTI parties, despite his public opposition to “LGBTI propaganda.” In an attempt to sever ties between Bese and the Orbán government, all the pictures that featured the priest were removed from governmental social media pages.

## PUBLIC OPINION

Háttér Society has commissioned a representative poll on public attitudes towards LGBTI people, with a special focus on LGBT women. According to the study, 49% are supportive of same-sex marriage, 72% of legal gender recognition, and 60% would allow

lesbian women access to assisted reproduction in healthcare institutions. Nonetheless, only 18% of respondents would rely on self-identification with regards to the access to bathrooms and changing rooms for trans people and 8% would allow intersex and trans women to continue playing in women’s sports. The study also highlighted that 62% of respondents would open a new category for intersex sportspeople.

## SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In a 2023 case regarding a trans woman’s access to preferential pensions for women, the Veszprém Regional Court in Hungary upheld the authorities’ practice of recognising her as a woman only for the period following her legal gender recognition, stating it was consistent with the law. A similar ruling was issued in another trans woman’s case in December 2024. The decisions are currently under judicial review.

In 2023, a trans woman’s case regarding access to preferential pensions for women was heard in court. The court upheld the authorities’ practice of recognising her as a woman only from the date of her legal gender recognition, stating that this was consistent with the law. A similar ruling was issued in another case involving a trans woman, G.V.A., in December 2024. In this case, the court dismissed her application for access to the “Women 40” pension benefit, which would allow her to retire after 40 years of work. These decisions are currently under judicial review.



MORE INFORMATION ON [WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG)

# ICELAND

## ASYLUM

In March, Iceland's Parliament passed an immigration bill imposing severe restrictions on the rights of asylum seekers, most notably by withdrawing access to housing and healthcare services 30 days after asylum applications have been denied. The bill also grants Iceland more latitude in applying the Dublin Regulation, which holds the first EU member state where an asylum application is made responsible for processing the claim, and permits the deportation of asylum seekers to that state if they apply elsewhere. The legislation has sparked significant backlash from human rights organisations, who argued that the bill will further marginalise LGBTI asylum seekers and other vulnerable categories by allowing, for instance, the physical examination of those seeking asylum.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The chairman of the Northwest District of the political party Lýðræðisflokkurinn (Democratic Party), Eldur S. Kristinsson, is facing a legal complaint for hate speech over comments made between 2022 and 2024. These remarks included a series of inflammatory and derogatory statements targeting the LGBTI community, such as accusations that LGBTI people groom children, labeling trans women as pedophiles, and promoting harmful rhetoric against LGBTI rights.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In 2024, eight reports of physical violence were recorded by LGBTI organisation Samtökin.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

On January 1st, a law banning conversion therapy for sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression took effect. The law was passed on the 9 June, 2023 with 53 out of parliamentarians voting in agreement.

## DATA COLLECTION

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour Market recently released a study conducted by University of Iceland's Social Science Research Institute, as part of the government's Action plan for LGBTI issues 2022-2025. The study, conducted by the SSRI, involved mapping the frequency and manifestations of domestic violence and violence in intimate relationships of queer people. The survey found that young LGBTI people are more likely to have witnessed physical violence in their home, to have been subjected to physical violence in their home, and to have been subjected to physical violence in an intimate relationship. A fairly high percentage had also experienced such behavior at the hands of parents, but a lower percentage had experienced emotional abuse at the hands of a current partner or other family member.

## EDUCATION

During a meeting with the National Youth Council of Iceland, as part of Iceland's Parliamentary election campaign in November, two parties claimed to be against education on LGBTI topics. LGBTI-inclusive education was also the subject of criticism by the leader of the Centre Party, Sigmundur Davíð Gunnlaugsson.

## EMPLOYMENT

A new study conducted by three unions revealed that the annual salaries of LGBTI men are, on average, 30% lower than those of their heterosexual counterparts. The study also found that only about half of the respondents are fully open about their sexual orientation at work, and nearly 60% report a general disadvantage in terms of conditions and rights in the labour market.

In October, Registers Iceland became the first institution to receive the Hinsegin certification from Samtökin '78, followed by the engineering office LOTA in November, and Ölgerðin earlier this year. This growing recognition highlights a shift towards workplaces taking tangible steps to ensure equal treatment and respect for all genders and sexual orientations. The Hinsegin certification, grounded in diversity education, assesses how effectively workplaces foster an inclusive environment, marking an important move toward more inclusive and equitable workplaces.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In late June, Hinsegin Vesturland held the 4th edition of the West Iceland LGBTI Festival in the town of Borgarnes. Similarly, Hinsegin dagar í Hrísey, in the north of Iceland, also held a LGBTI festival in the same period. In August, the Family Rainbow Festival (Regnbogahátíð), held by Hinsegin Austurland in Seyðisfjörður, celebrated 10 years of Pride in the east of Iceland. Reykjavík Pride was celebrated for the 25th time, and the newly elected President of Iceland, Halla Tómasdóttir, addressed the crowd.

## HEALTH

In October the Minister of Health made changes to regulations regarding blood donations. From July 2025 blood donations for men who have sex with men (MSM) will be allowed following a nucleic acid testing (NAT) to screen for HIV, Hepatitis B, and Hepatitis C. Iceland had previously been one of the few European countries to uphold a ban on blood donations for MSM.

Analysis of the data from the Icelandic Youth Survey showed that young people who identify as genderqueer or "other gender" are more likely than cisgender teens to have witnessed physical violence in their home, to have been subjected to physical violence in their home, and to have been subjected to physical

violence in an intimate relationship. Furthermore, the data from the Icelandic Youth Survey highlighted that 15-20% of Icelandic children and youth identify as LGBTI.

## **INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT**

Guðrún Karls Helgudóttir, the incoming Bishop of Iceland, the church's past on the LGBTI community, underlining the debt owed by the church to LGBTI people.



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# IRELAND

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In May, the Irish energy company SSE Airtricity partnered with the League of Ireland and LGBT Ireland to raise awareness for the National LGBTI Helpline during football matches nationwide, in anticipation of Pride month.

In September, Outhouse, in partnership with Bank of Ireland, launched a series of financial wellbeing workshops at its Dublin centre. The initiative came after a Bank of Ireland survey revealed that fewer than half of LGBTI people feel secure about their financial future over the next year. Additionally, according to the survey, only 59% of LGBTI respondents believed they could cover unexpected expenses, compared to 62% of heterosexuals, and 25% of LGBTI respondents felt they could raise over €3,000 for an emergency, compared to 29% of heterosexuals.

## ASYLUM

In January, Minister for Justice Helen McEntee announced that Algeria would be added to Ireland's list of 'safe countries' of origin for asylum seekers, despite its anti-LGBTI laws.

In June, the Irish High Court upheld the International Protection Appeal Tribunal's decision to refuse a Ghanaian man's application for refugee status and subsidiary protection. The man had claimed persecution due to his sexual orientation, asserting that he was openly gay and had faced discrimination in Ghana, where homophobic attacks are common. Nonetheless, the tribunal found his account to be lacking in credibility, citing issues with his narrative, including his portrayal of his relationship and realisation of his sexual orientation, which, in the tribunal's view, allegedly lacked emotional depth and common experiences associated with such a process. Further, despite the applicant's assertions of having been attacked three times in his home country, the tribunal ruled that his conduct in living openly as gay in such a hostile context would be "unexpected and unusual."

In August, Taoiseach Simon Harris and Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth Roderic O'Gorman voiced their commitment to passing hate crime legislation before the end of the current government's term. Their statement followed the publication of a report highlighting a surge in threats and physical attacks against asylum seekers in Dublin, many of whom are living in tents on the streets. In late October, the Dáil passed the 'hate crime' bill with a majority vote of 78 to 52, clearing the way for President Michael D. Higgins to sign it into law. (See also under Bias-Motivated Speech.)

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In June, LGBT Ireland reported a significant increase in threatening and abusive calls, observing a rise in LGBTI-phobic threats and discriminatory prank calls.

In September, Irish Minister for Justice Helen McEntee announced that the government would remove the "incitement to violence and hatred" component of the Criminal Justice Bill due to a lack of cross-party consensus on the scope of the bill. Having successfully passed its final stage in the Dáil in April 2023, the bill encountered some setbacks as some supporters, including members of Sinn Féin, have reconsidered their initial stance, citing concerns over potential infringements on freedom of expression. In late October, the Dáil passed the amended bill with a majority vote of 78 to 52, clearing the way for President Michael D. Higgins to sign it into law. Although the amended version does not include protections against hate speech, it will enforce stricter penalties for crimes motivated by an individual's protected characteristics, including gender identity and sexual orientation. (See also under Bias-Motivated Violence.)

In October, the Irish media regulator Coimisiún na Meán published the new Online Safety Code, setting binding standards for social media companies to enhance user protection in Ireland. The code explicitly bans content promoting terrorism, cyberbullying, self-harm methods, and any incitement to violence or hatred, and applies to all video-sharing platforms with European headquarters in Ireland, including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Udemy, TikTok, LinkedIn, X, Pinterest, Tumblr, and Reddit.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In late May, a woman was beaten unconscious by a soldier under the influence of alcohol after she asked him to stop hurling homophobic slurs at bystanders. He was given a fully suspended sentence for the unprovoked assault. The perpetrator's guilty plea did not result in a prison sentence, raising concerns about the severity of the response to the attack.

In June, three gay men walking in Dublin's Phoenix Park were pursued by six men wielding knives in what they reported as a targeted attack due to their sexual orientation. After the incident, the Garda National Diversity and Integration Unit collaborated with LGBTI organisations to support the victims. The investigation eventually led to the identification and arrest of a teenager involved in the incident.

Following the announcement that the hate speech provisions of the Criminal Justice Bill would be dropped, the Irish Department of Justice confirmed that the remaining hate crime legislation would still include protections for trans and non-binary people. (See more under Bias-Motivated Speech.)

In December, three individuals were convicted of public order offenses after disrupting a drag storytime event in Tralee, Kerry, in July 2023. Two of the accused also received common assault convictions when they appeared before Tralee District Court.

During the event, a group stormed the event, live streaming their disruption and assaulting event organisers and a security guard. Volunteers were also verbally abused.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In June, leading mental health organisations in Ireland and LGBT Ireland, as the chair of the banning conversion practices [coalition](#), issued a [joint memorandum](#) rejecting conversion therapy.

In August, the Sinn Féin party openly [declared](#) its support to the UK-led temporary suspension of puberty blockers for children and young people in Northern Ireland. In response, activists from several LGBTI organisations gathered outside the party's headquarters in Dublin to protest the party's support of the ban.

## DATA COLLECTION

In January, LGBT Ireland released a [shadow report](#) evaluating the National LGBTI Inclusion Strategy. The report highlighted success in areas such as integration and family matters, but underscored shortcomings on issues like the timely access to healthcare for trans people.

A [study](#) conducted by insurance broker Reassured placed Ireland in the top ten best countries for LGBTI residents.

[Research](#) released in June revealed that 20% of LGBTI people in Ireland's Midlands feel unsafe. The study, commissioned by the Midlands LGBTI Project and funded by Healthy Laois, examines both the advancements and persisting issues faced by LGBTI people in counties including Laois, Offaly, Westmeath, and Kildare.

[Research](#) from University of Limerick and Belong To showed a willingness amongst primary school staff to be LGBTI inclusive but limited knowledge about how to translate inclusivity into practice. (See also under Education)

Associate Professor Dr. Aideen Quilty in collaboration with Belong To, and with funding from the Community Foundation Ireland, conducted a [research study](#) on trans and non-binary people's access to gender-affirming care and healthcare related to gender identity in Ireland. The research highlighted critical barriers to accessing trans healthcare, revealing that essential services are effectively unavailable for many in this community. Key findings showed that one in three trans adults had to wait at least three years for an initial appointment, while only 14% of trans youth were able to successfully access trans healthcare in Ireland.

[Research](#) from RESIST highlighted a rise in organised attacks and threats against LGBTI people and organisations in Ireland. The research pointed to a critical juncture for LGBTI communities,

who are reportedly the second most targeted group for hate crimes and hate-related incidents in the country.

The [Census Pilot Survey](#), launched by the Civil Service Organisation (CSO), was conducted throughout September, introducing new questions related to mental health, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

## EDUCATION

This year 45 post-primary schools stepped up to work with Belong To, to create a safe space for LGBTI students in Ireland's first whole-school community safe and supportive schools project, the LGBTI Quality Mark.

In May, the 'Belong to Primary: New Foundations for LGBTQ+ Inclusivity in Primary Schools' research, conducted by Belong To in partnership with the University of Limerick, highlighted a gap between the willingness of school staff to be LGBTI inclusive and their confidence in how to do so. The research involved over 1,000 primary educators with a view to assessing the knowledge levels, views and professional needs of primary school staff in Ireland regarding LGBTI inclusivity.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In March, Sport Ireland released an [advisory document](#) aimed at guiding sporting bodies on policies for trans and non-binary athletes. The document notably emphasised the need for national governing bodies to proactively develop policies for the inclusion of trans and non-binary people in sports.

In June, LGBTI activists [marched](#) in Dublin to oppose instances of anti-trans rhetoric, advocating against misinformation about trans healthcare.

A [report](#) by UCD's School of Information and Communication Studies, supported by LGBT Ireland and the trade union Fórsa, highlights the impact of anti-LGBTI library demonstrations on the staff of these establishments. Since 2022, a coordinated campaign by anti-LGBTI agitators, opposed to the presence of LGBTQ+ reading material, has targeted public libraries across Ireland. These protests have led to harassment of library staff, with many reporting feeling unsafe and being verbally abused, including being called "paedophiles" or "groomers."

## FAMILY

In January, the Labour party introduced a new [bill](#), aimed at addressing legal gaps and ensuring equality by targeting key issues in the legal framework affecting same-sex families. In June, the Irish Dáil approved the [Assisted Human Reproduction Bill](#), which addresses surrogacy and family relationships, and

was signed into law in July. In October, the Irish Government agreed to introduce a second [Bill](#) aimed at addressing remaining gaps in existing legislation. Minister for Health Stephen Donnelly secured approval to draft amendments to the current Assisted Human Reproduction Act, focusing on providing legal clarity for Irish residents and citizens who undergo donor-assisted human reproduction (DAHR) procedures abroad. This legislation seeks to ensure that families formed through these procedures outside of Ireland are afforded the same legal recognition and protections as those established within the country, addressing concerns about legal parentage and other associated rights.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In June, Wicklow Pride was forced to [cancel](#) an event for young LGBTI people due to threats from protesters. The organisers later announced that the event would be postponed until a safer location was secured; however, it has not yet taken place.

## HEALTH

In March, following England's NHS decision to discontinue routine prescriptions of puberty blockers to children, Ireland's HSE announced its own plans to conduct a [clinical trial](#) to evaluate the use of these blockers in trans healthcare.

Following the release of the Cass Review in the UK, Senator Michael McDowell called for an [immediate halt to the prescription of puberty blockers](#) in Ireland's public health service.

In April, Trinity College Dublin and Belong To released the findings of '[Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland](#)' the largest study on the mental health and wellbeing of the LGBTI population in Ireland to date. The survey underscored that the wellbeing of the LGBTI population has significantly decreased since 2016, with a 17% increase in symptoms of severe depression, and a 30% increase in symptoms of severe anxiety.

In late September, members and allies of the trans and intersex community [gathered](#) outside the Dáil in Dublin, demanding urgent reforms to the Irish healthcare system. The rally, organised by Transgress The NGS, drew participants from various activist groups, seeking to pressure the Health Service Executive and the National Gender Service to address significant barriers faced by trans and intersex people in accessing medical care.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In April, Joe O'Brien, the Minister of State for Community Development, Integration, and Charities, [announced](#) that 18 projects would be awarded funding through the National Integration Fund 2023.

Duncan Smith, Labour TD for Dublin Fingal, has [criticised](#) Health Minister Stephen Donnelly for failing to engage with trans

advocacy groups. Smith also called for an engagement of trans advocacy groups in the appointment of the clinical lead for the National Gender Service's new care model.

In May, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth announced the development of a new [strategy](#) to succeed the National LGBTI Inclusion Strategy. The upcoming strategy aims to establish multilevel [consultation processes](#) with interested community members to enhance LGBTI inclusion, safeguard rights, and improve the overall quality of life for LGBTI people.

In June, the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration, and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman, [unveiled](#) €1.3 million in funding to support LGBTI communities and launched the 2024 LGBTI Community Services Funding Call. This financial commitment is part of a broader effort to advance equality in Ireland, with an emphasis on new national strategies aimed at supporting LGBTI inclusion. The announcement included a 62% increase in funding for LGBTI initiatives, aimed at strengthening the national LGBTI infrastructure. Additionally, the budget of the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission has been increased by €1.021 million. In December, the Department [announced](#) the allocation of funding to 24 LGBTI projects under the 2024 LGBTI Community Services Funding Call and the LGBTI Youth Fund. A total of €1,398,916 will be distributed to support various organisations across Ireland.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In October, Health Minister Stephen Donnelly announced an [expansion](#) of the free IVF scheme as part of the upcoming budget. The expansion will focus on enabling couples who require donor assistance—those in need of donor eggs or sperm—to access publicly funded IVF, and on expanding the scheme to include couples experiencing secondary infertility, where couples who already have a child face difficulties in conceiving again.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In Ireland's recent general election, eight LGBTI TDs (Members of Parliament) were elected to the Dáil, marking the highest number of LGBTI representatives in the country's history.

In October, far-right agitators in Ireland were [reported](#) to be planning a campaign to gather LGBTI books from libraries across the country and burn them, as indicated in posts shared on Facebook. The individuals involved are believed to be the same group that previously targeted libraries, harassing staff and threatening to destroy LGBTI literature.

In November, 18 LGBTI organisations in Ireland [launched](#) a manifesto urging election candidates to commit to LGBTI rights.

Key priorities included strengthening rights, investing in health, and tackling hate speech. In response, political parties like Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Sinn Féin, and the Green Party expressed varying levels of support, with commitments on healthcare, anti-bullying, and trans rights.

A Presbyterian minister in Dublin, resigned after facing multiple disciplinary actions linked to her support for the LGBTI community. She had previously been censured in 2021 for allowing a same-sex married man to serve as a council member. In 2023, she participated in a religious service with LGBTI Christians for RTÉ's Pride coverage, leading to further complaints and a formal rebuke from the church.

## PUBLIC OPINION

In March, after two recent referendums – one concerning legal definition of family in the Constitution and one concerning the introduction of more inclusive language in the definition of family duties – were rejected, Fine Gael Minister of State Peter Burke stated that the government must assess whether the views of campaigning NGOs reflect those of broader Irish society. Burke pointed out the significant involvement of state-funded organisations in promoting the 'Yes' votes in both campaigns.

In April, research from Trinity College Dublin and Belong To shared that public attitudes towards the LGBTI community in Ireland are mostly positive, with areas for consideration including one fifth of adults agreeing that being LGB is a phase, a choice, or that people can be convinced to be LGB, and 19% stating that accepting trans people is difficult.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

A student who assaulted a gay couple and directed homophobic slurs at them while involved in a dispute with his girlfriend has been given a two-and-a-half-year prison term, suspended entirely on the condition that he remains law-abiding during this time.

Irish former Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Leo Varadkar suggested that Ireland might need to adopt policies akin to Scotland's regarding the housing of trans women in prisons.

## SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In September, the Professional Association for Trans Health Ireland (PATHI) was officially launched. Funded by the Irish Research Council, PATHI is a new multidisciplinary organisation that brings together professionals from various fields, including healthcare, law, policy, advocacy, community organising, and education, all working towards advancing the health, rights, and wellbeing of trans and gender-diverse communities in Ireland.



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# ITALY

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In June, a gay couple in Modena was denied a rental home because the landlord specified a preference for a 'traditional family' consisting of a man, woman, and child.

## ASYLUM

In May, the list of "safe countries of origin," which allows for an expedited and more restrictive asylum process, was updated to include four additional countries where homosexuality is criminalised: Bangladesh, Cameroon, Egypt, and Sri Lanka.

In October, with the approval of the new immigration decree, Cameroon and Nigeria were removed from the list of "safe countries". This means that the current list of "safe countries" features nine countries that criminalise homosexuality, with no exceptions provided for at-risk groups such as LGBTI people: Bangladesh, Egypt, Sri Lanka, Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Ghana, and The Gambia.

In October, a court in Bologna referred the question of the definition of 'safe countries of origin' to the European Court of Justice, requesting the Court to establish whether a country that is overall safe for its general population can be considered safe even if it perpetuates discrimination against specific minorities.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Italy's Family Minister Eugenia Roccella criticised the declaration promoting European policies in favor of LGBT+ communities. She argued that the document's advocacy for self-identification and fluidity in gender is an "ideological constraint" and a denial of the "inherent reality of biological sex." Roccella emphasised her belief in maintaining "gender binarism," asserting that there are only men and women.

During the Olympics, a hate campaign targeted Algerian boxer Imane Khelif, while some public figures and politicians attacked trans athlete Valentina Petrillo for her participation in the Paralympics.

In Milan, homophobic graffiti targeting a teacher appeared on the walls of a middle school five times in nine months.

In September, a teacher in Treviso was insulted by a student on grounds of his sexual orientation. Although the teacher filed a complaint against the pupil for insulting a public official, the court dismissed the case due to the fact that sexual orientation does not constitute protected grounds in hate speech legislation.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

This year saw a troubling increase in the number and geographic spread of bias-motivated violence against LGBTI people in Italy compared to 2023, with incidents reported almost monthly.

In January, six youths were surrounded and beaten by a group of 12 people in Palermo, Italy, in a homophobic attack.

In March, two young men riding a scooter stopped, insulted and then assaulted another young man in Scampia, in the province of Naples. The two attackers shouted homophobic slurs at the victim before assaulting him.

In May, a 22-year-old man in Milan was attacked and stabbed for being gay. In Salero, Samir, a 32 year-old man of Honduran descent, was physically assaulted and was subjected to homophobic slurs.

In June, a gay couple was cornered and assaulted by three men and a woman in Rome after their attackers noticed they were holding hands. The attackers have since expressed remorse, claiming that the confrontation stemmed from a traffic dispute rather than discriminatory or homophobic motives.

In June, a makeup artist was attacked in Foggia, while, in Rome, two young men subjected an activist and leader of the Gay Party to insults before physically assaulting and threatening him.

In July, on Pride night in Cagliari, an individual was threatened with a knife, kicked, and punched in a homophobic attack, while during Naples Pride, two girls suffered head injuries as a result of an LGBTI-phobic assault.

In August, a boy walking with his partner in Turin was punched in the face by a group of strangers.

In August, two trans women were approached and attacked by a group of about ten young men in Castiglione in Teverina, in the Viterbo province. Despite the attack occurring in a busy square, none of the bystanders intervened to assist the victims or halt the violence.

In September, a 33-year-old gay man from Palermo, Sicily, took his own life, overwhelmed by the fear of being judged and discriminated against.

In September, a drag artist was attacked in Turin while walking arm-in-arm with his boyfriend, causing him to be taken to hospital.

In September, a 42-year-old man in Cremona was subjected to homophobic insults before being struck in the face with a can.



In November, Italian content creator Sespo [reported](#) being attacked while walking on the streets of Milan.

## DATA COLLECTION

In May, a [survey](#) conducted by the universities of Verona and Pavia highlighted dissenting opinions on LGBTI rights across the Italian respondents. The survey revealed that 56.3% of Italians believe Parliament made a mistake by rejecting the Zan bill in 2021, the bill aimed to extend anti-discrimination protections to include sexual orientation, gender identity, and disability. The majority (59.7%) support simplifying the process for changing one's gender marker on official documents. 83.4% agree with recognising unions between people of the same sex. Yet, there is a split on how this recognition should be implemented: 56.8% support extending marriage rights to same-sex couples, while 26.6% stated a preference for civil unions.

In July, the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) published a [book](#) with their data on the ISTAT-UNAR project (2018-2023) concerning labour discrimination towards LGBTI individuals and diversity policy.

The results of a [study](#) on gynaecological health and LGBTI identities conducted by Coming-Out LGBTI+ Community Centre of Pavia and UNAR were published in September. The survey revealed a lack of adequate training on gender nonconforming identities and orientations, which precludes essential services to a substantial portion of the population.

## EDUCATION

In May, Laura Ravetto from the Lega Nord party introduced a [bill](#) aimed at banning the teaching of "gender theories" in schools.

In September, the Culture Committee of the Chamber of Deputies approved a [resolution](#) introduced by Rossano Sasso of the party Lega, [calling](#) on the government to exclude any content related to what is referred to as "gender ideology" in schools.

In October, the Undersecretary for Education, Rossano Sasso, [requested the closure of a course](#) at the University of Sassari on gender and queer theories. Undersecretary Sasso accused the University of Sassari of promoting "gender ideology" with public funds. The case also reached the Italian Parliament, leading to controversy.

In October, the association Provita e Famiglia and the political party Fratelli d'Italia criticised the University Aldo Moro of Bari, for hosting a [conference on same-sex parenting](#), for allegedly denying children's rights to both a mother and a father while promoting surrogacy. [Provita e Famiglia also](#) expressed outrage over the

involvement of the university's Rector, Stefano Bronzini, and the university's counselling centre, which connects students with local LGBTI associations. Additionally, the association called on the Minister of University and Research, Anna Maria Bernini, to intervene and prevent Italian universities from using funds for political and ideological purposes.

## EMPLOYMENT

In September, Italy's Minister of University and Research, Anna Maria Bernini, requested an inquiry into whether a [research project](#) on trans and gender-creative children (ages 7-14) met the requirements of the public call won by one of the researchers at the University of Roma Tre earlier in 2024. The request came amidst a wave of hate speech and death threats targeting the two researchers—a cisgender woman at the University of Roma Tre and a non-binary person from the University of Bologna—sparked by certain political parties and anti-gender movements. The backlash extended to the researchers' universities, with accusations of promoting "gender ideology" and demands for institutional action against them. In [response](#), several associations and the Rector of the University of Roma Tre publicly defended academic freedom and condemned the attacks.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In January, a [statement](#) from the Ministry of Education addressing the Holocaust Remembrance Day failed to mention the persecution of LGBTI people.

In March, Italy voted against a European Commission regulation aimed at guaranteeing the cross-border recognition of same-sex parents.

In May, during the traditional spring assembly with Italian bishops, Pope Francis [reiterated](#) his stance against admitting gay men to seminaries. He reportedly expressed concerns about what he described as an inappropriate atmosphere within the Church, urging bishops to exclude LGBTI people from seminaries.

In June, the Puglia region enacted new [legislation](#) introducing structural measures to ensure equal rights for LGBTI people and address discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity.

In October, Senator Ivan Scalfarotto [revisited](#) the case of a prison police officer who faced discrimination in his workplace, the Vercelli prison. The officer was subjected to workplace discrimination by his colleagues and a prison inspector due to statements made by inmates about his perceived sexual orientation. After receiving such statements – which were later retracted – the inspector subjected the victim to a psychological

evaluation and reported him to his superiors. While the Regional Administrative Court awarded the victim compensation, the issue remains unresolved, with the disciplinary proceeding against the inspector still pending and a parliamentary question being submitted by the Italia Viva Party on his qualifications and professional background.

## FAMILY

The Court of Bergamo ruled against the National Institute for Social Services (INPS) for failing to allow same-parent families to apply for parental leave, citing this as an unjustified discrimination against same-sex parents. INPS was given two months to update its portal accordingly. However, instead of complying, the institute appealed the ruling and did not modify its IT system for handling administrative requests.

In February, the Court of Appeal of Milan ruled that only the biological mother can be recognised on the birth certificates of children of same-sex couples, obliging the non-biological parent to pursue adoption for legal recognition. Earlier, the court had invalidated the registration of a birth certificate for a child born to a male couple via surrogacy, deeming it illegitimate. However, this ruling established that even in cases where women use assisted reproduction, only the biological mother is entitled to be listed on the birth certificate. A few days later, the Court of Appeal of Brescia took a contrasting stance. In the ruling, the court upheld the validity of the birth certificate for a child with two mothers, arguing that an “evolutionary interpretation” of existing laws is necessary to address the gaps in legal protection for children.

In February, the Court of Appeal of Rome ruled against the Ministry of the Interior, who in 2019 put out a decree mandating the use of the terms ‘mother’ and ‘father’ on documents. The court ruled that electronic identity cards for minors should reflect the actual family structure by using “parents” or a similar inclusive term.

In March, the Padua court upheld the validity of birth certificates recognising children as having two mothers. In doing so, the court rejected a previous appeal from the Prosecutor’s Office that sought to erase the legal recognition of non-biological mothers or those who had not given birth. The decision emphasised that protecting the minors’ legal status and familial recognition takes precedence over the Prosecutor’s appeal.

In June, the Lucca court raised a constitutional question regarding articles 8 and 9 of Law 40/2004 and article 250 of the Civil Code, which currently limit legal parenthood status to the biological parent by excluding the non-biological mother from the birth records of children born through IVF. The deliberation was anticipated for early December 2024, but no official statements or rulings have been released to date.

In June, the Ministry of the Interior and the Venice Attorney General’s Office filed a complaint with the Venice Court of Appeal against the 39 decrees of the civil judges in Padua. In July, the Venice Court of Appeal “froze” the proceedings in Padua, pending the Constitutional Court’s decision on a similar case in Lucca.

In July, the Constitutional Court affirmed the status of de facto cohabitants as full family members, declaring Article 230-bis of the civil code unconstitutional.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## FOREIGN POLICY

In June, Italy refused to support an open letter produced by the United States and already signed by 37 diplomatic representations denouncing LGBTI discrimination in Hungary.

In November, in response to the state-sponsored dissolution of national organisations addressing LGBTI issues in Argentina, 30 Western ambassadors united under the “Diplomats for Diversity” initiative, signing a statement affirming their support for the LGBTI community. Notably, Italy’s Ambassador to Argentina, Fabrizio Lucentini, did not sign this appeal.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In October, a 15-year-old boy, bullied and subjected to physical violence by classmates because of assumptions about his sexual orientation, decided to take his own life. According to testimonies, the students taunted him and hit him in the genitals.

## HEALTH

In January, the Minister of Health launched an investigation into the Careggi Hospital in Florence, following a request by Senator Maurizio Gasparri from Forza Italia party, regarding the use of triptorelin, a hormone blocker, for trans youth. The investigation threatens access to this life-saving treatment and risks shutting down one of the country’s only services for trans adolescents.

## HOUSING

In May, a LGBTI co-housing refuge was established by the Gay Centre Association in Rome, marking the third LGBTI shelter in the capital. This refuge will accommodate up to three LGBTI youths

who have experienced violence and discrimination.

In December, the [National Network of LGBTQIA+ Anti-Discrimination Centre](#) was officially established during the “Spazio ai Cad” initiative. The two-day event, held on December 7 and 8, took place at Cassero in Bologna as part of the La Violenza Illustrata Festival.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In March, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe released a [report](#) underscoring the trend of ultra-conservative governments exploiting LGBTI people to bolster their political standing under the guise of defending “traditional values.” The report urged governments and authorities, among them Italy, to develop and fund public awareness campaigns and training programs to better educate the public about the rights and experiences of LGBTI people.

In April, the European Parliament [denounced](#) the rise of anti-LGBTI rhetoric within some European governments, expressing concern about how such rhetoric undermines global efforts towards the universal decriminalisation of LGBTI identities.

In July, [UNAR](#) finally issued a call for the selection of projects aimed at establishing or strengthening centres against discrimination motivated by sexual orientation or gender identity

In October, the Council of Europe [expressed concern](#) about the rise of hate speech and xenophobia in Italy, urging the government to adopt a plan to combat racism. After five years of monitoring the human rights situation in the country, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published a [report](#) highlighting an increase in xenophobic rhetoric in public discourse, particularly directed at refugees, immigrants, and LGBTI people.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The municipality of Turin introduced a [policy](#) allowing trans and non-binary people to use their chosen name on the GTT public transport card, aligning with their gender identity rather than their registered name.

In July, the Constitutional Court, answering the referral of a local court, [ruled](#) the request for legal gender recognition of non-binary people inadmissible but has called on Parliament to address the issue legislatively.

In July, the Constitutional Court [declared](#) unconstitutional the obligation imposed on trans people who want to undergo gender

reassignment surgery to ask for authorisation from the court.

In August, Augusto Barbera, President of the Constitutional Court, [reiterated](#) that parliament should address the legal status of children of same-sex couples and recognise non-binary gender identities.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In November, the headquarters of the Mario Mieli Homosexual Culture Circle in Rome were [vandalised](#) with homophobic graffiti on its rainbow-coloured ramp. Lara Ghiglione, secretary of the CGIL, [expressed](#) dismay, stating that the attack confirmed once more the hostile climate in the country for LGBTI people.

In December, an [LGBT+ Jubilee](#) event organised by La Tenda di Gionata was removed from the Vatican’s official website without explanation. A Vatican official later clarified that its prior inclusion did not imply official support from the Holy See.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In April, Italy’s Prime Minister condemned [surrogate parenthood](#) as an “inhuman” practice. As part of her intervention, she also urged parliament to advance a bill that would criminalise Italians who travel abroad for surrogacy, which is already illegal in Italy and punishable by jail and fines.

In June, the Lega Nord party proposed an [amendment](#) to a bill that aims to prohibit surrogacy, even when conducted abroad. The bill proposed the introduction of imprisonment ranging from 4 to 10 years and fines between €600,000 and €2 million for those involved in surrogacy. In October, [the bill was signed into law](#), allowing surrogacy to fall under the umbrella of “universal crimes”, a type of offence which typically applies to crimes like genocide or human trafficking, and [extending](#) penalties to Italian citizens who seek surrogacy abroad. The legislation, [approved](#) with 84 votes in favor and 58 against, ended up imposing fines ranging from €600,000 to €1 million and prison sentences from three months to two years. The law has sparked significant [controversy](#), particularly among human rights groups, who argue that the law unfairly targets same-sex couples and infringes on personal freedoms.



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# KAZAKHSTAN

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In January, a petition was initiated by a group of 135 Kazakhstani parents to ban or restrict Kazakhstan's first website dedicated to Selftanu, which aimed to share resources for LGBTI youth. In February, the Ministry of Culture and Information announced the banning of the website. The Ministry claimed that the measure was enacted to protect children's rights and to align with Kazakhstan's cultural and traditional values.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In February, the creators of the Selftanu website reported receiving numerous threats and bias-motivated speech, both from within Kazakhstan, and from Russia.

In May, the statement posted by the U.S. Embassy in Kazakhstan celebrating International LGBTI Rights Day was met with significant backlash by Kazakhstani authorities, according to NewTimes.kz.

In October, Rinat Zaitov, a member of Kazakhstan's Majilis and the AMANAT party, called for a ban on 'LGBTI propaganda' in the country, describing the LGBTI and feminist communities as enemies seeking to "poison" the nation. In a parliamentary inquiry addressed to the Prosecutor General and the Chairman of the National Security Committee, Zaitov condemned LGBTI activism as a "villainous organisation" that he claimed was corrupting the youth through its propaganda. Prime Minister Olzhas Bektenov responded to the inquiry by declaring that the government of Kazakhstan is set to conduct a study on the social, psychological, and medical impact of the LGBTI movement on young people. The prime minister also noted that organisations such as Kaleidoscope, Feminita, and KazFem, which work on LGBTI rights, have faced legal challenges, including administrative responsibility for holding unapproved public actions.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Over 80 cases of bias-motivated violence and discrimination against LGBTI people were documented in the time period from August 2023 to August 2024. Verbal violence, including hate speech, blackmail, outing and threats of outing, was most prevalent. In approximately 21% of cases, the injured person suffered material damage; in about 15%, physical damage. About 17% of the offences were linked to so-called "hate groups", including local anti-gender or xenophobic movements and other similar associations.

A trend of so-called fake dates was recorded, where an LGBTI person was lured into meeting a potential partner online, and was physically attacked upon meeting them. In five cases, attempts were made to extort money, as the injured party was blackmailed

by the fact that their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (SOGI) would be revealed to relatives and on the internet. One victim managed to achieve partial justice in such a case in court in 2024, with several perpetrators from a larger group being held accountable.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

According to reports by Education Community, a young lesbian woman was stripped of her legal rights when she was falsely diagnosed with schizophrenia as a result of conversion therapy efforts by her mother. The woman's partner managed to obtain guardianship over her, but she was left dependent for several years until the legal opportunity came for medical re-evaluation.

## DATA COLLECTION

In April, Orda.kz released an interview with Victoria Primak, a trans rights activist, revealing the often-shared experience of the trans community in Kazakhstan with discrimination. According to Primak's documentation work, trans individuals are among the most vulnerable groups in the country, with over 80% of trans respondents reporting having experienced discrimination or violence due to their gender identity.

In July, research by the Alma-TQ initiative revealed numerous instances of discrimination and abuse from law enforcement towards trans and gender-diverse individuals, including blackmail, threats, and refusal to investigate complaints.

## EDUCATION

In approximately 7% of cases documented by Education Community, university administration and faculty members outed pupils on the basis of their personal bias and used the stigma surrounding the exposed SOGI of the victims as an excuse for abuse, including hate speech, violations of student privacy, and deliberate grade reduction.

## EMPLOYMENT

Trans people continue to face significant barriers in terms of employment. In September, a trans woman named Alice was fired from the hostel where she worked due to the owner and roommates suspecting her of being gay. Later, she was also denied housing in that same hostel.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In March, the government-organised National Quryltay (an informational congress of government-selected public figures) brought together politicians, economists, and cultural figures to address pressing societal issues in Kazakhstan. Among other issues some participants advocated for the introduction of a legislative ban on LGBTI representation.

In June, a petition to ban all forms of LGBTI ‘propaganda’ gathered enough signatures to be officially reviewed, as reported by El.kz and confirmed by the press service of the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan. In July, the working group reviewing the petition held its second meeting with representatives from the government. In response to an official media inquiry from The Village Kazakhstan, the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan defended the petition. The Ministry notably argued that the petition does not infringe upon human rights or advocate for discrimination and instead solely aims to limit children’s and adolescents’ exposure to information promoting “non-traditional family values.” Reports have surfaced that the petition’s success was orchestrated by coercive tactics among employees of public institutions. A schoolteacher and a nurse revealed receiving directives to sign the petition via group chats affiliated with the ruling political party. In August, a public discussion on the petition took place at Astana’s Kazmedia Centre, with interventions by government officials like that of a Ministry of Internal Affairs representative who attributed the rising crime rates to the online dissemination of information about sexual freedom.

## FAMILY

In an interview with Ulys Media, Askhat Aimagambetov, Deputy of the Majilis and Chairman of the Committee on Social and Cultural Development, shared insights on various pressing social issues in Kazakhstan. Notably, Aimagambetov cited LGBTI adoption rights as a contentious topic that he believes to be often instrumentalised to create divisions between society and the authorities.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In early March, the Nazarbayev University announced a ban on its yearly Women’s Day march. The decision followed an unofficial warning from the mayor’s office, which argued that such rallies promote non-traditional values like LGBTI rights, and potentially disrupt public order. Officials cited “threats to public safety” as one of the reasons for these refusals, approving instead another government-affiliated rally. Among various proposals, this rally also called for a ban on “feminist and LGBTI propaganda” and emphasised the need to protect traditional family values.

In October, Bagila Baltabayeva, the author of a petition against “LGBT propaganda” in Kazakhstan, attempted to disrupt the “Lesbian Kurultai” event in Almaty, organised by the Feminita movement. Law enforcement took both Feminita, as well as Baltabayeva and her associates, to the police station for questioning. Feminita leaders filed a statement accusing the disruptors of petty hooliganism, clarifying that the event was legally conducted and that they had not violated any laws.

In April, members of Parliament proposed a provision to officially

classify “LGBT propaganda” as a legitimate reason for banning peaceful assemblies if such gatherings were deemed to promote it. This proposal was later withdrawn, and no draft law has been submitted to introduce such an amendment.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In October, the feminist initiative Feminita organised a conference in Almaty. On the opening day, the booked venues were reportedly denied the bookings, allegedly due to a blacklist targeting Feminita. The group accused the Almaty Akimat (city administration) of pressuring businesses to cancel the event. Despite these challenges, the organisers managed to secure an alternative location. However, shortly after the event commenced, the power was cut off.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In July, the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, and the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to education urged the Kazakh

government to reject the petition requesting legislation capable of banning both visible and covert LGBTI “propaganda.” In a common statement, they argued that such legislation would breach Kazakhstan’s Administrative Procedural Code and international human rights obligations.

In April, during the 15th Annual Human Rights Dialogue between the EU and Kazakhstan, the EU addressed the treatment of LGBTI persons.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The media agency Mediazona reported that trans individuals in Kazakhstan still face significant obstacles in aligning their legal documents with their gender identity. The report indicated that such delays derive from outdated legal and medical practices like mandatory psychiatric evaluations, government approvals, and mandatory sex reassignment surgery.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In April, various LGBTI initiatives, including the Education Community, LBkeshter and Amirovki, ran a crowdfunding campaign to support victims of April floodings in Kazakhstan to improve intersectional collaboration and positive coverage of LGBTI community.

## PUBLIC OPINION

In February, members of the Zheltoksan 86 movement organised a protest in Almaty against LGBTI rights, calling on Kazakhstan to enact legislation banning LGBTI activities and to prevent upcoming LGBTI demonstrations.

In July, travel blogger and trans activist Devin Halbal visited Almaty and held a fan meeting, which drew a large crowd. Despite the support from many fans, the visit sparked controversy online.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In February, Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev enacted amendments to the country’s children’s rights legislation. These amendments aimed at barring LGBTI people from adopting or mentoring children and setting up specific psychological tests to assess the sexual orientation of potential mentors and adoptive parents.

In April, journalist Botagoz Omarova reported a series of police raids targeting LGBTI parties in Astana. Omarova detailed that during one weekend, around 70 individuals were detained at a police station, where they were reportedly coerced into providing statements. According to documentation reports, two raids in

Astana’s gay nightclub and a private LGBTI party in April resulted in the detention of approximately 300 people overall. Law enforcement officers forced the detainees to disclose sensitive personal information, including their sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI), under duress. During the raids, police also forced HIV tests in non-confidential settings, and coerced individuals to sign statements about their SOGI with no definite explanation about the data’s use. Despite fears of further persecution, 33 detainees from the Astana raids sought legal support, leading to an unprecedented collective appeal by 27 of them to challenge the police’s actions and a progressive ruling by the local prosecutor’s office in July.

In June, in a closed LGBTI chat on Telegram, an activist shared a video of themselves holding a Pride flag in one of the courtyards of Astana’s residential complexes. A day later, police officers visited the activist’s mother and asked her to contact them for an interrogation about the alleged theft of a bicycle in the courtyard. After continued disturbances, the activist met with the police, where they were interrogated by an unknown local akimat (mayor’s office) employee, shown the video, and warned of harsher punishment if their actions ever repeated.

In July 2024, a pre-trial investigation was launched by the Karasai District Police Department in response to a video featuring choreographer Alisher Sultanbekuly dancing in high heels inside a yurt. The video, which sparked significant outrage online, led to the investigation for incitement of social, national, or religious hatred, carrying a penalty of up to seven years in prison. Minister of Culture and Information Aida Balayeva warned that such content could divide society and threaten Kazakhstan’s cultural norms. Sultanbekuly’s video was widely discussed, particularly regarding the tension between freedom of expression and maintaining cultural traditions.

A similar case was recorded in August, when Aman Aubakirov – a high-heels dancer – was fined by police for hooliganism after performing a high-heels dance in an advertisement video. He was asked intrusive questions regarding his relationship status, sexual orientation, and police required him to write an explanatory note that the advertisement video was not created with the intention of “spreading LGBT propaganda”.



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# KOSOVO

## FAMILY

In April, Prime Minister Albin Kurti revealed plans to legalise same-sex partnerships as part of the country's bid to join the Council of Europe. Nonetheless, the Civil Code has remained stagnant since March 2022, with no progress on its submission to parliament.

In September, Eman Rrahmani and Visar Korenica, MPs from the ruling LVV party, decided to leave the party and form a new coalition called the "List for Family." This move is in protest of the Draft Civil Code, which they aim to block from being voted on, claiming that it would promote laws concerning the rights of LGBTI persons that would be 'unacceptable even for Europeans'.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In June, hundreds participated in Pristina's eighth Pride march, advocating for LGBTI rights in Kosovo.

Blert Morina from CEL emphasised this year's motto, "We have been, and we will be," underscoring the need for solidarity and a safe shelter for the LGBTI community.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In June, Prime Minister Albin Kurti reaffirmed Kosovo's commitment to democracy and equality during Pristina's yearly Pride march.



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# KYRGYZSTAN

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In 2023 and 2024, Kyrgyzstan adopted two discriminatory laws targeting the LGBTI community and restricting the activities of LGBTI organisations. These laws were introduced alongside a media campaign filled with homophobic and transphobic statements from Kyrgyz politicians. Multiple MPs expressed fears that initiatives such as a [bill](#) to guarantee equality and protection against discrimination, as well as Kyrgyzstan's [application](#) to a Global Fund program focused on HIV prevention, could potentially be indirectly to advance LGBTI rights.

## DATA COLLECTION

A report by Eurasian Coalition on Male Health (ECOM), which included data from their database and open-source analysis, revealed high levels of stigma and discrimination, particularly from law enforcement and healthcare workers, against LGBTI individuals. The findings highlighted numerous cases of abuse of power by police forces, leading LGBTI people to often avoid seeking justice due to fear of further victimisation. For what concerns healthcare, the report underscored multiple instances of healthcare workers engaging in discriminatory practices against LGBTI patients.

## FAMILY

In March, Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Labor, Social Security, and Migration released a [revised Family Code](#) for public review. The draft reinforces the Constitution's view that family is a societal cornerstone, emphasising protection for family, parenthood, and child development. It defines marriage as a voluntary union between a man and a woman over 18, explicitly barring same-sex marriages under Article 15 of the draft.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

On July 22, the Supreme Court [upheld](#) the lower court's decision to maintain the ban on peaceful rallies and protests, which was introduced in March 2022, rejecting an appeal by activists who sought to overturn it.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Since 2021, trans people in Kyrgyzstan have been unable to obtain legal recognition due to amendments made to the Law on Civil Acts. In 2024, the Kyrgyz government further restricted trans rights by adopting new amendments to existing laws, including changes to the Law "On the Protection of the Health of Citizens in the Kyrgyz Republic," specifically in Article 47, which concerns the "Change and Correction of Gender Identity." Under the new legislation, trans people can no longer undergo medical examination or treatment related to gender transition until the age of 25. Previously, individuals could begin the process at 18.

In November, Kyrgyzstan's Ministry of Health proposed a [draft regulation](#) on the medical examination of trans people. The draft regulation, now open for public discussion, aims to address discrimination against trans and gender-diverse people, ensuring their rights to healthcare and legal gender recognition. The Ministry explained that the regulation is necessary to establish clear and fair procedures, provide access to qualified medical care, and support social integration for trans citizens.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In Kyrgyzstan, trans women are particularly vulnerable, with many turning to sex work due to societal discrimination and lack of opportunities. Although sex work itself is not criminalised, the Kyrgyz Criminal Code contains provisions prohibiting the operation of brothels, which law enforcement often uses as a pretext to raid the homes of trans women. These raids are frequently accompanied by extortion, as officers demand money from the women under threat of further legal action. The vulnerability of trans women has been further exacerbated by recent amendments to the Criminal Code on June 26, 2024, which regulate webcam studios. Since many trans women in sex work connect with clients through the internet, these amendments directly target them. Law enforcement officials exploit their gender identity for blackmail, intimidation, and extortion, using their status to pressure them for money. Furthermore, personal information about trans women is often shared among law enforcement officers, leading to continued violations of their rights and further harassment for personal gain.



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# LATVIA

## ASYLUM

In late April, Latvia's administrative district court overturned a decision by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs to deny asylum to a Ghanaian LGBTI asylum seeker. The ruling ordered the granting of asylum, rejecting the initial assessment that questioned the credibility of his claims.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Following last year's investigation into former MEP Andrejs Mamikins' homophobic social media post in response to the election of President Rinkēvičs, further investigations were launched concerning his support for Russian aggression in Ukraine. Mamikins has since fled to Russia, where he has been reportedly involved in activities aligned with Russian state narratives.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In July, the ECtHR ruled that Latvia mishandled the case of Denis Khanov, a lecturer who was attacked due to his sexual orientation. The ECtHR ruled that Latvia failed to properly address the hate crime he experienced and instead downgraded his case from a criminal to an administrative offence. The court emphasised that public authorities must prevent hate violence and properly investigate discriminatory motives. Following the entry of the court's judgement into force, the Prosecutor General Office reopened the criminal proceedings, which are currently pending fresh investigation.

In May, two individuals were attacked in Daugavpils due to being LGBTI. While one suspect was initially identified, the police closed the case. However, Prosecutor General Juris Stukāns questioned the legality of the police's decision and ordered the investigation to be reopened. In October, one of the offenders was found guilty of hooliganism causing bodily harm, under Article 231 of the Criminal Code, sentenced to seven months in prison and ordered to pay moral compensation, amounting to 2,500 Euro to one victim, Līvai Amareen, and 2,000 Euro to his companion. Although this case marks the first time in Latvia that a homophobic attack has been officially recognised and punished by law, the criminal proceedings were initiated on the grounds of "disturbing public peace - hooliganism" rather than under the charge of "inciting hatred/enmity against a social group" as outlined in Article 150 of the Criminal Law. Following the judgement, the prosecutor's office expressed its intention to file an appeal to seek a harsher sentence.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In June, the Latvian Supreme Court reviewed appeals against decisions by the Administrative Regional Court, which had previously dismissed applications seeking legal recognition of same-sex couples' family relationships. The appellants argued

that the registry office should be compelled to issue favorable administrative acts to legally register their relationships. The Supreme Court's decision on these appeals is pending.

## FAMILY

In early July, Latvia's law recognising civil unions for same-sex couples came into force. The bill, passed in November 2023, grants registered couples equal rights in household management, tax benefits, social security, and emergency hospital access.

In July, a Latvian gay couple became the first same-sex couple to register their union under the November 2023 law recognising same-sex partnerships. The couple was followed swiftly by six more couples.

In August, Latvian President Edgars Rinkēvičs, the EU's first openly gay head of state, stated that the legalisation of same-sex marriage in Latvia is not imminent. Rinkēvičs emphasised that the government is not yet ready to push for any immediate changes to the country's marriage laws.

In September, a "singing" protest advocating for marriage equality took place in front of the Saeima (National Parliament) in Latvia. Several dozen people, including a queer choir, gathered to remind lawmakers and the public that, despite the introduction of partnership registration three months earlier, the law remains inadequate. Protesters highlighted key issues, such as the lack of inheritance rights and the inability of partnerships to secure residency permits for foreign partners, emphasising the need for full marriage equality to ensure equal protection for all families.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Latvia officially ratified the Istanbul Convention, which entered into force in May, marking a significant development in the country's commitment to combating gender-based violence. Nonetheless, alongside the ratification, Latvia affirmed that it would apply the Convention in accordance with the principles, values, and norms outlined in its Constitution. The government also emphasised that the term "gender," as used in the Convention, would not be understood as an obligation to introduce any alternative understanding of sex beyond the traditional categories of men and women into Latvia's legal or educational systems.



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# LIECHTENSTEIN

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In May, with a 24-1 vote, Liechtenstein legalised same-sex marriage by approving an amendment to the Marriage Law of 1973.



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# LITHUANIA

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In March, the Lithuanian Ministry of Justice hosted an event on the needs of hate crime victims, Organised by the National LGBT Rights Organisation (LGL). The event focused on examining the needs of hate crime victims, highlighting the systemic lack of existing targeted LGBTI victim support measures in Lithuania.

## ASYLUM

Several LGBTI asylum seekers from Cameroon were granted protection after enduring a lengthy four-year wait for a final decision. However, civil society organisations continue to report ongoing concerns regarding the dire conditions in camps, the prolonged nature of asylum procedures, and the persistent fear of deportation amongst asylum seekers.

Psychologist Tomas Kelpša was found guilty by the Vilnius Regional District Court of coercing asylum seekers into sexual acts by threatening to deny their asylum applications.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In June, a Lithuanian court postponed the case against former MP Petras Gražulis, known for his anti-LGBTI rhetoric, over charges of publicly ridiculing and showing contempt for individuals based on their sexual orientation. The court instructed the prosecutor to seek permission from the Central Electoral Commission (VRK) to proceed with the prosecution before Gražulis assumed his mandate as a Member of the European Parliament (MEP), which would grant him legal immunity. Following his election to the European Parliament in mid-July, the Vilnius Regional Court in early September directed the prosecutor to request the European Parliament to lift Gražulis's legal immunity, allowing the case to proceed.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

A participant in the Lithuanian Pride reported being attacked with pepper spray at Vingis Park after the festival's concert.

The police terminated a pre-trial investigation into one of several alleged assaults, where neighbours, including a minor, verbally and physically attacked a same-sex couple. This incident was part of a broader pattern of ongoing harassment that had taken place over an extended period.

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) accepted to hear a petition for refusal to investigate a hate-motivated verbal assault in the case of Svirplys & Latvys v Lithuania, where two men were followed, harassed with homophobic slurs and threatened after being seen holding hands in public. The case was reopened in the Lithuanian court; however, the investigation does not include hate

or bias motive and the perpetrator denies the facts of the case, including the use of homophobic slurs and threats.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In February, the Lithuanian government asked the Constitutional Court to review the constitutionality of a law banning the dissemination of information about same-sex relationships to minors. The Court began its hearing in early December. Later that month, the Constitutional Court ruled that Article 4(2)(16) of the Law on Protection of Minors Against Detrimental Effects of Public Information violates several provisions of the Constitution. The Court determined that restricting information about different family models infringes upon minors' rights to receive information and hinders their development into well-rounded individuals. It emphasised that legislation cannot automatically deem information about various family structures and relationships as inappropriate for minors, as this contradicts the constitutional principles of equality, pluralism, and tolerance. The ruling concluded that the challenged regulation improperly limited the constitutional concept of family and failed to provide minors with objective information that would aid in forming a worldview aligned with constitutional values and human dignity.

In March, President Gitanas Nausėda appointed Laurynas Kasčiūnas, head of the Seimas Committee on National Security and Defence, as Defence Minister. The nomination came despite protest from over 20 human rights organisations denouncing Kasčiūnas views and opposition to human rights, particularly concerning the Istanbul Convention.

In April, Lithuania launched the state-funded project "More Effective Protection of LGBTI Rights by Strengthening Inter-Institutional Cooperation" (SV5-147), coordinated by the Lithuanian Gay League. Partnering with Kaunas University of Technology (KTU), the Seimas Ombudsmen's Office, and Vilnius City Municipality, the project evaluates municipal public policies in sectors like education, healthcare, and social protection to assess their inclusivity for LGBTI people. Results were shared at the National Human Rights Forum in December.

## FAMILY

In March, four same-sex couples filed a complaint with the ECtHR, seeking the registration of a civil partnership, the inclusion of a foreign marriage in Lithuania's civil registry, and the recognition of a same-sex marriage that took place in the country.

In May, the Government made an appeal to the Constitutional Court requesting an evaluation of the constitutionality of the current legal regulations related to partnership institutions. This move is seen as a step towards potentially recognising same-

sex partnerships in Lithuania. In June, the Constitutional Court accepted the request and will proceed with examining the matter to determine whether these provisions conflict with Lithuania's Constitution. During the drafting of the new government's programme, Gintautas Paluckas, the leader of the Nemunas Dawn party, communicated that the Partnership Law will not be in the government's programme.

In November, Lithuania's Civil Registry Department refused to register the marriage of a same-sex couple married in Belgium. The department cited a legal ban on same-sex marriage in Lithuania, stating that the marriage could not be included in the country's records.

In December, the Vilnius District Court issued a historic ruling by recognising two mothers for a child born from a same-sex couple.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In October, members of the LGBTI community held a protest near the Lithuanian Parliament, voicing their frustration over the government's ongoing failure to legalise same-sex partnerships. Approximately 20-30 participants attended, carrying rainbow flags and posters to express their dissatisfaction with the absence of legal recognition for same-sex couples in Lithuania.

## HEALTH

The Ministry of Health initiated training of healthcare professionals based on Health4LGBTI methodology.

In November, Aleksandras Alekseičikas-Kirinovas, a psychiatrist who previously claimed to have "treated" LGBTI people during the Soviet occupation and defended this practice in public interviews, was dismissed from the Vilnius City Mental Health Centre after the Lithuanian Bioethics Committee ruled that his statements breached professional ethics.

## DATA COLLECTION

A Eurobarometer survey revealed that discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, among other factors, remains high in Lithuania, though there are signs of improvement. Compared to 2019, resistance to working with LGBTI people has decreased from 37% to 33%. Nonetheless, the percentage of respondents expressing discontent over the possibility of their child having romantic relationships with LGBTI people remained high (57%).

A survey by the Lithuanian Centre for Social Sciences and the Diversity Development Group revealed that about half of Lithuanians would prefer not to live next to LGBTI people.

In April, Lithuania's Savaitė TV program highlighted presidential candidates' starkly differing views on LGBTI rights. Freedom Party candidates and some independents supported civil partnerships and broader definitions of family, while others, like Labour Party's Andrius Mazuronis, upheld a traditional view of family as a union between a man and a woman.

## HOUSING

Racialised LGBTI migrants consistently reported experiencing discrimination in rental housing situations.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In March, Vilnius City Municipality, Minister of Justice, Minister of Economy and Innovation, Seimas Ombudsperson Office, Estonia's Gender Equality Commissioner, and numerous other entities supported a bid by LGL to host EuroPride 2027 in Vilnius.

In June, the Lithuanian Pride festival in Vilnius welcomed an estimated 20,000 attendees. The event featured the participation of writer Kristina Sabaliauskaitė, and Freedom Party members like Finance Minister Aušrinė Armonaitė. The Lithuanian Green Party and Vilnius Mayor Valdas Benkuskas also participated, with international guests and embassy representatives, such as the German Embassy.

On the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia, and Transphobia, foreign ambassadors in Lithuania issued a statement backing the LGBTI community and urging the Seimas to pass a civil unions bill.

The Equal Opportunities Promotion Action Plan for 2024-2026 included measures related to LGBTI rights but has been criticised for being fragmented and lacking long-term impact.

Seimas Ombudsperson Office led an inter-institutional discussion on LGBTI rights on 30 August, with representatives of major ministries, law enforcement and civil society.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Following the European Court of Justice's ruling mandating that EU member states recognise name and gender changes made in other countries within the bloc, the Lithuanian Ministry of Justice announced plans to assess the necessity of updating national legislation. While Lithuania currently acknowledges name changes executed abroad, it does not have an administrative procedure in place for changing gender in civil status records, necessitating a court order instead. Ministry spokesperson Paulius Žeimys indicated that the department is evaluating how the CJEU decision may influence Lithuanian law moving forward.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In March, the Lithuanian Prosecutor's Office decided to terminate the investigation into the disruption, by conservative groups, of a peaceful protest to support the repeal of a provision in the Lithuanian Law on the Protection of Minors and to promote inclusive education, held in 2023. Although the protest had been legally coordinated with both the Vilnius Municipality and Police, it was met with disruption by a group of "traditional family values" supporters. Despite the growing tension, police officers present at the scene did not intervene to protect the protesters or stop the harassment. The prosecutor referred the case for potential administrative offences but did not classify it as a hate crime.

In April, Seimas Ombudsperson Erika Leonaitė criticised the inadequate police response to the disruption. As part of their statement, they underscored that authorities failed to act against provocateurs who physically and psychologically intimidated protesters.

In June, activist Raimondas Šimaitis conducted a protest near the National Martynas Mažvydas Library in Vilnius, during which he burned several pieces of colored fabric. Authorities interpreted this act as the burning of the LGBTI flag, leading to his detention and a subsequent fine of €15. Šimaitis contested the penalty, viewing it as political persecution, especially in light of his announced candidacy for the upcoming elections. Critics argue that such a minimal fine may inadvertently encourage similar provocative actions in the future.



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# LUXEMBOURG

## ASYLUM

In response to the European Parliament's adoption of measures addressing the vulnerability of people in reception contexts based on their sexual orientation or gender expression, the Luxembourg Refugee Collective (LFR) released a [press statement](#) in April. The LFR emphasised the systemic failure to detect vulnerabilities early on, noting that individuals who have endured violations affecting their physical and psychological integrity often struggle to articulate their distress and trauma. The collective called for comprehensive initial and ongoing training for staff to enhance the identification of vulnerabilities and ensure that applicants for international protection receive appropriate care and procedural safeguards.

Since December 2023, all single men seeking asylum have been entitled to a vulnerability assessment interview, marking a significant step forward in addressing the needs of vulnerable individuals, including those based on sexual orientation or gender expression. In line with the ongoing reform of the European asylum system, the Office National de l'Accueil (ONA) has been working to improve current procedures. Centre LGBTQI+ Cigale has been invited by the ONA to provide training on LGBTI issues to their staff and has continued training social workers at reception centres operated by the Luxembourg Red Cross, one of the most prominent organisations assisting asylum seekers.

## EDUCATION

In May, the drag character Tatta Tom was invited to give a reading at the Lycée technique agricole. Following the event, a member of parliament from the right-wing conservative party ADR harshly [criticised](#) the school's invitation and the presence of queer topics in schools in general.

In July, a public [petition](#) (No. 3.198) calling for the exclusion of LGBTI themes from educational programmes for minors gained the [support](#) of over 9,000 people. In response, civil society organisations and individuals launched counter-petitions opposing the exclusion of LGBTI content. These were combined by the Luxembourg Parliament's Petitions Commission into a single petition (No. 3281). The counter-petition [quickly gained momentum](#), collecting 4,500 signatures on its first day and surpassing the anti-LGBTI petition within two weeks.

## EMPLOYMENT

The Ministry of Family, Integration, and the Greater Region, in cooperation with the Centre LGBTQI+ Cigale, the Centre for Equal Treatment, the Rosa Lëtzebuerg association, developed a [guide](#) to help bridge the gap between trans people and their employers. This guide equips employers with key information to better understand trans identities and implement inclusive policies,

while also offering trans people support in communicating their needs within the workplace.

The Musée National de la Résistance et des Droits Humains opened the temporary exhibition "[Vergessene Opfer. Victimes oubliées](#)" with a panel discussion. The exhibition was dedicated to the fates of the forgotten victims of the Holocaust such as LGBTI people, people of colour, Sinti and Roma people, disabled people and Jehovah's Witnesses.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In July, Luxembourg Pride marked its 25th anniversary, featuring a supporting programme with over 24 different activities. The festival was attended by six members of the government, including Deputy Prime Minister Xavier Bettel and Minister for Equality and Diversity Yuriko Backes.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In April, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Diversity released an [evaluation](#) of Luxembourg's national action plan on LGBTI rights. The evaluation highlighted progress but also notable hardships for trans and intersex people, as well as for the development of key legislation against conversion therapy. Furthermore, the evaluation underscored that representatives of LGBTI organisations noted challenges in monitoring the progress of the plan on LGBTI rights.

This year, the Ministry for Equality and Diversity provided financial support to three organisations through conventions. In June, support was granted to Intersex & Transgender Luxembourg (ITGL), followed by a commitment to queer-feminist film art in August for Queer Loox. Finally, in September, the Laboratoire d'Etudes Queer, sur le Genre et les Féminismes (LEQGF) received funding for their research on discrimination mechanisms.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

During Pride Week, the President of the Luxembourg Parliament [received](#) the board of the National LGBTQI+ Association Rosa Lëtzebuerg and the managing director of its Rainbow Centre to discuss the most pressing concerns of the LGBTI community in Luxembourg. The President of Parliament asked Rosa Lëtzebuerg to offer further training for the employees of the parliamentary administration over the next year.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In January, Rosa Lëtzebuerg's Rainbow Centre published the first issue of the Queer.Lu print and online magazine with a launch event. The magazine is intended to be a platform for the LGBTI

community in Luxembourg to discuss activities, opinions and ideas. With the support of the Ministry for Equality and Diversity, the magazine is published quarterly and is available free of charge.

The national LGBTIQ+ action plan is currently being revised by the Ministry of Equality and Diversity (MEGA), with a strong focus on collaboration with civil society actors. MEGA has involved LGBTI associations across the country through working groups, ensuring diverse perspectives are included in the process.



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# MALTA

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In June, the Government of Malta [announced](#) the restoration of a government-owned building on Old Bakery Street in Valletta to be converted into a community centre for LGBTI people and their families.

In July, the government [launched](#) psycho-social services for LGBTI individuals, offering personalised and group support sessions at the Wellbeing Hub in A3 Towers, Paola, with plans to relocate to the Old Bakery Street building in Valetta once its renovation is complete.

## ASYLUM

Civil society made [four recommendations](#) to the government to amend the asylum system and legislation that fails to protect LGBTI asylum seekers from discrimination and violence, and prevents them from enjoying the same rights as Maltese citizens. The recommendations build on concerns highlighted by the government's LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2027), launched the previous year, which aimed to combat discrimination and violence but left gaps in protections for LGBTIQ+ migrants and refugees.

## EDUCATION

According to a Eurobarometer [survey](#) on discrimination, 77% of Maltese respondents believe that school lessons and educational materials should include information about LGBTI identities. Additionally, 78% of Maltese respondents agree that school lessons should also cover sexual orientation.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

An audit by the National Audits Office published in December [slammed](#) the EuroPride 2023 budget blowout and discrepancies in procurement procedures and documentation, which significantly exceeded its original budget of €2.5 million by 86%.

Seven NGOs [expressed frustration](#) over the lack of consultation and transparency regarding the costs of EuroPride.

## HEALTH

In January, Checkpoint Malta [announced](#) it would host free, community-led HIV testing sessions throughout the year in Valletta, Gozo, and Paola. These sessions address a vital need for accessible and stigma-free HIV testing, which is not consistently available through public health services.

The [National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing 2023-2030](#) includes measures to address the specific needs of older LGBTI individuals. One such measure is the establishment of a national

working group tasked with mapping both the common and unique social and healthcare challenges faced by the LGBTI population. The National Sexual Health Policy was [launched](#) for public consultation in December 2024 after being last updated in 2010. The Minister for Health [announced](#) that PrEP and PEP will be free in 2025, but it is unclear if they will be universally accessible.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In March, it was [reported](#) that gender-affirming care was being delayed at the Gender Wellbeing Clinic since July 2023, due to the resignation of the psychiatrist. In October, the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement (MGRM) staged a [demonstration](#) outside the Ministry of Health, calling on authorities to address ongoing and critical delays in gender-affirming care, which left new patients without the essential healthcare services that were promised by the government.

## DATA COLLECTION

The data from the [2021 Census](#) by the National Statistics Office (NSO) was published in January, and collected data on sexual orientation for the first time. 2.5% of individuals over 16 identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual or a different sexual orientation. The rate was three times higher in foreigners than Maltese. The NSO placed Gżira ahead of its neighbouring areas for the percentage of LGBTI residents, with 509 out of 9,442 identifying as LGBT.

A [survey](#) conducted by the EU Agency for Human Rights revealed that 62% of LGBTI people in Malta feel comfortable disclosing their sexual orientation, surpassing the EU average of 51%.

## FOREIGN POLICY

The Maltese nominee for European Commissioner, Glenn Micallef, was asked about his [position on trans athletes](#) participating in women's sports in the parliamentary hearing to approve his nomination. He responded that decisions should be left to the sporting organisations that decide on such issues, and that "sport is for everyone, no matter the identity or gender". He was later approved for European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport.

## HOUSING

The first shelter providing supported accommodation for LGBTI people was completed by the Malta LGBTIQ Rights Movement, and [inaugurated](#) by the Prime Minister and Minister for Social Accommodation in December 2024. It is expected to start receiving residents in 2025.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Following the publication of the European Union Agency for



Fundamental Rights (FRA) [LGBTIQ survey](#), Rebecca Buttigieg, Malta's Parliamentary Secretary for Equality and Reforms, [acknowledged](#) that while progress has been made, further efforts to identify other needed policies to counter discrimination and safeguard the rights of LGBTI people are needed to ensure full equality and inclusivity.

In July, the Human Rights Directorate of the Government of Malta published a [progress report](#) for its 'LGBTIQ+ Equality Strategy & Action Plan', covering the period from January 2023 to July 2024.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In September, Malta implemented a new [law](#) that allows non-binary identities to be officially recognised on birth certificates. The new law builds upon the 2018 Gender Identity, Gender Expression, and Sex Characteristics Act that granted trans people the right to update their legal gender by further expanding these rights.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In March, activists in Valletta held a [march](#) for International Women's Day, calling for significant reforms on abortion rights and domestic violence. Participants particularly highlighted the need to address Malta's stringent abortion laws. The criticism focused mainly on recent legislative changes that further limit access to abortion, and the prioritisation by both politicians and the Church of embryo protection over women's rights.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

The 2024 [Malta Pride Week](#) took place from September 6 to 15, commemorating 20 years since the country's first Pride celebration. The theme for this year, #20YearsofPride, highlighted not only the celebration of diversity but also the continued fight for LGBTI rights and visibility.

## SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In November, the Malta's Nationalist Party (PN) [reaffirmed](#) its commitment to strengthen LGBTI rights in Malta, to ensure the LGBTI community continues to benefit from legislation that promotes inclusivity.



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# MOLDOVA

## ASYLUM

In January, a 21-year-old trans woman and asylum seeker from Moldova took her own life two weeks after her asylum application was denied.

In March, the General Inspectorate for Migration denied refugee status to seven LGBTI people from Russia. The Inspectorate argued that the applicants failed to demonstrate risks or dangers if they were to remain in Russia and cited that mere membership to a social group would not award refugee status. The applicants challenged the decisions in court, with two rulings from the Court of Cassation issued in their favor. However, two decisions were refusals, and three other cases are still pending.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

During the Moldova Pride festival several people posted videos on TikTok threatening and inciting hatred towards LGBTI people. Several complaints were filed with the police. Two people were identified and fined. Three more cases are under investigation.

Several instances of hate speech occurred during the electoral campaign for the presidential elections in the Republic of Moldova. "Political affiliation", "sexual orientation/gender identity" and "sex/gender" are the criteria that have most cases of hate speech identified during this period. All pro-Russian parties used homophobic and transphobic language.

In September, two TikTokers in the Republic of Moldova were fined by the police for publishing hateful videos targeting participants from this year's Pride March. The sanctions, one for hooliganism and the other for incitement to hatred, set a legal precedent in Moldova.

In September, Ilan Shor, leader of the opposition "Victory" bloc in Moldova, vowed to ban LGBTI propaganda if the country rejects European integration in the upcoming referendum. Shor pledged to push for legislation that would prohibit LGBTI propaganda and attacks on faith, aligning his position with anti-LGBTI stances, which are part of Russia's broader agenda in the region.

In October, the Audiovisual Council of Moldova rejected appeals from the Communist Party of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) and Our Party, who complained that Teleradio-Moldova had refused to air their electoral messages. One of the contested messages advocated for banning LGBTI propaganda in schools.

In November, the Audiovisual Council sanctioned the regional public broadcaster Găgăuzia Radio Televizionu with a fine of 15,000 lei for violating the principles of impartiality and accurate information and was warned against broadcasting

discriminatory content. This decision came after a petition by the GENDERDOC-M Information Centre, which argued that the "Обсуждаем вместе" program on TV-Găgăuzia failed to respect the principles of freedom of expression, correct information, and human rights, featuring homophobic behavior, incitement to hatred, and discrimination.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In January, a trans man was physically and verbally assaulted by a passenger and the conductor of a bus in Chişinău. In response, the police and the Electric Transport Authority have launched an investigation, urging citizens to respect and support each other.

In June, a lesbian woman was assaulted on public transport by an Interior Ministry guard on grounds of homophobia. A police complaint was filed and the employee was fined.

In July, a young man was attacked in the city centre by several minors. The police on patrol nearby got involved late and let the assailants go without identifying them.

On the night of July 17-18, the door of the new office of Queer café in Chisinau, which organises events for queer people, was vandalised. A police complaint was filed.

On the night of July 19-20, a young LGBTI man was stripped naked near a club and was attacked by several men nearby. The assailants threw several objects at the man and then started beating him, knocking him to the ground. Several people called the police who were patrolling nearby but they said they would not get involved. The beating continued for a significant amount of time before the police eventually arrived after several calls.

In October, a lecture on queer history in Romania and Moldova, hosted by the Cărtureşti Bookstore and led by Florin Buhuceanu, founder of the Museum of Queer History and Culture in Romania, was disrupted by a bomb alert at the National History Museum of Moldova.

## EDUCATION

In September, a teacher at Anton Chekhov High School delivered a speech to students that included anti-European propaganda. The speech contained claims that following EU integration, children would be able to change their gender and that Ukraine had already installed urinals in girls' restrooms and legalised same-sex marriage.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In January, Transnistria released an official document titled "Preservation of Traditional Values is the Priority of the State."

The document addresses the rise of various movements and subcultures that advocate for non-traditional sexual relationships among youth. It describes this as widespread promotion carried out through media channels and public events, including online film screenings. The document asserts that the demonstration of what it terms “deviant behaviour” is increasingly viewed as normal in contemporary society.

In June, a [draft law](#) aimed at approving the Concept of the National Policy for the Preservation and Strengthening of Traditional Spiritual and Moral Values in the Republic of Moldova was registered by six deputies from pro-Russian parties.

## FAMILY

In April, the Râșcani sector court [dismissed](#) the case of a same-sex couple seeking to have their marriage registered after the Public Services Agency also rejected the couple’s initial request.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## HEALTH

In December 2023, a new law was [enacted](#) to amend Article 191 of Law No. 1409/1997 regarding medication. This legislation effectively prohibits the medications commonly used by trans men for hormone therapy. In the wake of this ban, several trans people have reached out to the GENDERDOC-M Information Centre, reporting that they are unable to purchase these essential medications, even when they possess a doctor’s prescription. Since then, the Centre has met the Ministry of Health on this subject, clarifying that the Ministry is planning to set up a committee that will create a protocol for prescribing hormone therapy.

## DATA COLLECTION

The GenderDoc-M Centre released a [report](#) detailing numerous instances of assault, discrimination, and harassment against LGBTI people throughout 2023. The report highlighted a significant amount of anti-LGBTI rhetoric originating from politicians.

In November, in its latest National Report on Moldova, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) [highlighted](#) that discriminatory attitudes toward LGBTI people persist in Moldova. ECRI particularly noted that although there is

a lack of official data on the LGBTI population, which hinders an accurate assessment of the situation, prejudice against LGBTI people remains widespread in Moldova.

## HOUSING

The GENDERDOC-M Information Centre for Assistant was approached by a trans woman who suffered domestic violence due to her gender identity. The staff helped the victim file multiple complaints with the Ministry of Social Protection, the Children’s Ombudsman, and the police, prompting the formation of a commission to investigate her situation. Since she had no safe place to stay, she was accommodated in the refugee shelter operated by the GENDERDOC-M Centre until she reached adulthood.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In November, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) [released](#) their latest national report on Moldova, recommending that Moldovan authorities intensify their efforts to ensure the independence, effectiveness, and proper resourcing of the Council for Equality and the Ombudsman. The report also provided a series of recommendations, urging Moldovan authorities to take urgent and substantial actions to combat discrimination, promote equality, and protect human rights.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

Frolov criticised statements by MP Marina Tauber and Gagauz Autonomy governor Evghenia Guțul, who, during a visit to Moscow, claimed European integration would undermine Moldova’s national identity and impose LGBTI values on the country.

During a visit to Moscow in September, Moldovan politicians Marina Tauber and Evghenia Guțul met with Russian officials, including Maria Zakharova and Olga Skabeeva. Tauber [stated](#) that European integration would destroy Moldova’s national identity and impose LGBT values, sentiments echoed by Guțul.

In October, two false bomb alerts targeted an LGBTI festival in Chișinău. The festival’s disruption came just days before key elections in which Moldova’s pro-EU President Maia Sandu sought re-election.

## PUBLIC OPINION

A recent [survey](#) conducted by the Centre for Sociological Analysis and Investigations CIVIS, commissioned by the Lex XXI Association, revealed significant gaps in understanding the LGBTI community among residents of Balti. Carried out from June 20 to

July 11, 2023, the findings indicate that 90% of respondents lack awareness and comprehension of the issues faced by the queer community in the region. Furthermore, the social distance index towards the LGBTI community registered an average score of 5.1 on a scale of 0 to 7, with 7 signifying a very high level of distance or exclusion from society.

In December, the GENDERDOC-M Information Centre, in collaboration with Magenta Consulting, conducted a study titled “Evaluation of the Perceptions of Residents of the City of Chisinau About LGBT+ People.” The research surveyed 723 respondents aged 25-45 years. The results showed that only 9% of respondents held a positive attitude towards LGBTI people, while 44% had a negative opinion, a six percentage point increase compared to the 2023 survey. Overall, 55% of respondents were neutral or supportive. The Social Distance Index, which measures the level of acceptance towards various minority groups, revealed that LGBTI people continue to have the lowest level of acceptance, with an index of 1.75.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In February, the former president of Moldova, Vladimir Voronin, and six other opposition deputies were summoned by the Chisinau Appeals Chamber to face court proceedings over their involvement in a 2022 anti-LGBTI flash mob.

In June, the Court ruled in favour of a gay man who had been persecuted in the army because of his sexual orientation. As part of the ruling, the court ordered his aggressor to pay approximately 60,000 lei in compensation.

In June, the Chisinau Court ordered Bishop Marchel of Balti and Făleşti ordered to pay 10,000 lei in moral damages to two LGBTI people for inciting discrimination based on sexual orientation.



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# MONACO

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In May, France's Sports Minister demanded "the toughest sanctions" against the footballer Mohamed Camara and his club. The request came after the Monaco player covered an LGBTI support badge on his jersey with white tape on IDAHOBIT. The player was handed a four-match suspension for his actions and refusal to take part in awareness-raising activities proposed by the disciplinary committee.

In June, Monaco Pride celebrated its third edition, with over 150 attendees including Camille Gottlieb, daughter of Princess Stephanie.



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# MONTENEGRO

## ASYLUM

Asylum seekers reported having difficulties in accessing health care services, as well as experiencing long waiting periods on the decision on their asylum requests. Spectra, Juventas, LBTQ Association Stana and Queer Montenegro, in cooperation with the Centre for Asylum and the UNDP, stepped in and have been providing support to an increasing number of LGBTI asylum seekers from Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and the Middle East.

The case of a Russian asylum seeker whose request for asylum was denied was documented by Queer Montenegro.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In September, during Pride in Podgorica and accompanying events, there was an extreme increase in hate speech directed at LGBTI people in the online public space during the Pride march in Podgorica, and the LGBT Forum Progres submitted [58 reports](#) to the Police Directorate of Montenegro.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

During the year, Spectra continued to provide legal assistance to a trans man during the court process of a [hate crime case from 2019](#), when he was dragged out of his home and beaten by several attackers. Spectra pointed out the unnecessary length of this court process and is closely following its process. In addition to that, Spectra provided support to a trans woman and activist who was attacked physically, verbally and online, reporting these cases, but without any action by the state authorities.

## EMPLOYMENT

A [report](#), released by the LGBTI Forum Progress and LGBTIQ Social Centre shedding light on the challenges faced by LGBTI people in employment. 82.7 percent of the respondents stated that they personally experienced discrimination at work based on sexual orientation, while 36.5 percent experienced discrimination at work based on gender identity.

In February, the Spektra Association published its research on socio-economic violence against trans, intersex, and gender-variant (TIRV) persons conducted in 2023. The study indicates that in the past 21 months, 35% of trans respondents reported experiencing discrimination at work, with 40% of trans women specifically feeling discriminated against—representing the highest percentage among all TIRV subgroups included in the investigation.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Results of the research on socio-economic violence against TIRV persons by Spektra Association revealed that every participant

in the study reported having experienced mistreatment over the past five years. The study also highlighted the specific types of violence experienced by respondents: 62.5% reported receiving threats of physical violence, while 37.5% had experienced attempted or actual physical violence. Additionally, 31.3% of participants reported receiving threats via telephone, 25% had personal property damaged or stolen, and 12.5% were threatened with weapons. Regarding sexual violence, one quarter (25%) of respondents had faced attempted rape or other forms of sexual violence, while 18.8% had been victims of rape or sexual assault. When asked about the most pressing issues for the trans/intersex/gender-variant community, 81.3% of participants emphasised the urgent need for legislation for more accessible Legal Gender Recognition, along with stronger enforcement of the anti-discrimination law.

## FAMILY

3 years after the adoption of the law on same-sex partnerships, the government and parliament have yet to take action to align other laws with the Law on Same-Sex Partnership, and thus ensure the law's proper implementation. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Interior continues to deny citizenship to children of same-sex couples, in clear violation of the law, perpetuating discrimination against these families.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Pride march was held in September 2024, in a peaceful atmosphere. Pride Week was organised in multiple public locations, without any incidents.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In October 2024, the For the Future of Montenegro (ZBCG) coalition, which includes the Democratic Front, announced plans to urgently propose a Law on Foreign Agents. This initiative was met with [criticism](#) from civil society and embassies. As of now, the proposal remains in the early stages, with no formal draft law.

## DATA COLLECTION

A [report](#) published by the LGBTI Forum Progress and LGBTIQ Social Centre revealed that 82.7% of LGBTI people reported experiencing workplace discrimination based on sexual orientation, while 36.5% faced discrimination on grounds of gender identity. The report further highlighted that 67.4% of LGBTI respondents experienced workplace discrimination in some form, yet a considerable 70% did not report these incidents due to fear or other concerns.

## FOREIGN POLICY

Montenegro has included the adoption of the Law on Legal Gender

Recognition based on self-determination in its 2024 EU Accession Plan for 2024–2025, specifically under chapters 19 and 23. This revision is part of the closing benchmarks Montenegro must meet to move forward in its EU accession process.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The Ministry of Human and Minority Rights has been actively engaged in developing a new LGBTI Strategy, particularly through its efforts in establishing a working group dedicated to drafting the Law on Legal Gender Recognition based on self-determination. The previous LGBTI Strategy, which ran from 2019 to 2023, has now expired. The new strategy was adopted in June and will cover the period until 2028.

In March, during her visit to Montenegro, now former Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Dunja Mijatović emphasised the need for Montenegro to adopt several key laws. She stressed the importance of ensuring that laws on equality, anti-discrimination, and legal gender recognition (LGR) based on self-determination align with international human rights standards. The Commissioner also highlighted the increase in hate speech, particularly online, which exacerbates ethnic, religious, and political divisions, disproportionately affecting marginalised groups such as Roma, LGBTI people, and women in public roles. These concerns were echoed in the Commissioner's report published the same month, which also raised issues regarding the use of mental health diagnoses, sterilisation, and invasive medical procedures as requirements for LGR in Montenegro.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Hostility towards LGBTI human rights defenders is on the rise, manifesting both online and in physical spaces. Many activists are refraining from reporting threats due to a widespread lack of trust in institutions, further exacerbating the vulnerability of the LGBTI community.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The draft law on Legal Gender Recognition based on self-determination was completed by the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and presented to Parliament in February. The draft law underwent a 30-day public consultation from February 15 to March 15. Despite the Strategy for Improving the Quality of Life of LGBT Persons in Montenegro (2019–2023) urging its adoption by the end of 2023, the law has still not adopted by the end of 2024. The law was been included in Montenegro's EU Accession Program under chapters 19 and 23, but has faced significant resistance, particularly from the Serbian Orthodox Church and other political forces. The Ministry of Interior has been obstructing the law's progress. Additionally, other ministries have shown little interest

in advancing the law, as well as other legislative reforms to protect the rights of LGBTI people. Despite widespread support from civil society organisations, international bodies like the EU, various embassies, and the Council of Europe, as well as over 100 academics, 137 regional civil society organisations, 18 MEPs, and major European human rights organisations, Prime Minister Spajić and President of the Parliament Andrija Mandić blocked the law by not putting it to a vote.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

There have been ongoing problems accessing hormone therapy for some trans persons in Montenegro.

In response, there have been numerous efforts to address this issue, including communications with Health Centres, the Ministry of Health, the Health Insurance Fund, and the Ombudsman. Despite these efforts, challenges persist, including a recent shortage of Nebido, a form of testosterone crucial for the health of some trans persons. No actions have been taken by state institutions to resolve this shortage.

In October 2023 the PrEP treatment for HIV prevention was introduced in Montenegro. However, in 2024 the treatment is still in its testing phase and limited to only 100 participants. Additionally, the Institute for Public Health this year made progress in expanding access to HPV vaccination by including trans people in their vaccination program, marking a positive step toward inclusive healthcare initiatives.

The Ministry of Health's discriminatory restriction preventing LBTQ women from accessing reproductive treatments has been lifted following the Ombudsperson's ruling on discrimination.

## SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The recent economic reform, which removed the employee-side tax for the pension system and made it optional for employers, has sparked significant debate regarding the sustainability of the social protection system. This follows an earlier reform that also eliminated the healthcare fund tax. Civil society organisations have raised concerns about the government's proposed fiscal strategy, warning that it could disproportionately affect the most vulnerable communities, including women, Roma people, the elderly, and LGBTI people.

## PUBLIC OPINION

Spektra's 2023 research on public attitudes toward trans, intersex, and gender-variant people in Montenegro revealed that 15–20% of the population, primarily young, educated women, are supportive of the LGBTI community. The research further uncovered significant gaps in understanding about gender identity and

sexual orientation. For instance, 68.7% of respondents admitted they were unsure of or did not understand the difference between sexual orientation and gender identity, while 69.1% were similarly confused about the distinction between gender and gender identity. Additionally, 28.6% of respondents did not know how to define the term “transgender person,” and, 22% incorrectly defined it as a “disease, hormonal disorder, or psychological disorder.”



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# NETHERLANDS

## ASYLUM

In July, a coalition government composed of the Freedom Party (PVV), the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), New Social Contract (NSC) and the Farmer-Citizen Movement (BBB) was inaugurated. Minister Faber for Asylum and Migration, of the Party for Freedom (PVV), announced the 'strictest asylum policy ever'. Reinette Klever, Minister for Foreign Trade and Development and also member of the PVV, said that the government is considering sending refugees back to Uganda, a country with one of the strictest anti-LGBTI laws in the world. The new government announced in October it will only allow refugees who are married to bring their partners to the Netherlands, effectively excluding LGBTI couples from countries where they cannot marry. The issue was addressed by various LGBTI organisations and will hopefully be corrected.

In February, the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy advocated for a soon-to-be built asylum centre in Nieuwegein to serve as a refuge for LGBTI asylum seekers.

LGBTI Asylum Support in 2024 documented over 750 incidents of unsafe conditions for LGBTI people in asylum shelters in the Netherlands. The organisation reported that LGBTI asylum seekers are more prone to face discrimination, bullying, and physical violence in reception centres.

In April, reports revealed that at least four Russian-speaking LGBTI asylum-seekers had taken their own lives in 2023. Human rights groups urged the Dutch Ministry of Justice to investigate and reassess migration procedures.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In October, a petition calling on the Parliament to protect trans and non-binary people against hate speech garnered over 29,000 signatories.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

A number of reports of bias-motivated violence against the LGBTI community were recorded in 2024. For example, in May, a gay couple fleeing Tunisia was hospitalised after being attacked as they exited their unit at an asylum centre in Ter Apel. The attackers started shouting derogatory terms, threatening to kill the couple, before physically assaulting them with knives.

In another instance, in August, someone set fire to an apartment in the city of Breda where a rainbow flag was hung. In Montfoort, the apartment of a same-sex couple was attacked with a firework bomb, and in Groningen, the rainbow flag that a citizen hung outside of their apartment was destroyed, and visitors to a queer party were attacked.

A report by the National Police and Anti-discrimination Bureau showed a sharp increase in reported discrimination and violence against the LGBTI community by almost 25% in one year. The report also showed a sharp increase in reported discrimination and violence against other minorities. In December, the National Statistics Bureau (CBS) reported that LGBTI people encounter almost twice the rate of violence (10%) as compared to others in The Netherlands (6%). The highest prevalence is reported for non-binary people (23.5%) and bi+ women (12.7%).

In September, the Parliament took up a hate crime bill striving to prosecute perpetrators of discriminatory violence more severely. It was adopted by the Second Chamber in December. The parliamentary procedure in the Senate is expected to continue into 2025.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In April, Bert-Jan Ruissen and Diederik van Dijk, politicians from a Dutch political party SGP (Staatkundig Gereformeerde Partij), went to Rome to sign an international declaration condemning surrogacy.

## DATA COLLECTION

In January 2024, the National Voter Survey highlighted increasing intolerance towards non-binary individuals and growing opposition to proposed amendments to the Transgender Act. These amendments aim to simplify the process of gender rectification on birth certificates, including removing the requirement for expert statements and lowering the minimum age for gender change applications.

Research from the Dutch health service GGD indicated a significant decline in LGBTI acceptance among youth, with only 43% of young people in Amsterdam declaring support for homosexuality. The data notably indicated a sharp drop from the 69% recorded in 2022. (See also under Education.)

In October the National Bureau of Statistics (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, CBS) published an article based on their large scale Safety Monitor Survey, about the number of LGBTI people there are in the Netherlands, concluding that there are 2.7 million LGBTI people and that bi+ people are the largest group under the acronym with 1.7 million people.

## EDUCATION

In August, following reports from several local youth monitors about a sharp decrease in the acceptance of LGBTI identities among young people, civil society called on the government to investigate this alarming trend. In response, the Secretary for Education committed to launching a research study, which has

already begun, to better understand the causes of this decline in acceptance.

The governmental programme of the new Dutch cabinet states that sexual and relational education in schools should be ‘neutral’ and ‘age appropriate’. The new secretary for Education later stated that such a form of education is already neutral and age appropriate and that the existing policy will not be changed.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

On January 1, a new policy came into effect to put an end to discriminatory practices in blood donations against men who have sex with men.

In March, Ministers De Jonge (BZK) and Yeşilgöz (J&V) introduced a bill aimed at better protecting especially bi, intersex and trans people against discrimination. The bill includes sex characteristics, gender identity and gender expression as non-discrimination grounds into the penal code and replaces the term ‘homosexual orientation’ by ‘sexual orientation’.

In August, an open letter was addressed to the Government by a number of organisations advocating for the rights of LGBTI people, people of colour, Muslim and Jewish people, women, people with disabilities, and Dutch citizens with Moroccan and Turkish heritage to advocate for measures against discrimination and discriminatory violence. The National Voter Survey indicated a growing intolerance toward trans rights among residents of the Netherlands. The report noted diminishing support for gender reassignment surgeries and growing intolerance towards queer and intersex people.

The Bishops’ Conference of the Netherlands rejected the idea of providing blessings or prayers for same-sex couples, criticising a contrasting declaration by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

## FAMILY

Starting January 1, a law came into effect making it possible for children to receive the surnames of both parents.

In October, the Dutch government submitted three reports to Parliament concerning the development of legislation for multi-parent families. In one report, the Child Protection Board stated it has changed its position and is now in favor of a law providing the option of parental custody and multi parenthood for intentional multi-parent families. Similar advice was issued by the Council for the Administration of Criminal Justice and Protection of Juveniles. A report on values and wishes concerning a law for multi parent families was also sent to parliament and, in the

accompanying letter, the government wrote that it is still awaiting several other reports.

## FOREIGN POLICY

The new government has announced a cut of about 2.4 billion euro to its development cooperation budget. This may affect the global fight for LGBTI human rights disproportionately, since The Netherlands is the largest donor in this field in the world. The United Nations Human Rights Secretariat protested the cuts. The government confirmed that LGBTI human rights as a priority in Development cooperation in a letter sent to Parliament at the end of November.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In May, the House of Representatives voted in favour of a motion calling on the government to do everything possible to prevent non-consensual, non-emergency medical treatments on intersex children from taking place. In June, a roundtable was held by the Ministry of Health, Welfare, and Sport as part of an exploration into the possibility of a ban. A similar exploration took place in 2019, indicating a repeated legislative process. In December, parliament adopted a second motion, explicitly calling for a legal ban on the non-consensual treatments.

## HEALTH

In June, a symposium was organised by outspoken critics of gender-affirmative care for trans youth at the Free University in Amsterdam about non-medical interventions, with speakers including Dr. Hillary Cass and Dr. Riittakerttu Kaltiala. Outside the venue, a protest was held by trans people against the anti-trans premises of the symposium.

In July, the draft bill seeking to ban so-called conversion practices was concluded and the bill was submitted for review during a plenary session by Parliament (expected in 2025).

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In April, the House of Representatives was scheduled to vote on a motion by the New Social Contract party to withdraw an amendment to the ‘Transgender Act’, which aims to simplify the process of changing the gender marker in birth certificates. However, just before the debate began, the NSC announced they would temporarily set the motion aside. A few weeks after the initial discussions, a vote was held, and a slight majority voted in favour of asking the government to withdraw the proposed amendment. However, the government ultimately chose not to proceed with the withdrawal, and the newly formed government has maintained the same position. Since the amendment was

originally introduced by the government, the decision to withdraw remains at their discretion.

In July, the government introduced a [bill](#) to remove gender markers from official identification cards, a move long advocated by civil society organisations including the Transgender Network, COC, and NNID.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In May the Dutch association of obstetricians and gynaecologists presented their updated position on assisting trans people's reproductive wishes. It states that there is no reason to treat trans people who wish to become parents and need reproductive assistance any differently than cisgender people, contrasting the previous position.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In July, the Council of State of the Netherlands, an advisory body routinely consulted by the cabinet on proposed legislation before a [law](#) is submitted to parliament, [ruled](#) that Aruba and Curaçao must introduce same-sex marriage. The ruling overturned their previous bans on the practice, and pushed for an alignment of their policies with those of the Netherlands.



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# NORTH MACEDONIA

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In July, the Summer School, designed to foster friendships, support, and understanding between LGBTI youth and their straight/cisgender peers, faced intense backlash shortly after its call for participants was posted in early June. The backlash included hate speech, death threats, and calls for violence against the organisers and participants. Among those leading the backlash were Ljupco Ristevski, leader of the political party "Integra," and Gordana Godzo, a public figure. In response, Ekvallis, the organisation behind the event, filed a criminal complaint against Ristevski, Godzo, and others for spreading racist and xenophobic material, as well as for endangering public security.

## DATA COLLECTION

In May, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) released an LGBTIQ survey revealing that despite minor improvements, significant issues persist regarding LGBTI rights in North Macedonia. Notably, the report highlighted that only 21% of LGBTI people in the country are open about their identity, while 39% of respondents reported experiences of discrimination in various areas of their lives.



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# NORWAY

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In November, a drag bingo event organised at the Inferno Metal Festival sparked a wave of incitement and online [threats](#).

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In May, the police published its annual [report](#) on hate crimes. The number of reported crimes continues to rise, being 18% higher in 2023 compared to the year before. The largest increase percentage-wise is crimes motivated by sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and antisemitism.

Zanfar Matapour was [found guilty](#) of aggravated terrorism by the Oslo District Court for his role in the mass shooting during Oslo Pride on June 25, 2022. Matapour was sentenced to 30 years in prison, the strictest penalty under Norwegian law. State prosecutor Aud Kinsarvik Gravås [expressed satisfaction](#) with the court's decision in the case. Gravås highlighted that the court's ruling aligns with the prosecution's recommendations, which sought to fully understand and address the events surrounding the attack. Matapour has [appealed](#) the court decision. Not long after, the Borgarting Court of Appeal [rejected](#) Arfan Bhatti's appeal against further detention in connection with the same terrorist shooting. Bhatti, who has been in detention since May 4, with both a letter and visitation ban, had previously appealed the extension of his detention. The Court of Appeal ruled that there was a risk of Bhatti evading justice and a potential for evidence to be lost, which justified his continued detention.

In the beginning of August, two people were subjected to a knife [attack](#) by a group of youths, which the police are investigating as a hate crime.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In April, regional professional directors representing the Ministry of Health and Care [classified](#) trans-specific healthcare for individuals under 18 as experimental based on recommendations from the Norwegian Healthcare Investigation Board. However, this decision has yet to be implemented, as the specialised team at Oslo University Hospital is still working on practical guidelines for its application. This classification stands in stark contrast to international standards, such as those outlined in the World Health Organisation's ICD-11 diagnostic manual and the World Professional Association for Transgender Health's Standards of Care 8.

## DATA COLLECTION

A [report](#) published by Verian in June highlighted that over half of Norway's population over the age of 15 have experienced some form of sexual harassment in the past year. The report

identified young people, queer people, and women with minority backgrounds as the most vulnerable groups.

A [survey](#) by Verian, conducted for the Norwegian Institute for Human Rights (NIM), showed that four out of ten Norwegians have witnessed incitement and hate speech against queer individuals in the past year.

A [survey](#) conducted by the Norwegian Association of Journalists revealed concerning statistics about harassment and threats faced by journalists from marginalised groups. The survey noted that LGBTI journalists reported the highest rates of sexual harassment.

A government-commissioned [report](#) on people's experiences with employment in State bodies, found that trans people experience barriers while finding and maintaining employment. The report proposed a number of different actions to combat these difficulties, among which the promotion of gender-neutral changing rooms/toilets/uniforms, the establishment of guarantees for the correct use of personal pronouns, and the promotion of competency-building courses for staff.

## EDUCATION

In November, a proposal introduced by members of the Christian Democratic Party, Representative Proposal 156 S, sought to remove teaching about gender identity in schools. The proposal was met with significant opposition, including a detailed consultation [response](#) from FRI, the Norwegian association for gender and sexual diversity, which emphasised the importance of accurate and respectful education on gender identity to prevent bullying and support queer youth. Ultimately, the Storting [rejected](#) the proposal, with 86 representatives voting against it and 13 in favour.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In June, the Equality and Anti-discrimination Ombudsman has published a [summary](#) of previous discrimination cases regarding gender identity and gender expression, to help with potential future cases and also function as a practical guide.

In September, the Lyngdal municipality [banned](#) the rainbow flag on its premises.

## HEALTH

Across Norway, four new regional [centres](#) for trans-specific care opened, offering therapy and access to prosthetics but not medical or surgical services, as that is still under the control of the national treatment centre in Oslo, contrary to the guidelines. The last to open was the [centre](#) in Bergen on February 15.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The Ministry of Culture and Equality commissioned the Directorate for Children, Youth and Families to develop a national guide on gender diversity to foster greater understanding and recognition among public service providers. Scheduled for release in spring 2025, this guide aims to improve conditions for non-binary people and builds on the recommendations in the 2023 report on a potential third legal gender category. The measures proposed in the guide include the removal of the gender indication numbers from citizens' social security numbers.

In the revised national budget, the Socialist Left Party secured funding for a support group following the terror attack during Oslo Pride on June 25, 2022. For 2025, the party also secured funding for two national programs: Pink Competency Child Welfare, aimed at employees in the child welfare system, and Pink Competency Justice, focused on police employees with an emphasis on hate crimes.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In April, following the submission of a report to the government detailing Norwegian support for the introduction of a third legal gender, the Minister of Culture and Equality issued a statement indicating the issue may not be addressed until 2032 due to upcoming changes in the personal identification system.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

Alex Ramstad Døsvik was ordained as the first non-binary priest in Norway.

In June, the Riddu Riđđu Festival organised the first-ever Indigenous drag show, which brought together four indigenous drag artists from around the globe.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In July, the Oslo District Court upheld a fine of NOK 65 million imposed by the Norwegian Data Protection Authority against the app Grindr for having shared sensitive user data with numerous commercial entities without consent. Grindr has appealed the case.



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# POLAND

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In January, Deputy Minister of Justice Krzysztof Śmiszek announced plans for a new "hate speech" law. Modelled after existing Article 256 of the Penal Code, the new legislation will expand protections to include gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, and disability. In March, a draft amendment to the Penal Code was published on the Government Legislation Centre's website. The draft introduced stricter penalties for hate speech, violence, and criminal threats, including those targeting LGBTI people.

In May, the text passed all stages at the Government Legislative Centre but the final decision for the approval was postponed pending further regulations. Instead, the Prosecutor General established a special team to analyse current responses to such crimes and draft new guidelines for law enforcement. Since then, a second bill on hate speech and hate crimes was presented at the end of October by the Ministry of Justice. One of the most notable differences between this bill and the version proposed in March is the omission of gender identity as a protected category against hate crimes or discrimination. The bill underwent only five days of public consultation before it was accepted by the government and sent to parliament. The first reading in the lower chamber, the Sejm, was scheduled for December 19. Following the first reading, the bill continues to be debated.

Adam Szczepkowski, mayor of Grunwald in Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, has been sentenced to a suspended prison term by the court in Elbląg. The ruling followed a letter he sent in 2020 to Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki, which included defamatory claims about local councillors. Among other claims, Szczepkowski notably revealed private details about the sexuality of another councillor's daughter.

In March, the National Broadcasting Council (KRRiT) imposed a fine of nearly PLN 20,000 on TVN for the transphobic remarks made by satirist Krzysztof Daukszewicz during an episode of "Szkło Kontaktowe."

Public Television (TVP) has been condemned to issue apologies following its broadcasting of the homophobic program "Inwazja" ("Invasion") in 2019. The case, brought by KPH and activists, argued that the program violated the personal rights of LGBTI people, activists, and organisations portrayed in a discriminatory manner. While TVP initially appealed after losing in the first instance, they eventually withdrew their appeals.

In September, the Sejm Petitions Committee submitted a draft amendment to the Penal Code to the Justice and Human Rights Committee. The amendment proposes tightening penalties for disclosing someone's sexual orientation without their consent.

Under the proposed regulations, those found guilty of such actions could face a fine, restriction of liberty or imprisonment for up to one year. The proposed changes have not yet been enacted into law.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In June, participants of the Olsztyn Equality March participating in the event's official afterparty were attacked twice. The perpetrators shouted homophobic slogans and used pepper spray. Two perpetrators were detained by the police.

In August, LGBTI activists holding rainbow flags and banners in a parade opening a pottery festival in Bolesławiec, a town in south-western Poland famous for its pottery-making traditions, were attacked by a group of men who threw bottles at them and physically assaulted them, resulting in one woman being hospitalised. The town's mayor criticised the activists' participation in the event and unsuccessfully tried to have them removed from the festival.

## DATA COLLECTION

A National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) working paper found that annual suicide attempts rose by 16% following the enactment of anti-LGBTI legislation in Poland.

According to a Ipsos + Pride survey, 67% of Poles support same-sex marriage or legal recognition of relationships. The survey also reveals that 61% of Poles recognise significant discrimination against trans people, 47% support LGBTI people discussing their sexual orientation and gender identity publicly, while 33% are comfortable with non-heterosexual couples showing affection in public.

Another Ipsos survey, conducted in September 2024, found that 62% of respondents support registered civil partnerships for same-sex couples (33% do not). According to the survey, 50% of Poles support extending parental rights of a biological parent to their same-sex partner, with 65% supporting the parental rights of a same-sex partner of a biological parent in case of the biological parent's death (and only 29% against). 51% support marriage equality and 35% support adoption rights for same-sex couples.

According to a survey from March 2024, the majority of Polish society supports guarantees for children in the civil unions bill, the support is also high in voters for every part of the ruling coalition.

## EDUCATION

In January, Katarzyna Kotula, Minister for Equal Opportunities, announced her endorsement of the annual "LGBT-friendly schools" ranking organised by civil society actors in collaboration with the European Commission.

In April, the government announced the introduction of a new subject, “Health Education,” in both primary and secondary schools.

In August, the organisation Ordo Iuris, issued a publication arguing against addressing school students by their preferred names and pronouns by school staff and faculty.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In January, the LGBTI flag made a reappearance on Poland’s Morning TV, as two activists from Rainbow Poland were invited by the network to discuss the place for LGBTI people in Polish media. The broadcast represented the first time the LGBTI flag appeared on TV in eight years due to a now-lifted ban on LGBTI topics in the media.

In February, the Voivodeship Administrative Court in Warsaw annulled a 2019 declaration by the City Council of Mordy rejecting alleged LGBTI influences on social life. The court ruled that the local government lacked the authority to issue a resolution deemed discriminatory and inconsistent with Polish and international law.

In February, TVP presenter Wojciech Szelaż issued a public apology for the channel’s previous treatment of LGBTI people.

In May, a leadership crisis within the Volunteer Equality Foundation triggered a split among Pride organisers in Warsaw. This conflict resulted in three separate marches: one organised by the foundation, supported by Warsaw Mayor Rafał Trzaskowski, and others by existing volunteers and the Praga Equality Collective.

Following a shift in both the mayor’s office and the council majority, in May, the Radzyń Podlaski Council repealed its discriminatory Local Government Charter of Family Rights, ending the region’s LGBT-free zone status. At the time of writing there are only three LGBT-free zones remaining in Poland, all located in Podkarpacie, and the Ombudsman for Human Rights has submitted a letter to the local authorities advocating for change.

## FAMILY

In January, the Polish government initiated work on the Civil Partnership Act, by sketching out public consultations with civil society representatives. Poland’s Minister for Equality announced the government’s intention to legalise same-sex marriage, criticising the previous PiS government’s persecution of women and LGBTI people.

In April, Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk announced that the government has prepared a bill on civil partnerships. However, he stated that the proposal will not be introduced until there is

certainty that the parties within the ruling coalition will support it. The Minister of Equality, during an interview on TVP Info, announced that all necessary preparations regarding the Civil Partnership Act have already been completed.

In May, the Civic Coalition intensified efforts to persuade the Polish People’s Party (PSL) to support the civil partnership bill. Amnesty International, along with the Campaign Against Homophobia and the Love Does Not Exclude association, also called on PSL politicians to back the bill amid disagreements with the section on same-sex adoptions.

In June, the Minister of Equality confirmed that the draft law on civil partnerships would be introduced by the government instead of the parliament. This process entails preparation and approval by the relevant ministry and the Council of Ministers before its presentation to the Sejm. In mid-October, the proposal was eventually submitted by the Government. The proposal seeks to introduce the possibility for couples to register their partnerships at the Registry Office, responding to the needs of same-sex couples who lack access to marriage, as well as different-sex couples in informal relationships who, for various reasons, cannot or choose not to marry. Throughout the month of November the bill was the subject of public consultations but the perspectives of CSOs have not been made public at this time.

In February, a Civic Platform (PO, EPP) MP Agnieszka Pomaska noted a growing shift towards supporting LGBTI rights in Poland. Nonetheless, she also acknowledged the long way to go before legalising same-sex marriages.

In May, Warsaw witnessed the first public blessing of a same-sex couple in Poland.

In September, the ECtHR ruled against Poland in a legal case involving two same-sex couples. The court ordered Poland to recognise the marriages of the couples, who had married in the UK and Denmark. Poland’s government had previously resisted this, citing national laws that only recognise heterosexual marriages.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In February, the “Stop LGBT” initiative launched a public campaign aimed at banning all gatherings that “promote non-heterosexual orientation” or “challenge the traditional man-woman relationship.” This campaign was accompanied by a bill seeking to amend the law on associations in a way that would effectively prohibit Pride marches and similar events. The bill was introduced to the Sejm by a citizens’ committee, and under parliamentary rules, the newly elected Sejm was obligated to continue working on it, even though legislative work typically ends with the conclusion



of a parliamentary term. During the bill's presentation in the Sejm, members of the citizens' committee used inflammatory language and made derogatory remarks against LGBTI individuals, prompting the speaker of Parliament to intervene multiple times. Despite the heated rhetoric, the Sejm ultimately rejected the "Stop LGBT" bill.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In July, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judged the case W.W. versus Poland. The case concerned the situation of a trans woman in the national prison system. According to the Court, Poland did not meet the requirements set out by art. 8 of ECtHR by failing to provide access to medication and hormonal therapy. However, the Court did not share the complainants' argumentation on the alleged violations of art. 2 and art. 3 of the ECtHR. In response, the Prison Services announced the establishment of a special team tasked with analysing the situation of trans prisoners.

In October a report by Rzeczpospolita detailed significant

issues for trans people in the prison system such as the denial of continued hormone replacement therapy, lack of access to medical professionals, and even refusal of basic items like bras and headbands. The report also shed light on the harsh conditions faced by trans prisoners, including solitary confinement and harassment from both fellow inmates and prison staff. The report noted that following a ruling from the ECtHR (see above), the Polish Prison Service is expected to address and resolve these ongoing problems.

## HEALTH

Ordo Iuris, an ultra-conservative Polish advocacy and legal organisation, petitioned the parliament to introduce legislation banning access to trans-related healthcare, including surgical procedures, hormone replacement therapy and puberty blockers, for minors and people diagnosed with any mental illness. In July, the parliamentary Petition Commission referred the matter for further proceedings in two other commissions (the Justice and Human Rights Commission and the Health Commission).

In August, the Ministry of Health established the Department of Equality in Health (Departament Równości w Zdrowiu), which will specifically focus on advancing healthcare policies and services for LGBTI persons, with particular emphasis on the needs of non-binary and trans individuals.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In May, Krakow Mayor Aleksander Miszański announced his willingness to participate in the city's Pride march and said the rainbow flag would also be raised at the town hall.

In May, the parliamentary team for LGBTI equality held a meeting focused on the situation of trans people in Poland. The meeting included input from parents of transgender youth, who proposed legal, educational, and healthcare reforms to improve the conditions for young trans people.

In June, Ombudsman Marcin Wiacek underscored the necessity for Poland to align its legal framework with a 2023 ruling by the ECtHR declaring that the Polish government has an obligation to legalise civil unions of same-sex couples.

In February, the Ombudsman's office issued an updated version of the guidelines for judges and lawyers on proceeding legal gender recognition cases. The publication was prepared by numerous lawyers and practitioners who are experts in this field. The Ombudsman has submitted the guidelines to courts in Poland.

As a consequence of the ECtHR judgement in the W.W. v. Poland case, the intervention of KPH in the Ministry of Justice, and

intervention of the Human Rights Ombudsman's office, the General Director of Prison Service declared the will to establish a working group of trans persons in prisons.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In January, the Supreme Court decided to refer a significant case concerning which relatives of trans people should be involved in gender change proceedings to the entire Civil Chamber. In January, the General Prosecutor and Minister of Justice Adam Bodnar withdrew Zbigniew Ziobro's request which started the procedure. However, the Supreme Court has not discontinued the proceedings and has not set a date of seating yet.

In February, the CoE's Commissioner for Human Rights highlighted concerns over the lengthy process of gender reassignment court cases.

In March, the government published a draft amendment to the Regulations on the Operation of Common Courts. The amendment was enacted on 1 October. The amendment proposed introducing the possibility for those submitting documentation to request a change of their gender marker to request their case to be classified as urgent to ensure their timely assignment to judges under the Random Case Assignment System and their prioritisation in court scheduling.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

The "Iron Man" exhibition, organised by the Mieszkanie Gepperta Gallery under the Art Transparent Contemporary Art Foundation, was cancelled after receiving backlash for its explicit nature.

In May, TVP3 Poznań launched "Talks of the Day," an educational program aiming to educate viewers and dispel myths and prejudices about LGBTI individuals.

In October, the District Court in Warsaw acquitted the leaders of the Women's Strike—Marta Lempart, Klementyna Suchanow, and Agnieszka Czerederecka-Fabin—of charges related to organising the Black Protests following the Constitutional Tribunal's ruling. This decision marks a significant legal victory for the activists, who had faced charges for their involvement in the large-scale demonstrations.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

A priest was sentenced to 18 months in prison for sexual and drug related offences. He had been arrested and charged in connection with a gay orgy in which one of the attendees collapsed due to an overdose of erectile dysfunction pills.

Mariusz Dzierżawski, a board member of the Pro-Right to Life Foundation, was sentenced to 20 hours of community service per month by the District Court in Gdańsk. The conviction followed Dzierżawski's involvement in the organisation of a controversial street campaign equating members of the LGBTI community to paedophiles.

In June, in Warsaw, six people were detained for attempting to disrupt the Equality Parade by organising a counter-demonstration.

In June, Poland's Prosecutor's Office announced it will cease investigating same-sex marriages conducted abroad. This decision derived from the revocation of a policy implemented by the previous right-wing government that required such marriages to undergo scrutiny.



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# PORTUGAL

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

On the International Day to Combat Hate Speech, Minister of Youth and Modernisation Margarida Balseiro Lopes highlighted the Government's concerns over rising hate speech. Balseiro underscored the need to review legislation for better victim protection, enhance public awareness, and support victims.

In August, the organisation Corpus published a list on social media titled "LGBTIA+ terrorists heavily funded with Portuguese tax money, with the socialist propaganda machine at their service," aiming to incite violence against those named. This list is part of the organisation's ongoing campaign to expose LGBTI activists and supporters, under the guise of fighting against what they claim is the misuse of Portuguese tax money for supporting LGBTI rights.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The Public Security Police and the National Republican Guard reported that hate crimes and hate speech in Portugal increased by 38% in 2023 compared to the previous year, with authorities documenting 347 incidents. The head of the Victim Support Association (APAV) highlighted that many incidents which should be classified as hate crimes are not adequately reported or misclassified due to inadequate recording practices.

## EDUCATION

In late January, President de Sousa vetoed a law that mandated schools to implement measures ensuring students' right to self-determination of gender identity. According to the Portuguese Presidency, the veto was issued because the decree on neutral names did not adequately align with the essential principle of personal freedom. The PAN party criticised the President for his "ideological conservatism," denouncing his decision to reject parliamentary measures designed to protect and affirm students' gender identity and expression in educational settings.

## EMPLOYMENT

In June, Randstad released its 2024 Workmonitor Pulse Survey, highlighting that while 49% of LGBTI employees feel comfortable discussing their identity at work, 28% still avoid it. The survey underscored that non-inclusive workplaces not only drive LGBTI talent away but also impact motivation and productivity, with discrimination concerns affecting 40% of LGBTI workers.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Armed Forces have announced the development of a manual to improve the integration of women and trans people. The initiative was promoted as part of the National Defence Sector Plan for Equality 2022-2025.

In January, the General Inspection of Internal Administration initiated disciplinary proceedings against 13 PSP police officers and GNR soldiers for sharing xenophobic and homophobic posts on social media.

On International Day of Remembrance for Holocaust Victims, President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa urged citizens to combat all forms of racism, anti-Semitism, discrimination, xenophobia, and homophobia.

On the IDAHOBIT the City Council of Funchal, Lisbon, Almada, Loures, Porto, Leiria raised the rainbow flag, underscoring their commitment to combating violence and discrimination against the LGBTI community.

In May, the facade of the Assembly of the Republic in Porto was illuminated in rainbow colours to commemorate IDAHOBIT.

In July, addressing a parliamentary hearing, Minister of Youth Margarida Balseiro Lopes acknowledged that discrimination against LGBTI people exists in Portugal and reaffirmed the Government's commitment to human rights.

In July, the Lisbon City Council approved municipal plans extending to 2026 focusing on gender equality, LGBTI rights, and the prevention of violence against women. The initiatives aim to promote LGBTI rights and work towards a more equitable municipality free from violence and discrimination.

## FAMILY

In May, former Minister of Education João Costa announced the launch of his book, "Manifesto pelas Identidades e Famílias (Manifesto for Identities and Families)". In the introduction, Costa clarified that the book is a direct response to the controversial "Identidade e Família (Identity and Family)" collection, edited by former Prime Minister Pedro Passos Coelho. Costa criticises what he perceives as an "attack on conquered rights" and an effort to impose a particular moral view on those who do not share it. He argued that movements opposing gender ideology and euthanasia, as presented in Coelho's collection, represent a "regression in civilisational advancement and an imposition of a singular moral perspective".

## HEALTH

In March, the Advisory Group for Sexual and Gender Diversity, previously monitoring the Health Strategy for LGBTI people, was officially integrated into Portugal's Directorate-General for Health (DGS). The Group is expected to maintain its mission to evaluate the implementation of the Health Strategy for LGBTI people.

In March, the Directorate for General Health (DGS) considered ending anonymity in cases of sexually transmitted diseases. GAT - Group of Activists in Treatment - denounced that this reversal communicates the policing of other people's sex lives, is a screening deterrent and will promote the underreporting of STIs.

In July, the Minister of Youth and Modernisation announced that anyone with a uterus, regardless of their name or gender marker in identity documents, will be included in cervical cancer screenings.

With the aim of carrying out a diagnosis of the situation regarding menstrual health in Portugal, the Directorate-General for Health developed the online questionnaire - "Let's talk about menstruation?" The Directorate-General was subjected to criticism for using the wording 'people who menstruate' while referring to its expected target audience.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In January, President de Sousa signed a decree banning forced conversion practices for LGBTI people. Furthermore, the decree imposes penalties of up to three years in prison or fines for those involved in such practices. In cases of "irreversible modifications" to the body, the sentence can be extended to up to five years in prison. As part of the provision, the decree establishes that the convicted may face professional and legal restrictions, especially in activities that involve contact with minors. The law entered into force on 1 March, 2024.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG) expressed its commitment to contribute to the development of the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2018-2030. The plan aims to combat discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, expression, and sexual characteristics through a broad range of activities such as the enhancement of the competencies of professionals across both public and private sectors.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In January, the Committee on Constitutional Affairs of the Assembly of the Republic approved a proposal to allow individuals to choose gender-neutral names. The initiative aimed at eliminating the existing requirement for names to be strictly identified with either male or female genders.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The EMIS 2024 study, the largest survey aimed at men who have sex with men (MSM) took place, and this year it was designed to include trans women and non-binary people for the first time.



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# ROMANIA

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In January, Romania's National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) ruled in favour of a printing house that refused to print leaflets on lesbian rights. The CNCD justified the decision by prioritising the Constitutional freedom of conscience over anti-discrimination laws. Although the legislative framework allows for the publishing, distribution, and sale of materials that advocate for or raise awareness about the human rights of LGBTI persons and explicitly prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation, the refusal was based on the grounds that the content did not align with "Christian principles."

In October 2024, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) issued a landmark ruling in Case C-4/23 Mirin, which clarified that Romania must automatically transcribe any changes in name and gender marker made through legal gender recognition in another EU Member State, without requiring additional internal procedures, reinforcing their rights to free movement.

## ASYLUM

Several individuals from countries where being LGBTI is criminalised have sought assistance from ACCEPT Association to access asylum in Romania.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections in Romania have highlighted the rise of far-right influences, also triggered an increase in hate speech against LGBTI people. Călin Georgescu's electoral score for his candidacy in the first presidential elections round provided a platform and incentive for the re-emergence of discriminatory attitudes, intensifying hate speech against the LGBTI community.

The ACCEPT Association filed a criminal complaint after a TikTok video of an interview clip of a participant in an LGBTI rights protest who was talking about marriage rights for same-sex couples, was edited to depict violent acts, suggesting physical violence as a justified response to LGBTI people talking about their rights. The video received over 200,000 views and 20,000 likes, along with hateful and dehumanising comments, with users agreeing that violent methods should be used against LGBTI people. A Zelist.ro analysis of social media and blog activity during the the elections campaign period (November 1 to December 5) revealed an increase in references to the LGBTI community. While these mentions initially rose moderately before the first presidential round, anti-LGBT propaganda increased after candidate Călin Georgescu advanced to the second round. Georgescu advocated for a return to criminalising homosexuality under previous Article 200 in the Penal Code. His opponent, Elena Lasconi, affiliated with a progressive party, but still lacking a clear

pro-LGBTI agenda, inadvertently fueled these tensions. Official social media accounts of PSD (Social Democratic Party) and AUR (Alliance for the Union of Romanians) amplified these messages, further mainstreaming discriminatory rhetoric.

The parties Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) and SOS Romania, which acquired eight seats at the European Parliament during the latest European Elections, relied on disinformation as well as on LGBTI-phobic and ultra-nationalist discourse in their social media campaigns.

Mihai Enache, the AUR candidate for Bucharest Mayor in the 2024 local elections, is facing accusations from LGBTI activists for hate speech after making controversial statements during his electoral campaign. The ACCEPT Association filed a complaint with the National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) against Enache, accusing him of discriminatory remarks. The complaint cites several Facebook posts made by Enache, in which he criticised the Central Electoral Bureau's guidelines on interacting with trans people and expressed his intention to protect children from what he referred to as "deviant ideologies". There has been a hearing on this case and the ruling is expected in 2025.

ACCEPT has filed multiple complaints with the National Audiovisual Council (CNA) regarding LGBTI-phobic comments aired on public platforms, with broadcasters failing to adequately moderate the content of political guests' statements. One significant case involved MEP Cristian Terheş, who made discriminatory remarks against non-binary people following the Eurovision Song Contest, where a non-binary artist won the top prize. ACCEPT's complaint led to sanctions against the station.

In another case, MEP Diana Ivanovici Şoşoacă, has also been active in promoting anti-EU and anti-LGBTI rhetoric, frequently sharing such views on her social media platforms.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The reporting of hate crime cases remains low. In December, ACCEPT Association launched a reporting platform that makes it easier for people to report hate crimes and be referred to counseling, or just document what has happened to them.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

Romania still has no regulation concerning medically unnecessary treatments performed on intersex children, which is still a common practice in the medical field.

There is no specific law banning conversion practices in Romania, and efforts to introduce broader protections for LGBTI people have been limited. Professional bodies, including the Romanian

College of Psychologists, do not issue guidelines prohibiting conversion therapy and, as many of these practices occur within conservative or religious communities, they are often disguised as religious or medical interventions. The spokesperson for the Romanian Orthodox Church, until early 2024, made statements promoting the idea that “homosexuality is reversible,” reflecting a broader conservative stance that hinders the acceptance of LGBTI rights and complicates efforts to end conversion practices.

## DATA COLLECTION

A survey by the ACCEPT Association, titled *Attitudes and Perceptions Towards the Need for Protection and Recognition of LGBTI Families in Romania*, highlighted increasing acceptance of LGBTI people and same-sex families in the country. The findings revealed that 70% of Romanians believe same-sex couples should be legally protected, and 56% support marriage or other forms of legal recognition for same-sex families—an increase of 13 percentage points compared to previous studies. The survey also underscored specific inequalities faced by LGBTI people: 69% of respondents found it unjust that LGBTI people cannot inherit from their partners, and 67% deemed it unfair that they cannot visit their partners as next of kin in hospitals.

Disaggregated data on LGBTI people is still not being collected. In a series of information requests submitted by ACCEPT under Law 544/2001 on free access to information to Population Registries across various counties, inquiries were submitted about the number of applications submitted by LGBTI people. The institutions responded that they do not collect data based on this criterion.

## EDUCATION

A new pre-university education law took effect at the beginning of the 2023/2024 school year, introducing the creation of a body aimed at combating discrimination within the educational system. This move sparked controversy and led to a wave of misinformation, particularly around an “Educational Contract” included in the legislation. Some sources falsely claimed that parents or school principals who refuse to sign this contract could face heavy fines or even community service penalties. Clauses promoting diversity and inclusivity are portrayed as “hidden agendas to advance gender theory and LGBTI rights”, fueling a wider anti-gender and anti-LGBTI discourse. In addition, a legislative proposal was introduced by former AUR deputy Mihai Lasca, who founded *Patrioții Poporului Român* (Patriots of the Romanian People - PPR), to censor LGBTI issues in schools, the media, and public spaces. His proposal also aims to ban pride marches and public assemblies on related topics, claiming inspiration from Viktor Orbán’s policies in Hungary.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In January, the CNCD ruled against a Bucharest printing house that had refused to print posters with pro-LGBTI messages. Nonetheless, several NGOs accused the CNCD of increasingly straying from its mission to uphold non-discrimination principles. The NGOs denounced the body’s decision not to sanction the printing house, as opposed to a previous case where the council sanctioned an art exhibition considered offensive to Christians.

In June, the AUR urged all Romanian political parties to endorse a “National Pact for Saving the Innocence of Children.” Among other provisions, the Pact entails the prohibition of alleged ‘LGBTI propaganda’ towards children.

Another such legislative initiative also was registered in the second half of the year, initiated by former AUR members and PSD. The draft also bans the broadcasting prior to 22.00hrs of programmes that promote or present gender reassignment, homosexuality or any identification with a gender other than the biological one. It also obliges broadcasters to “classify media content according to the potential impact on minors in relation to LGBTQIA+ ideology.

## FAMILY

In Romania there is still no legal recognition and protection of same sex families and there continues to be no implementation of the Coman judgement, despite the pre-infringement procedure launched by the European Commission in 2020. A working group coordinated by the Romanian Ombudsperson in cooperation with ACCEPT Association was created to identify solutions to implement ECtHR and CJEU judgments related to LGBTI rights.

In February, the AUR party launched an initiative to amend the Constitution to define family strictly as a union between a man and a woman, replacing the term “spouses” with “man and woman.” The initiative sparked protests by the LGBTI community at the AUR headquarters in Bucharest and was widely condemned by a consortium of LGBTI organisations, which highlighted the ongoing attacks on civil rights and freedoms in Romania. The initiative required 500,000 signatures from at least half of Romania’s counties by August 1, 2024. Despite high-profile campaigns and endorsements by parties, the proposal failed to meet the required threshold, marking the second such failure in recent years. In February, the Minister of Family, Youth, and Equal Opportunities, Natalia Intotero, announced plans to draft a new Family Law aimed at encouraging the birth rate and defining the family. Despite the legislation’s potential impact on diverse family structures, including same-sex families, LGBTI rights organisations were excluded from the consultation process, leading 30 NGOs to submit a letter to the Ministry expressing concerns about the

exclusion of same-sex families in favour of religious groups like the Christian Office for Rights and Freedoms (OCDL).

More than one year after the ECtHR judgment in the [Buhuceanu And Others V. Romania](#) case became final, stating that Romania is obliged to ensure a legislative framework so that same-sex families are protected and recognised, no action plan for its implementation has been put in place and the draft plan only states that the Government translated the decision and sent it to other institutions and authorities. At the time, Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu, now a presidential candidate, publicly stated that he does not intend to respect the judgment, stressing that Romania is not ready to recognise same-sex families. Romania's deadline to submit an action plan addressing the ECtHR's judgment was March 25. The final document lacked specific measures and included only the translation, dissemination, and internal discussions of the judgment.

In October Romanian Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu sparked [controversy](#) when he questioned the need to introduce civil partnerships for same-sex couples, claiming that LGBTI citizens already enjoy equal rights. The MozaiQ Association strongly criticised Ciolacu's remarks, asserting that they reflect a misunderstanding of the needs of LGBTI citizens. They pointed out that without civil partnerships, same-sex couples lack critical legal rights, including inheritance, medical decision-making, access to a partner's pension, and joint property ownership.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Extremist MPs Mihai Lasca and Dumitru Focşa (former members of AUR and current members of the Patriots of the Romanian People party) presented a proposal to forbid "LGBTI propaganda" in schools, media and demonstrations such as Pride.

Bucharest Pride march saw a record-breaking turnout of over 27,000 participants, making it the largest march to date. This year's celebrations were marked by a peaceful atmosphere, with no major incidents reported. Cluj Pride also saw a strong turnout with hundreds attending the event, despite a counter-protest by the "Family Meeting" group nearby, ensuring the event proceeded without incident. In Iasi, 1,500 people attended the Pride event safely, and in Timisoara, 1,500 people also participated without any issues. Brasov Pride was attended safely by 200 people.

ARK Oradea, the organisation behind Oradea Pride, accused local authorities of homophobia and transphobia after [repeated refusals by the city to permit their events](#), prompting ARK to organise a protest at the city hall. During the protest, which drew around 50 participants, both ARK Oradea and a counter-protester who incited violence were [fined](#), as the demonstration lacked authorisation.

Attempts to thwart Pride march organisations continued from local authorities in Timișoara, such as by refusing to hold the march on religious holidays, which is a frequent justification brought up in attempts to limit LGBTI assembly.

## HEALTH

A [study](#) by MozaiQ Association revealed significant gaps in healthcare services for LGBTI people. Queer women reported feeling unsafe during visits to obstetricians, gynecologists, and even in ambulances. Additionally, the study highlighted the lack of established procedures for trans healthcare, rendering it inaccessible and experimental. Furthermore, 23% of respondents living with HIV experienced medication shortages in hospitals. Trans people who have undergone legal gender recognition no longer have access to medical services specific to their reproductive health as the system does not allow the reimbursement of gynecological procedures for people with documents reflecting the male gender, nor urological procedures for people with documents reflecting the female gender.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Ahead of the 2024 local and European Parliament elections, a proposal to ensure the inclusion of trans people in the electoral process faced significant opposition from civil society groups and political actors. Opponents argued that trans people do not have the right to legal gender recognition under Romanian law. The proposal, submitted by the ACCEPT Association to the National Electoral Bureau, aimed to address issues faced by trans persons during previous elections, such as the refusal of their right to vote due to discrepancies between their civil status documents and their gender identity or expression.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In February, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) [heard](#) the case of Case C-4/23 Mirin, involving a Romanian-British trans man who had legally changed his gender marker and name in the UK but faced challenges in having these changes recognised in Romania. In October, the CJEU ruled that Romania, along with all other EU Member States, must recognise and automatically transcribe changes in name and gender marker made through legal gender recognition in another Member State. The court emphasised that this process must occur without the need for additional procedures, ensuring seamless recognition of gender identity across the EU.

The Working Group coordinated by the Romanian Office of the Ombudsperson has taken steps to address the implementation of the X and Y judgment (CJEU cases 2145/16 and 20607/16) and advocate for a legal gender recognition procedure in Romania. Despite these efforts, there has yet to be a legislative initiative.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

This year marked significant milestones for LGBTI representation, with Nicu Ștefănuță, a pro-LGBTI advocate, elected to the European Parliament on an inclusive platform. Additionally, Romania now had its first openly LGBTI candidate, Florin Buhuceanu, running in the December parliamentary elections.

Two LGBTI new community centres opened in Romania this year, leading to a total of four such centres in the country.

Ahead of the 2024 Romanian Presidential Elections, the Central Electoral Bureau (BEC) distributed to relevant election bodies Guidelines for Interaction with Trans Persons, developed and provided by ACCEPT Association. No major issues were reported by trans voters.

Cases of systemic discrimination on the basis of HIV infections have been reported to ACCEPT, especially in the context of employment in the Ministry of Internal Affairs and in the army.

The Romanian queer film 'Trei Kilometri Până la Capătul Lumii' gained international recognition by winning the Queer Palm at Cannes 2024.

In December, ACCEPT Association filed complaints against AUR and PSD for using discriminatory campaign materials targeting the LGBTI community during the parliamentary elections.

## PUBLIC OPINION

The 2024 Presidential and Parliamentary electoral campaigns highlighted deep societal divisions, with far-right rhetoric dominating political discourse. Anti-LGBTI propaganda surged after candidate Călin Georgescu advanced to the presidential election's second round. His platform's emphasis on "traditional family values" and opposition to LGBTI rights intensified online hate speech and led to direct threats against organisations.

The controversy surrounding Imane Khelif's participation in the Olympics caused a rapid spread of disinformation and transphobia in media and online spaces. False claims that Khelif, a female athlete, was "actually a man" gained traction, amplified by influential foreign figures such as J.K. Rowling and Elon Musk.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Romania is still lacking mandatory sex education. This is due to the fact that, in 2020, the Constitutional Court ruled that the bill that deleted "sanitary education" from the law on the rights of the child, was constitutional. Although the Education for Health class covers sexuality to some extent, very few schools teach it.



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# RUSSIA

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In 2024, access to goods and services for LGBTI people in Russia deteriorated significantly due to intensified state repression and societal discrimination.

In April, the Kino TV channel was penalised by the St. Petersburg district court under Part 2 of Article 6.21.2 of the Russian Administrative Code. The penalty was awarded for broadcasting a film depicting “non-traditional sexual relations” labelled with a “16+” rating, thus allegedly making it accessible to minors.

In May, administrative protocols were filed against the online cinemas Wink and KinoPoisk under the Russian law prohibiting the promotion of LGBTI content, as reported by RIA Novosti.

In September, Moscow’s Tagansky District Court fined the online cinema Kinopoisk twice in one day, for a total of 10 million roubles (99,000 Euro) for the screening of the film ‘Love’ by French director Gaspard Noe. The online cinema was found guilty under the Protocol on “propaganda of paedophilia” on the Internet (Part 2 of Article 6.21.1 of the Code of Administrative Violations) and fined 7 million roubles (69,000 Euro). In addition, Kinopoisk was fined 3 million roubles (29,000 Euro) under the protocol on “propaganda of LGBT and sex change” (Part 3 of Article 6.21.1 of the Code of Administrative Offences).

A joint study by the Sphere Foundation and the human rights organisation Civic Control shows that the prosecution of streaming services and TV channels for showing films or videos under the ‘propaganda’ law was the second largest group of court cases between December 2022 (when the new propaganda law comes into force) and March 2024.

In June, Reuters reported that Duolingo, the language learning app, removed references to “non-traditional sexual relations” from its content in Russia. The removal followed a warning from Russia’s communication regulator, which had flagged the LGBTI content as “extremism.”

## ASYLUM

A gay couple living in Russia faced increasing threats after the Kremlin expanded its anti-LGBTI laws in December 2022. Their social media presence, which had gained thousands of followers, led to complaints about their “propaganda of nontraditional sexual relations.” In 2023, Gogishvili was fined, and Xu was detained in a migrant Centre, awaiting deportation. They eventually fled Russia separately and reunited in France in 2024, where they are seeking asylum.

In January, Antonina Babkina, a transgender girl from Russia who had been granted asylum, committed suicide in the Netherlands.

This is at least the fourth reported case of suicide among Russian-speaking refugees in the country since 2023. This case highlights the challenges faced by LGBTQ+ refugees in Dutch camps, including inadequate psychological support and poor living conditions.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In May, former deputy for the Liberal Democratic Party and public figure Roman Khudyakov criticised interviews with feminine men and trans women. Khudyakov notably described such interviews as part of an “information war” promoting “LGBTI behaviour”. As such, he called for further enforcement of anti-LGBTI legislation to criminalise the alleged promotion of LGBTI identities.

In July, the head of the Russian delegation to the Vienna talks on military security and arms control, Konstantin Gavrilov, accused the OSCE of straying from its founding principles of arms control, expressing displeasure at the fact that the OSCE reserved part of its priorities to the protection of LGBTI people in conflicts against the backdrop of a tense international situation.

In December, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled in favor of Alexei Evstifeev, Ruslan Miniakhmetov, and Daniil Grachev, finding that Russian authorities had failed to respond adequately to homophobic statements made against them. The court determined that the Russian government had not fulfilled its obligations to protect the applicants’ privacy or safeguard them from discrimination and highlighted the Russian authorities’ tolerance of openly homophobic rhetoric, which contributes to impunity and an increase in hate crimes.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In May, a report by LGBTI groups Coming Out and the Sphere Foundation highlighted that homophobic and transphobic sentiments surged in Russia. The findings highlighted that over 43% of LGBTI people reported violence or pressure due to their sexual orientation or gender identity. According to the report 8% of respondents experienced physical violence, with the rate rising to 12% among trans people, while 24% reported threats of physical violence. Blackmail or extortion, involving threats to release personal information or photos, affected 14% of respondents.

At least 18 police raids in gay clubs and queer parties were carried out in different Russian cities during 2024, according to one of the LGBTI news channels on Telegram. Often, these raids were carried out with violence (see here and here) and the objective of humiliating, detaining and prosecuting patrons for LGBTI propaganda and extremism (see here, here and here). Some of the clubs targeted by these raids were subsequently forced to close.

In March in Minusinsk, two students were verbally and physically attacked by a teenage boy after being questioned about their short haircuts and gender presentation.

In April, two men beat up and robbed a gay man on a fake date in Yekaterinburg.

In July, police officers in Ufa attacked a migrant trans sex worker, beating her and robbing her of 100,000 rubles. The policemen were subsequently sacked and the woman deported.

During the year, 4 anonymous reports of homophobic violence from different Russian cities were reported to Coming Out. Some cases involved regular family violence, another involved an attack by a stranger on public transport, another reported police violence.

The Russian LGBT network has recorded several cases of ‘fake dates’ against underage men: the perpetrators recorded sex with young gay men on video and then extorted money from them.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

According to Sever.Reality St. Petersburg, Russian authorities are using abusive methods, including beatings, prayers, and forced injections, to “treat” LGBTI people.

In May, Russia’s first trans politician, Roman Alyoshin, announced his intention to detransition amid an intensifying crackdown on the rights of LGBTI people.

## DATA COLLECTION

A study by the LGBTI group “Exit” surveyed 816 trans people across Russia, highlighting severe challenges following the 2023 ban on gender transitions. Participants reported restricted healthcare access, the inability to change gender markers, and rising discrimination, with many viewing emigration as the only solution despite financial barriers. The study also noted occasional support from some state employees, offering rare positive examples amid the overwhelmingly negative environment.

In May, a study by Russian LGBTI support groups Coming Out and the Sphere Foundation revealed that violence, discrimination, and stress have intensified for LGBTI people in Russia over the past year. The survey found a rise in threats of violence, with 25% of respondents experiencing threats in 2023 compared to 20% in 2022, and violent or hateful acts increased from 30% to 43%. Additionally, one in five cisgender respondents and one in three trans respondents reported being denied medical care, while the proportion of trans people who were denied government services doubled. The report noted that the Volga Federal District ranked

third among regions with the lowest risk levels for LGBTI people. Nonetheless, the findings highlighted that the Volga District also had the highest number of respondents who do not disclose their LGBTI identity to their families.

In May, Idel.Realities reported the experiences of LGBTI people from the Volga region after the tightening of anti-LGBTI laws. One respondent, who left Russia in 2021 on a student visa, shared that the growing lack of safety for her and her partner, despite hiding their identities, forced them to flee.

In August, Human Rights Watch released a report examining the repressive legislation enacted by President Vladimir Putin’s government since 2020. The report detailed how these laws have been used to stifle dissent and cripple civil society, severely limiting freedoms of expression, association, and assembly while enforcing state-controlled historical, social, and political narratives.

In November, a survey on attitudes towards homosexuality, LGBTI rights, and “propaganda of homosexuality” in Russia revealed a significant shift toward negative views. More than half of the respondents expressed a negative attitude toward LGBTI people, with only a little over a quarter showing neutral or friendly sentiments. The proportion of Russians who believe that gays and lesbians should enjoy the same rights as other citizens has decreased drastically over the past twenty years, from 50% to 30%. The survey also highlighted widespread concerns, with nearly two-thirds of respondents fearing that their children or grandchildren could be exposed to “propaganda of homosexuality.” More than half stated they would reduce or stop communication with acquaintances if they discovered their homosexuality. However, the survey noted a small increase in the number of people who report having gay or lesbian acquaintances—10% of respondents, compared to just 3% in 2015.

## EDUCATION

In November 2023, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation indicated that the use of feminines—distinctively feminine forms of nouns—could suggest involvement in “LGBTI extremism.” While no administrative or criminal cases have arisen on this point, the ruling has contributed to a broader chilling effect on language use. In response, the Higher School of Economics in Moscow prohibited students from using feminised terms in their written work, further curtailing linguistic expression.

In March, a trans woman reported to Coming Out that a college in Irkutsk refused to replace her education diploma after she changed the gender marker on her passport.

## EMPLOYMENT

In April 2024, Denis Leontovich, an official in Samara's youth policy agency, was publicly targeted by Russian State Duma deputy Alexander Khinshtein, who shared photos of his alleged gay wedding online with the objective of discrediting him and fueling hatred. Following intense social media harassment and public outcry, Leontovich was forced to resign and ultimately left Russia due to fears of further persecution and legal threats. In October 2024, Leontovich, now living abroad, spoke out against Russia's anti-LGBTI policies and the ongoing Russia's war in Ukraine.

In September, a biology and chemistry teacher from Khabarovsk was forced to resign after a video surfaced showing him dancing in high heels, sparking public controversy. In October, he filed a lawsuit against the Khabarovsk education department, seeking reinstatement, and the case is currently ongoing.

In October, two policewomen in St Petersburg were fired for allegedly flirting with each other on social media.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The organisers of the Andrei Dementyev All-Russian Poetry Prize have excluded entries from trans people. The organisation stated that, "although submissions are accepted from poets regardless of citizenship, nationality, profession, or residence, those who have changed their gender would be disqualified".

Following the Kremlin's intensified push for "traditional values" and its criminalisation of the LGBTI community, those who challenge gender norms or advocate for LGBTI rights found themselves particularly targeted. This includes drag artists who have reported the need to go underground, taking measures to keep performing away from the gaze of authorities.

In March, two patrons of the Sholes bar were charged under the "LGBTI propaganda" law after being reported for kissing in the establishment. Eyewitnesses filed a complaint with the head of the Investigative Committee, demanding action against the bar's staff for inaction. In May, the bar announced a temporary closure for alleged renovations.

## FAMILY

In April, in Tula, the mother of an underage girl was reported to the Juvenile Affairs Commission for failing to meet parental responsibilities under part 1 of article 5.35 of the Administrative Code. The daughter was also registered with the police department for minors due to her posts on a Telegram channel, which, according to the law enforcement, included symbols of a 'banned extremist LGBTI organisation' and other illegal content.

In September, in Tula, police conducted a "preventive visit" to a 17-year-old boy for distributing 'symbols of the banned extremist LGBT organisation' in a Telegram channel. They forced him to delete the content, and registered him with the juvenile affairs department. Additionally, his mother was charged with 'failure to fulfil or improper fulfilment of parental duties' under part 1 of article 5.35 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offences.

In September, Russian MPs voted in favour of a bill that would prohibit the adoption of Russian children by citizens of countries that allow legal gender recognition. In November 2024, a court in Moscow dissolved a de facto same-sex marriage for the first time despite the fact that same-sex marriages are not recognised in Russia. The marriage was dissolved between a cis-male and a transgender man who had changed his documents after entering into a same-sex marriage.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

No public rallies, marches, demonstrations or pickets in defence of LGBT people were held in Russia in 2024. This is largely due to the Russian authorities' persecution of people for expressing their opinions, which has become much more severe since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In March, the Federal Financial Monitoring Service added the "LGBT movement" to its list of terrorists and extremists.

In May 2024, a second criminal case on LGBTI extremism was opened in Russia - against Artem Fokin, the head of the LGBT initiative 'Irida' (Samara). He faces up to 10 years in prison for leading an LGBT initiative. This is the only criminal case against the head of an LGBT initiative in Russia so far.

In October 2024, the European Court of Human Rights ruled against Russia's "foreign agents" law, condemning it as a violation of fundamental rights. The Court found that the law infringed on the right to freedom of association for the LGBT organisation Social Information Centre Action in St. Petersburg.

In 2024, Russian LGBT initiatives minimised offline events due to the criminalisation of LGBTI extremism by Russian authorities.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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 rubles. 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 demand 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.

## HEALTH

Due to pressure from conservative activists, a clinic cancelled a scheduled gender-affirming surgery for a trans woman, despite the fact that the patient had obtained a transition certificate and changed the gender marker on her passport before the law banning gender transitions was passed.

The Coming Out study, published in November 2024, reveal that trans people in Russia are increasingly forced to seek semi-legal or illegal methods for acquiring essential medications, due to limited access to hormonal treatments and medical consultations. There is growing mistrust among trans people towards healthcare providers, primarily due to concerns over confidentiality and the quality of services. This lack of professional support creates significant risks, as incorrect dosage calculations and inadequate care can severely impact the health and wellbeing of transgender individuals.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

LGBTI activist Zhenya Morris was forced to flee Russia after security forces visited her home and her Queer Compass Telegram channel was blocked by Roskomnadzor (the Russian federal executive agency responsible for monitoring, controlling and censoring Russian mass media) and added to the list of banned sites.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In May, the ECtHR ruled that Russia had discriminated against a teacher who was dismissed for posting pictures indicating her sexual orientation.

In October, the ECHR found the inclusion of more than 100 Russians and organisations in the register of 'foreign agents' to be discriminatory and unlawful, and awarded them compensation ranging from 10,000 to 1 million Euro.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In August, the Russian Computer Sports Federation announced its decision to discontinue holding League of Legends tournaments, citing the presence of LGBTI characters in the video game.

In April 2024, a complaint was filed demanding the expulsion of volleyball player Ebrar Karakurt from the Russian Lokomotiv team due to her being openly lesbian.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In March, a Russian court placed two employees of the Pose bar in custody, accusing them of involvement with an "extremist organisation." The employees could be condemned to up to ten years in prison if convicted of having promoted "non-traditional sexual relations" among the bar's patrons.

A St. Petersburg court fined Alexei Nazarov 5,000 rubles for referencing an article from 'Meduza', calling for activists from Russia and Belarus to address systemic issues faced by women in Russia on his VKontakte page.

In May, Istories published a study by a graduate student from the University College of Dublin's Law School, which analysed 1,500 court decisions involving "non-traditional orientations in Russia." The study underscored that over the past two years, Russian authorities have fully criminalised the LGBTI community through discriminatory legislation, leading to increased hate-based violence against LGBTI people.

In a report released in August, Civil Control and the Sphere Foundation examined the law enforcement practices regarding the ban on "LGBT+ propaganda" in Russia. The study analysed 64 court decisions made between December 2022 and March 2024, focusing on administrative articles 6.21 and 6.21.2 of the Russian Code of Administrative Offenses, which prohibit the "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" among both adults and children. The report highlighted systemic issues and contradictions in the application of these laws. The report also criticised the independence of experts used by courts, noting

that many of these experts were affiliated with state bodies responsible for initiating administrative offense protocols.

In November, Russian security forces raided the “Zebra” club in Voronezh, where a closed LGBTI costume party was being held. According to PostNews, approximately 40 people were present at the event when the raid occurred. Following the raid, a criminal case was opened against the event organisers under the article on extremism.

In late November, Russian police raided several bars and nightclubs in Moscow, enforcing laws criminalising “LGBT propaganda.” During the raids, authorities confiscated smartphones, laptops, and video cameras, and checked the documents of club-goers. Social media footage showed police ordering partygoers to lie on the floor at the Arma nightclub, while another video depicted people being escorted out of the popular gay club Mono with their hands over their heads with a police van waiting outside. The Interior Ministry also reported a raid on a nightclub on Skladochnaya Street for allegedly promoting the “ideology of the banned LGBT movement.”

In December, a trans girl in Moscow was detained by the police at a bus stop and sent to the military registration and enlistment office, as reported by the Sphere Foundation, which supports LGBTI people. The police did not provide an explanation for her detention but stated their intention to send her to military service. The girl was held at the Perovo police department from about 12.30 – 09.00, without food or the ability to communicate. She was then taken to the district military registration and enlistment office, followed by a transfer to the North-Eastern Administrative District of Moscow. At around 21.00, she was sent to the City Assembly Point but managed to escape. However, she was re-detained later that evening and taken to the Pechatniki police department. At the time of writing, the girl’s whereabouts were unknown, and efforts by her lawyer to obtain information from the police were unsuccessful.



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# SAN MARINO

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The country's first LGBTI organisation, "121," was established as a committee and later formalised as a legal association. Its mission is to raise awareness, advocate for community representation, and provide a support network addressing legal, psychological, and health-related needs of the LGBTI community.

## HEALTH

The parliament voted in favour of providing free PrEP treatment to combat the spread of HIV. While the therapy is approved on paper, implementation measures, such as dedicated offices, personnel, funding, drug availability, and informational resources, remain absent. Full availability is anticipated to be delayed until 2025.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

A new law targeting cyberbullying was adopted, explicitly including protection based on gender and sexual orientation. The law complements a 2024 regulation addressing private violence, with a stronger focus on safeguarding women.



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# SERBIA

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In Serbia, trans people face challenges accessing testosterone due to supply chain disruptions, with shortages of Testosteron Depo, a critical HRT medication. Advocacy groups are working with Galenika, the manufacturer, to address these issues and ensure consistent availability.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The publication “Hate Speech of Politicians Towards the LGBTQI+ Community in Serbia” offers a detailed analysis of 70 instances of hate speech made by politicians about the LGBTI population in Serbian media between April 2023 and April 2024.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In January, the Pride Info Centre in Belgrade was attacked by a masked individual who shattered its front windows.

In September, the Pride Info Centre in Belgrade announced it would cease operations due to a lack of financial and institutional support, making its continued sustainability impossible. The centre became a symbol of resistance and hope for the LGBTI community in Belgrade, despite facing almost daily threats, insults, and over 20 attacks since 2018, none of which were properly sanctioned by the Ministry of the Interior.

## DATA COLLECTION

A survey conducted by Zoomer revealed widespread discrimination against trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse people in Serbia’s job market. The survey highlighted that three-quarters of those surveyed fear job interviews due to anticipated discrimination, while half reported having encountered discrimination in their workplaces. The findings also indicated that one-third of respondents felt that employers were emboldened to violate their labour rights because of their gender identity.

## EMPLOYMENT

Rainbow Ignite played a key role in the research “The Economic Case for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Serbia,” conducted by Open for Business, by offering insights and data on the socio-economic challenges faced by the LGBTI community in Serbia. The study revealed that discrimination and inadequate inclusion cost Serbia between RSD 42.8–47.3 billion (364.3–402.6 million Euro) annually, representing up to 0.70% of the GDP.

## FAMILY

In March, the Green-Left Front (ZLF) in Serbia proposed a bill for civil partnerships, aiming to grant same-sex couples equal rights,

including inheritance, property relations, and healthcare access. Highlighting systemic discrimination and lack of government support, ZLF emphasised that the bill aligns with human rights principles and addresses widespread public support for such measures, as seen in prior surveys. They also criticised the government’s silence during Pride week and urged legislative and societal change to recognise LGBTI partnerships as legitimate families. As of December, the bill had not been adopted.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In September, thousands took to the streets in Belgrade for the Pride march, demanding legislation to recognise same-sex unions and gender identity rights. Participants pointed to the persistent prejudice and stereotypes that continue to affect Serbian society. During the event, police separated a group of counter-protesters opposing the march. Nonetheless, organisers criticised the silence of state bodies and institutions on the rising hardships encountered by the LGBTI community in Serbia, calling for political representatives to express their support for events like the Pride march.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In February, Serbia’s Interior Ministry announced that the Prosecutor’s Office would investigate claims of police misconduct. This decision followed the alleged beating and humiliation experienced by two LGBTI people during an apartment search in Belgrade.

In February, two LGBTI individuals in Belgrade were subjected to police brutality, including abuse, torture, and sexual harassment, during a police search of their apartment. In early March, several hundred Serbian LGBTI activists and supporters gathered in Belgrade to protest the incident, demanding the criminal prosecution of the involved officers and quicker sanctions against police who commit violence.



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# SLOVAKIA

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In July, the Culture Minister, Martina Šimkovičová, Slovak National Party (SNS), attributed Europe's declining fertility rates on the LGBTI community. In an interview with Topky.sk she suggested that the excessive number of LGBTI people is contributing to Europe's demographic decline, specifically within the "white race."

## EDUCATION

Following Hungary and Bulgaria, the government attempted to introduce new regulations aimed at restricting "LGBTQ+ propaganda" in schools. The proposed bill, introduced in September by the ruling Slovak National Party (SNS), was intended to "protect children" from influences deemed inconsistent with the national Constitution by amending the Education Act. The bill, backed by four SNS deputies, including party leader Andrej Danko, sought to ensure that the educational processes in schools and school facilities are in accordance with the principles and standards that reflect the cultural and ethical values of Slovak society, and support education for responsible citizenship, respect for biological and social factors and the integrity of family relationships. Schools found in violation of this ban could have faced fines of up to €30,000. Proponents of the bill justified the amendment by referencing Article 41 of the Slovak Constitution, which defines marriage as the exclusive union between a man and a woman. Education Minister Tomáš Drucker firmly opposed the law, arguing that such issues often ignite emotional and ideological debates, detracting from efforts to improve the quality of education. In November, the amendment was rejected by the Slovak Parliament but representatives of the SNS stated that they would continuously resubmit the bill until its adoption.

In October, several schools canceled commemorative events for the victims of a terrorist attack targeting LGBTI people at the queer bar Tepláreň in 2022, following pressure from far-right politicians on social media. Prime Minister Robert Fico further fueled the controversy by declaring that people should report to him any school events promoting LGBTI ideology.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In June, the board of the Bibiana Revue magazine, published by the Bibiana children's art gallery, resigned. The resignation followed a dispute with the magazine's director over the planned inclusion of a review for a children's book titled Stáva sa Elu, which addresses topics related to non-binary and trans identities.

In July, Slovakia's Deputy Prime Minister, Tomáš Taraba, announced that he would skip the closing ceremony of the Paris 2024 Olympics. He declared his decision was in protest against the depiction of the Last Supper presented at the opening ceremony, which he believed was filled with "LGBT ideology" and insulting to Christian symbols.

## FAMILY

In March, a Slovak citizen who had married a British national in a same-sex marriage and subsequently obtained British citizenship, was informed that his Slovak citizenship was being revoked. Subsequently, the Slovak Constitutional Court took on the case for further consideration.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In July, the 14th annual Pride Festival gathered approximately 10,000 people in Bratislava, despite warnings of a potential terrorist attack on the march. After the event, Deputy Prime Minister Tomáš Taraba, filed a criminal complaint with the General Prosecutor's Office against the organisers, alleging defamation of the state flag. However, the prosecutor's office later dismissed the complaint, ruling that the use of the rainbow flag with the Slovak state symbol was unfounded as a legal offence.

In early July, the Slovak parliament passed a controversial law, commonly referred to as "Lex assassination" ("Lex atentát"), through an expedited legislative procedure which led it to come into effect on July 15. Human rights organisations have expressed alarm over several aspects of the law, notably the prohibition of all gatherings within 50 metres of designated sites. The law also expands the grounds on which assemblies can be banned, introducing vague and subjective criteria that make it easier for authorities to restrict peaceful gatherings. Despite the implications of these changes, there has been no comprehensive analysis of the law's full impact, and key stakeholders, including civil society, were excluded from the legislative debate. The law places an unreasonable level of responsibility on municipalities, granting them the power to ban gatherings based on ill-defined concepts like public order or potential conflict, both of which lack clear legal guidelines. This creates the risk of inconsistent interpretation and arbitrary enforcement.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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 Šimkovičová, 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.

## HEALTH

In April, the Health Ministry announced the discontinuation of a series of standards outlining the necessary steps in medical transition. The decision was justified on the basis of alleged administrative and implementation-related issues. LGBTI organisations argued that the Health Ministry’s decision to cancel transgender care standards was part of a political trade-off in exchange for the Slovak National Party’s endorsement of Hlas Party’s presidential candidate, Peter Pellegrini. The organisations emphasised that the decision came just days before the presidential election.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In February of this year, the Ministry of Justice cancelled the only subsidy call for its Human Rights 2024 Program, effectively halting the provision of financial grants to human rights non-governmental organisations. The decision came just one day before the scheduled oral hearings of subsidy applicants and was made without any substantial justification from the department. These grants were a crucial source of funding for NGOs involved in informal education, supporting disadvantaged population groups, and advocating for LGBTI rights. Compounding this issue, the Ministry of Culture, under the leadership of Minister Martina Šimkovičová (SNS), also terminated all grants aimed at supporting NGOs working to protect LGBTI rights.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In 2024, the Ministry of Health in Slovakia canceled the guidelines for legal gender reassignment. While the process is still technically allowed under existing laws, registries have stopped performing gender reassignment procedures. Additionally, the Ministry of the Interior has refused to issue an instruction to resume these procedures, causing significant concerns for trans people.

Slovakia mandates trans people to undergo transition-related surgeries and obtain certification from a medical professional to have their gender identity legally recognised. In November 2023, the government reversed guidelines that had previously allowed

trans people to update their gender marker on legal documents without the need for surgery.

In May, a proposed amendment to Act No. 301/1995 failed to pass the second reading. The amendment sought to alter the law on birth numbers by mandating that only “biological sex” be recorded on official documents.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In 2024, projects related to LGBTI rights were excluded from the evaluation of grant schemes at the Slovak Ministries of Culture and Justice, despite receiving scores that would typically qualify them for support.

In January, Culture Minister Martina Šimkovičová announced plans to cut funding for Pride events and LGBTI educational programmes. In a Facebook statement the Minister expressed her intention to halt what she described as the exploitation of department funds. In January, the director of the Kunsthalle Bratislava art gallery resigned following the Culture Ministry’s decision to halt funding for the institution’s 2024 artistic and educational programmes. The organisation expressed alarm on social media, questioning the ministry’s commitment to the independence and freedom of cultural institutions.

In July, Slovakia’s Foreign Ministry abruptly removed gay diplomat Metod Špaček from his position as permanent representative to the United Nations in New York, in a move that is deemed political.

In September, in response to actions by the Ministry of Culture led by Martina Šimkovičová (See more under Freedom of Expression), hundreds of cultural organisations, including theaters and galleries, threatened to go on strike. Their discontent stems from the Ministry’s moves against cultural institutions, including dismissals of management at prominent organisations, and its criticism of liberal art and LGBTI educational initiatives. In response to these actions, the Culture Strike initiative, which represents over 340 organisations, and raised alarms and warned that a full strike may follow if their concerns aren’t addressed.

In October, Zuzana Ľapáková, the new director of the Slovak National Theatre (SND), canceled a scheduled performance of Moonstone by Prague’s Studio of Heroes, which was set to be part of the Drama Queer festival. Ľapáková’s decision was seen as discriminatory by festival organizers, who accused her of censorship.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 2024, the Slovak government continued to dismantle

independent institutions designed to combat corruption, which also led to the abolition of specialised units within the police and prosecution dedicated to tackling extremism and hate crimes against LGBTI people.

In January, Special Prosecutor Daniel Lipšic announced that the investigation into the October 2022 attack on the Tepláreň gay bar in Bratislava was concluded. Lipšic confirmed the perpetrator was a secondary-school student who took his own life following the attack.

In September, two individuals were arrested and charged with leading Terrorgram Collective, an online white supremacist group that promoted hate crimes and terrorist attacks. The group has been linked to the deadly shooting at a queer bar in Slovakia in October 2022, which resulted in the deaths of two people. New details suggest that the Terrorgram Collective played a role in inspiring the attack, as the shooter had been influenced by the group's rhetoric.



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# SLOVENIA

## ASYLUM

Slovenian courts have made notable progress in recognising the vulnerabilities of LGBTI asylum seekers, granting refugee status to individuals persecuted for their sexual orientation or gender identity, according to a [report](#) by Ljubljana Pride Association. However, challenges persist, such as inadequate data collection, late disclosure, and the lack of tailored support. Many LGBTI refugees continue to face inadequate healthcare, unsafe housing, and discriminatory practices in Slovenia.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In April, the Ethics Commission of Journalists ruled that journalist Rok Blažič violated the Code of Journalists of Slovenia in a series of articles published in 2023. According to the Ethics Commission, Blažič misleadingly portrayed gender reassignment as a commercialised and harmful practice.

In April, the two largest opposition parties in Slovenia, SDS and NSi, recently submitted a proposal to amend the Criminal Act to criminalise the promotion of homosexuality and trans identities, with penalties of up to three years in prison. The proposal mirrored similar laws seen in Hungary, Bulgaria, Georgia, Belarus, and Russia. However, the current government swiftly rejected the initiative, citing its incompatibility with human rights and democratic principles.

In June, a special edition of the magazine 'Demokracija' was published under the provocative title 'LGBT+ Ideology: Genocide of Childhood', featuring 76 pages primarily focused on anti-trans narratives.

In September, the second-largest opposition party, NSi, submitted a proposal to the Ministry of Health to remove gender-affirming surgery costs from coverage under compulsory health insurance. As of now, the government has not yet responded to the proposal.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In 2023, the Legebitra Society received 26 reports through its website Niprav.si, which serves as a platform for reporting hate crimes and hate speech. These reports were submitted both anonymously and with contact information, with some individuals also requesting further assistance from the Society's legal team.

During the [Pride celebrations in Maribor](#), the employees of a bookstore, were subjected to various instances of [verbal and physical abuse](#) after hanging a LGBTI flag over the entrance. The director of the bookstore reported strangers spitting on the flag, attempting to forcibly remove it, performing Nazi salutes, and even going as far as threatening the staff with scissors

and physical force. The bookstore's director [accused](#) the police of inadequate action and reported that a police patrol blamed the employees for the abuse they endured and suggested the bookstore should remove the flag to avoid further incidents.

In June, [Ljubljana Pride Festival 2024](#), marked the 40th [anniversary](#) of the LGBTI movement in Slovenia, ending with the [Pride March](#). It was marked by several [hate-motivated incidents](#). The [attacks](#) included theft and desecration of rainbow flags, harassment, and physical assaults. Notably, eggs were thrown at participants, and perpetrators uploaded footage online with threatening commentary. Despite the [establishment of two on-site points](#) for reporting incidents or attacks, marking more effective collaboration with the police compared to the 2023 march, the police were criticised for their inaction and reluctance to register complaints or take adequate protective measures.

In Koper, a trans woman and her mother were subjected to a violent attack, with the assailant chasing them until they were able to find refuge in a nearby bar. They remained there until the police arrived to ensure their safety.

In October and November, the Mariborka bookstore in Maribor was [targeted](#) in two LGBTI-phobic [attacks](#). Graffiti and hateful messages were sprayed on the bookstore's door, drainpipe, and other areas, including the phrase "SMRT PEDROM" (Death to Fags), and stickers with slogans promoting intolerance.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In June, Deputy Mayor Dejan Crnek and Minister of Labor Luka Mesec [joined](#) 5,000 participants for the yearly Pride march in Ljubljana.

In July, the Ljubljana City Council approved a [proposal](#) to name a new park after Ada Škerl and Sonja Plaskan, making it the first park in Slovenia dedicated to a same-sex couple.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Bogdan Lešnik, a prominent Slovenian psychologist, humanist, and LGBTI activist known for his contribution to the creation of a grassroots LGBTI movement in Slovenia, [passed away](#) at the age of 73.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The Ministry of Health officially confirmed its agreement with the Interdisciplinary Council for Gender Recognition, stating that medical treatment is not required for legal gender recognition. As a result, the Ministry has formally requested the Ministry of Internal Affairs to amend the relevant sub-article of the Civil Registry Act.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Two initiatives were submitted to the Constitutional Court's constitutional review concerning sexual and reproductive rights. The first concerned equal access to assisted reproductive procedures for lesbian couples, while the second concerned the access for single women to the same services.

In November, the Constitutional Court of Slovenia ruled that certain provisions of the Act on Infertility Treatment and Biomedically Assisted Fertilisation (OBMP) are unconstitutional. Specifically, the court found that limiting access to OBMP procedures to single women and women in same-sex relationships violated the constitution. The court has given the country one year to address the non-compliance and amend the law accordingly.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

At the Museum of contemporary history and in the Museum of the city of Ljubljana, two exhibitions were set up in honour of the 40th anniversary of the creation of the LGBTI movement in Slovenia.



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# SPAIN

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In February, Isabel Rodríguez, the Director of the Women's Institute sparked controversy by attending an event organised by "Feminist Teachers for Coeducation", who are explicitly in favour of repealing Spain's LGBTI law and ending support for trans students. The meeting included presentations that equated trans people with paedophiles and criticised "gender ideology". In July, six months after her appointment, Rodríguez was dismissed by the Spanish Government due to suspected irregularities in several public tenders. She was replaced by Cristina Hernández.

In June, a subcommittee at the Low Chamber (Congreso de los Diputados) was set up to develop a State Pact against hate speech towards vulnerable groups.

Albert Puig, a councilor from the party Aliança Catalana, made offensive remarks about the LGBTI community, referring to gay men as "the biggest cancer Catalonia has". His comments were made just before the IDAHOBIT and followed a message from the Generalitat's Council of Equality and Feminisms inviting people to celebrate Pride.

In July, the Barcelona Court acquitted a man accused of a hate crime for directing homophobic insults at a young man during the 2019 LGBTI Pride march in Barcelona. While the court condemned the insults and humiliation, it ruled that the comments did not meet the severity required to constitute a crime under the Penal Code. Barcelona's Prosecutor Office has issued an appeal against the ruling.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In May, several cases of bias-motivated violence were recorded across Spain. These include the violent beating of a 14-year-old trans girl by a peer, a homophobic attack against openly gay singer Miguel Garena, and an episode of harassment faced by a health worker who received a threatening letter accompanied by a photograph of him and his partner in the crosshairs of a gun.

In May, a man was tried and faced nearly four years in prison for threatening an Irish gay couple and telling them to return to Ireland.

In August, two transphobic attacks were reported in Valencia during the early hours of Saturday morning. The assailants shouted slurs and targeted two trans women in separate incidents, with one of the women sustaining a serious injury requiring seven stitches after being struck.

The trial concerning the murder of Samuel Luiz in 2021 on the promenade of A Coruña began in mid-October. In late November,

the Court ruled that the murder was motivated by homophobic intent. The sentence is due to be announced before the end of 2024.

In December, new cases of LGBTIphobia were reported in Gijón and Valencia.

## DATA COLLECTION

FELGTBI+ and the State Federation of Education released a report revealing that 36.5% of teachers in educational centres have experienced LGBTIphobia. In 53% of cases, victims received no support from management, increasing their risk of sick leave fourfold. The report attributes 50% of such violence to students, 31% to staff, and 19% to family members.

The Report on the State of Education for LGBTI People, published by FELGTBI+ in collaboration with 40dB, surveyed 800 respondents aged 18 and older. It estimates that 1.6 million of Spain's 8.3 million students identify or will identify as LGBTI. While coming out occurs earlier, only 8.6% of LGBTI students aged 18-24 are fully out, compared to 44.9% in the 55-64 age group. The report highlights significant barriers for trans people, with only 23.5% holding a university degree—below the national average—and 46.3% having only an ESO qualification. Dropout rates among LGBTI students stand at 18.9%, nearly six points above the national average.

The State of Hate: State LGBTI+ 2024 provides a broader view of bias-motivated violence. This second comprehensive study highlights the persistent underreporting and underdetection of violence in police records and reveals that 10% of LGBTI people in Spain have experienced physical or sexual violence in the past five years.

In November, FELGTBI+ released a socioeconomic report showing that 30.6% of LGBTI people in Spain are at risk of poverty, while four-in-ten LGBTI people over 60 are unemployed.

Finally, the Political State: LGBTI+ State 2024 survey, published in March, analysed voting trends among the LGBTI community. It found that 57% of LGBTI people vote for left-wing parties and 29.3% for right-wing ones. Notably, more than 30% of right-wing LGBTI voters supported left-wing parties in the general election.

A report published by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) revealed that 53% of LGBTI people reported experiencing harassment due to their sexual orientation or gender identity over the past year. Additionally, the report indicated that 12% of LGBTI people in Spain have faced physical assault in the last five years, with 4% experiencing such attacks in the past year.

In July 2024, the Observatory against LGBT-phobia published a report recording 303 incidents of violence and discrimination in Catalonia in 2023, marking a 27.8% increase from the previous year. Verbal aggressions were the most common, representing 25.5% of the reported cases, while physical assaults comprised 23.5%, totalling 71 cases.

In Galicia, the Observatory against LGBTIphobia of A Coruña, managed by the LGBTI NGO, ALAS A Coruña, reported 48 LGBTIphobia related incidents, of which 43 could be considered aggressions. Almost half of them (47.92%) were verbal aggressions.

## EDUCATION

(See under Data Collection.)

## EMPLOYMENT

In March, Spain's Ministry of Labour and Social Economy launched its first Social Dialogue roundtable to tackle LGBTI equality and discrimination in the workplace. At the end of June, following negotiations between trade unions, business representatives, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Economy, with the support of LGBTI organisations, an agreement was signed to promote equality and prevent discrimination against LGBTI people.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In April, around a hundred people gathered in Barcelona to protest against the rising number of transphobic attacks and the growing influence of far-right forces and their inflammatory rhetoric.

In June, it was reported that the Xunta de Galicia had significantly reduced funding for LGBTI-related resources in recent years. These cuts affected support for inclusive education, healthcare, and public services. In response, Avante LGBTI Compostela called for greater financial investment and better training for public employees to address these gaps.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Events in Valencia have raised significant concerns about freedom of association, particularly regarding Lambda, the principal LGBTI organisation in the Autonomous Region of Comunidad Valenciana. A high-ranking official from the regional government issued threats to Lambda, indicating that all funding for LGBTI organisations could be revoked. In response to this threat, LGBTI organisations in the region severed ties with the government and proceeded to organise an independent Pride event, free from the involvement of regional political institutions.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## FOREIGN POLICY

The city of Merida hosted a summit on LGBTI international cooperation supported by the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which aims to boost the funds allocated for LGBTI projects and other topics included in the Merida Declaration.

In October, the United Nations General Assembly elected Spain as a member of the Human Rights Council from 2025 to 2027. The Foreign Office announced SOGIESC as a key priority during its mandate.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In June, the Council of Ministers decided to file appeals of unconstitutionality against the regulations passed by the Community of Madrid in 2023 that impact the rights of LGBTI people. The Madrid Assembly had introduced laws that permitted exceptions to the ban on conversion practices, required psychiatric diagnoses for young trans people, and barred LGBTI organisations from participating in discrimination cases. The Minister of Equality announced this decision during a press conference following the Council of Ministers meeting with the LGBTI+ State Federation, where she condemned the Madrid Community's regulations as "regressive." In August, the Spanish Constitutional Court accepted these appeals and suspended the laws pending the review.

In mid-October, the Regional Government of Madrid announced several amendments to its own legislation to avoid a legal setback, should the Constitutional Court rule against their legal reforms. The regional government claimed technical reasons as the grounds for these amendments.

In December, Isabel Díaz Ayuso, President of the Community of Madrid from the Partido Popular (PP), passed a proposal that significantly reduces protections for LGBTI people in the region. The new reforms amend the regional trans rights law and LGBTI rights law by removing the punishment for discrimination against workers based on sexual orientation or gender identity and decriminalising assaults on individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity, provided no injury occurs. The proposal also mandates that underaged trans people can only begin hormone replacement therapy after an examination by both a pediatrician and a psychologist. As part of these measures, the regional government also decided to eliminate the General

Subdirectorate of LGTBI Equality from the Ministry of Family, Youth, and Social Affairs.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

During the recent European Parliament elections, a Spanish content creator was met with resistance and hostility while attempting to vote. The creator reported that the voter registration list displayed his deadname, despite him having previously updated his ID and personal information to reflect his correct name and gender.

In early March, multiple episodes of legal fraud were reported involving military personnel who applied to change their registered sex under Spain's LGBTI Law, with the aim of mocking trans people and questioning the scope of the law. The concerns arose from distorted reports about the number of individuals in Ceuta who had changed their registered sex following the enactment of the 2023 law for the equality of trans people. Sensationalised media coverage falsely claimed that "almost 40 men have become women in Ceuta to take advantage of more lenient selection processes for police or firefighter positions" or that these individuals, after changing their legal gender, would enjoy "better retirement benefits and other perks." In response, FELGTBI+ issued a press release calling on the Prosecutor's Office to take decisive action against these fraudulent actions. A collective of trans advocacy groups also denounced the alleged fraud, seeking the help of the Ombudsman of Spain.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In September, the Trans Platform Federation submitted a proposal for a Trans Memory Law to the parliamentary groups of the Congress of Deputies. The proposal includes provisions for a pension of an "identical amount" to that of social security for pensioners over 65 years of age who do not have family dependents. The Federation emphasised that this initiative aims to be a collective effort supported by all political parties committed to advancing the rights of the LGTBI community. However, at the time of writing, it is unclear whether the proposal has been officially considered or rejected by political parties.



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# SWEDEN

## ASYLUM

A lesbian woman who fled Uganda due to fear of persecution for her sexual orientation faced potential deportation from Sweden. Despite presenting extensive evidence and a credible oral account, her asylum application was denied by the Migration Agency and the Migration Court, which deemed her account insufficiently detailed. After significant media attention and a petition with over 40,000 signatures, she was granted a residence permit in November.

This case reflects a broader issue in Sweden, where migration authorities often assess SOGIESC asylum claims based on stereotypes, contrary to EU law, UNHCR guidelines, and the Swedish Migration Agency's legal stance.

In September, RFSL released an updated report on Swedish asylum decisions, "Rejection Motivations in SOGIESC Asylum Cases in Sweden," based on over 3,360 cases. The report found that the Swedish migration authorities frequently reject LGBTI asylum seekers, violating both Swedish and international law. The authorities demand detailed personal accounts of emotional journeys and negative feelings to establish the credibility of SOGIESC claims. This reliance on stereotypes in credibility assessments undermines the right to an individual, objective evaluation in asylum cases, leading to deportations to countries where LGBTI individuals face persecution, torture, or even the death penalty.

A 40-year-old gay asylum seeker from Russia, faced deportation after the Swedish migration authorities assessed that the general situation for LGBTI people in Russia did not amount to persecution, despite the new harsher anti-LGBTI laws in the country. The asylum application was denied with the same rejection motivation as the majority of SOGIESC asylum cases from Russia,

In August, a 32-year-old Nigerian asylum seeker was deported from Sweden to Nigeria despite significant risks to his safety. Despite providing evidence, including a police document confirming his homosexuality and the threats against him, the Swedish Migration Agency dismissed it as lacking probative value. Since his deportation, he has been out of contact, and his friends and family fear the worst.

In October, a 35-year-old asylum seeker from Iraq faced deportation after the Swedish Migration Agency rejected his application for asylum. Despite the Migration Court's acknowledgment of his bisexuality, he was unable to provide a detailed account of his "inner process and reflections on his identity and sexuality," a requirement under the agency's DSSH model for assessing LGBTI asylum seekers. As a result, despite

the risks he faces in Iraq, where same-sex relationships have recently been criminalised, and the criticism of the State Office, the Migration Agency upheld its decision to reject his claim.

In October, in an interview in QX, Migration Minister Johan Forssell emphasised the importance of conducting asylum investigations in a safe environment, particularly for LGBTI people. He acknowledged the difficulty for newly arrived asylum seekers to discuss their sexuality and stated that these investigations must be carried out with respect and sensitivity. Forssell's comments came amid growing concerns over the Swedish Migration Agency's handling of LGBTI asylum cases and after that the government agency Statskontoret in a report, commissioned by the government, concluded that the legal certainty in the Swedish Migrations Agency's assessments of asylum cases has serious shortcomings. Forssell confirmed that the government has not issued new directives to the Migration Agency on handling LGBTI cases.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In June, a woman reported that someone had set fire to the rainbow flag outside her home. The police classified the act as vandalism rather than a hate crime.

## DATA COLLECTION

A survey, conducted by RFSL, in collaboration with security company Verisure, revealed that LGBTI people feel less safe in their neighbourhoods. As part of its findings, the report noted that LGBTI people have worse experiences with the legal system and trust the police and authorities less than the general population.

A Umeå University study showed that Sami women and LGBTI Sami people face higher levels of violence than other Sami, with LGBTI Sami twice as likely to experience sexual violence.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In February, Gender Equality and Deputy Labor Market Minister Paulina Brandberg held a meeting with several civil society organisations marking the beginning of the government's efforts to develop a new action plan to ensure equal rights and opportunities for LGBTI people.

The National Board of Health and Welfare in Sweden announced that an equally long withdrawal period for all blood donors after a new sexual relationship will be introduced, moving away from the current practice of dividing donors into separate risk groups. This shift will eliminate group-based risk assessments in favour of individualised assessments. Until now, men who have sex with men were categorised as a separate risk group and faced a longer deferral period of six months before being allowed to

donate blood. Under the new regulations, the deferral period will be shortened to four months for all donors, regardless of sexual orientation. However, before this policy can be fully implemented, the introduction of the NAT-test (Nucleic Acid Test) for infection screening will be necessary in Sweden.

In October the Skurup municipal council adopted a new flag policy, limiting the raising of the rainbow flag to May 17, IDAHOBIT. This decision followed a shift in the local government after the Sweden Democrats and Moderates took control in 2022. Schools and preschools in Skurup are now restricted to flying only the Swedish flag, with the Scanian flag allowed on Scanian Flag Day and the EU flag on EU Day. The policy also prohibits the display of Ukraine's flag, though exceptions may be made. The decision has sparked debate, with opposition parties advocating for greater inclusivity in flag displays.

## FAMILY

In July, an option was introduced to transfer parental allowance to another relative. Before, parents could waive parental allowance to, for example, a cohabitant, but not to certain other close relatives, such as a co-parent without custody not living in the household. According to the new regulations, parents with joint custody of a child are given the opportunity to hand over 45 days of parental benefit each to someone else who is insured for parental benefit. Parents with sole custody of a child may hand over 90 days of parental allowance to another insured.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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.

## HEALTH

The persistent issue of lengthy waiting times for accessing one of the six national teams responsible for conducting gender dysphoria diagnostic assessments in Sweden continues to worsen. Currently, patients face waiting periods of 3 to 3.5 years from referral to their first appointment at adult clinics, while adolescents experience a waiting time of approximately 2.5 years.

On January 1, most of gender-affirming healthcare became national specialised medical care in Sweden. One of the main goals with this change has been to make gender affirming healthcare more equally accessible across the country, as the healthcare system for long has been criticised for unequal waiting

times and not offering the same treatments. Other goals of this change have been to centralise and further develop specialised medical competence, as well as raising the status of the medical field. However the gender-affirming healthcare continues to be underfunded, and the waiting times are still several years.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In September, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson addressed LGBTI rights, emphasising Sweden's commitment to being a tolerant society where everyone can live safely and freely, regardless of faith, race, or sexual orientation. He highlighted that a multi-year action plan for LGBTI people's equal rights and opportunities had already been initiated, a statement that was met with applause. Kristersson also introduced Maria Malmer Stenegard as the new Minister for Foreign Affairs, following her tenure as Minister of Migration, where she affirmed the importance of prioritising women and LGBTI people, who are particularly vulnerable.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In June, Sweden passed a new law on legal gender recognition, which will come into effect on July 1, 2025. Under the law, changing one's legal gender will no longer require a formal diagnosis. Instead, individuals will be able to apply for a legal gender change with just a certificate from a medical professional. This means that individuals will no longer need to apply to the Judicial Council, which had previously been involved in reviewing these applications, although the Council's decisions have been linked to the ongoing public debate around trans issues.

An investigation conducted by magazine Ottar revealed that rejections for legal gender recognition by the Judicial Council have increased, with nearly half of the rejected cases lacking complete medical certificates. Lawyer Silas Aliki, who represents trans people appealing these decisions, suggests that the Council's decisions have been influenced by the ongoing public debate around trans issues.

At the time of writing, it remains unclear which professions will be authorised to grant these certificates and the specifics of the process are not yet known, aside from the indication that it will be significantly simpler and easier to obtain than a full medical diagnosis.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The Public Health Agency of Sweden has completed a 2023 investigation into expanding preventive HPV vaccination efforts. The extension would include unvaccinated older boys, young men, and risk groups, such as men who have sex with men, trans people, and people living with HIV, up to the age of 26.

A study by the University of Borås, commissioned by the Public Health Agency, revealed that stigma remains a significant issue for older people living with HIV in Sweden. Despite effective treatment for many, individuals report facing persistent stigmatising attitudes and challenges related to their condition.

In September, the Swedish government announced that a public inquiry will investigate the potential removal of the information obligation for individuals living with HIV under the Swedish Communicable Diseases Act. Currently, the law requires those living with HIV to inform their sexual partners of their status. However, for several years, people with well-controlled treatment and undetectable viral levels have been able to obtain an exemption from this obligation through their treating physician. Organisations representing people living with HIV have long argued that this requirement, in place since HIV was included in the Communicable Diseases Act in 1985, stigmatises individuals and does not effectively contribute to infection prevention.

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

In May IKEA announced that, for the sixth consecutive year, it would donate proceeds from the sale of its rainbow bag to support LGBTI causes, among which is RSFL's Newcomers initiative, which provides support to LGBTI refugees.

In September, the approval of the Swedish government's new budget lacked additional funding for LGBTI initiatives in the coming year and proposed a reduction in aid from 2026. While the government has introduced a new LGBTI action plan running until 2027, additional funding for this plan will only be provided in 2027, leaving LGBTI initiatives underfunded in the meantime.



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# SWITZERLAND

## ASYLUM

In November, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) condemned Switzerland, ruling that the country must re-examine the asylum application of a gay Iranian asylum seeker. The 34-year-old man had fled to Switzerland in 2019, citing mistreatment in Iran due to his sexual orientation, including insults and physical abuse from his family. Despite this, Swiss authorities rejected his asylum claim, arguing that being gay in Iran, where same-sex relationships are criminalised, was not sufficient grounds for persecution. The ECtHR disagreed, stating that the risk of the man's sexual orientation being discovered in Iran, potentially leading to persecution, was significant. The judgment is not yet final, as Switzerland has three months to refer the case to the Grand Chamber of the ECtHR.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In April, the Swiss Federal Court upheld the conviction of right-wing extremist Alain Soral for homophobic hate speech. In its ruling, the Court confirmed that Soral's anti-LGBTI statements violated the anti-discrimination provisions of the Swiss Criminal Code (Article 261bis).

In September, the regional court Baden confirmed a penalty order against an employee of a bar who refused service to a lesbian couple (under Art. 261bis Criminal Code).

In October, the Council of States Law Commission voted against including "sex" into the anti-discrimination provision of the Swiss Criminal Code (Article 261bis). However, in December, the Council of States supported the parliamentary initiatives. With this decision, both chambers supported the initiatives and a legislative proposal will be presented.

In October, the Council of States' law commission supported a parliamentary initiative demanding the mandatory expulsion of foreign nationals from Switzerland if they are convicted of discrimination, including hate speech, in the sense of Article 261bis Criminal Code (Article 66a Criminal Code).

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In response to the increase in reported hate crimes against LGBTI people, the LGBTI helpline launched the "305 Votes Against Hatred" campaign. The campaign, featuring 305 mobile phones arranged in Bern's Bundesplatz and ringing simultaneously, seeks to represent a wake-up call to the Federal Council and policymakers.

In September, the public prosecutor of Zürich-Sihl issued six summary penalty orders to members of the group "Junge Tat" in relation to their attacks on a Drag Queen Storytelling event and a

Pride worship service in 2022. The summary penalty orders are not final.

The LGBTIQ helpline, in collaboration with LOS, Pink Cross, and TGNS, released a report revealing a rise in hate crimes directed towards LGBTI people. The report underscored that the number of reported incidents has more than doubled compared to last year, emphasising the need for enhanced protective measures and a more robust response to these crimes.

## EDUCATION

In June, political proposals to ensure modern and comprehensive sex education were officially submitted in nine cantons by Pink Cross, the Lesbian Organisation Switzerland, and Transgender Network Switzerland, in collaboration with parliamentarians. These initiatives also aim to protect queer teachers and students from discrimination, highlighting the need for inclusive and respectful educational environments across Switzerland.

A study conducted by the University of Bern, alongside the University of Zurich, revealed concerning insights about the school climate for LGBTI students. The study stressed that over 90% of respondents reported homophobic and transphobic remarks from their classmates. Among the respondents, more than half faced exclusion from their peers due to bullying related to their sexual orientation or gender identity, and nearly two-thirds of trans and non-binary students experienced verbal harassment.

In May, the Canton of Valais introduced directions on the accompaniment of trans and non-binary pupils in obligatory and post-obligatory schools.

In November, the Canton of Basel-Stadt also introduced guidelines for schools to support them in accompanying trans pupils in an appreciating and non-discriminatory way. On CitizenGO, a petition against these guidelines was launched.

## EMPLOYMENT

In April, a group of parents from Pfäffikon utilised the pretext of criticising a school's sex education programme to advance unfounded accusations against a gay teacher. The involved individual was subsequently dismissed from his position by the school's administration.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In January, the Grand Council of Basel-Stadt passed a revision of the Cantonal Equality Act. Although the revision was a highly-debated topic and sparked intense anti-trans rhetoric, no requests for referendums were lodged to halt the process and the revision was therefore enforced.

In September, the first LGBTI project leader started their position within the Basel-Stadt equality office. With the approval, Basel-Stadt became the first canton in German-speaking Switzerland to explicitly enshrine the equality of the LGBTI community in its legislation through the Basel-Stadt Equality Act, which ensures protections for all genders and sexual orientations.

Although similar gestures of support, such as raising the rainbow flag on public buildings during Pride Month, were accepted in other cities like Zurich and Winterthur, the city of Brugg in the canton of Aargau declined a request to do so. To justify the refusal, the city cited a policy to treat all interest groups equally and questioned the relevance of the rainbow flag to Brugg's local context.

In May, the National Synod of the Christian Catholic Church in Aarau elected its first openly-gay bishop.

Zurich's 30th Pride Anniversary drew tens of thousands of participants despite the presence of agitators who displayed anti-LGBTI banners and the arrest of two teenagers who were planning violent attacks against the event.

In November, the city of Biel/Bienne published two language guides: one on non-binary inclusive language and one on simple language, designed to make texts more accessible for people with reading or comprehension difficulties.

In November, voters from the city of Zürich upheld the city council's language guide on non-binary inclusive language by a majority of 57%. The public vote was provoked by the popular initiative "Tschüss Genderstern" from the SVP party.

In September, the Federal Council announced that amendments to the Therapeutic Products Act regarding blood donation, adopted by Parliament, will come into force on January 1, 2025. These changes will enshrine the constitutionally guaranteed principles of non-remuneration and non-discrimination in blood donation law. Individuals will no longer be excluded from donating blood based on their sexual orientation. Instead, exclusion criteria will be based on individual risk behavior and scientific evidence.

## HEALTH

In January, SRF Investigativ aired a movie on health care for trans youth suggesting that professionals prescribe treatment too quickly, without careful diagnostics, and therefore many regret the treatment undergone. Several experts, as well as TGNS, protested against the movie and denounced its alleged biases.

In November, the National Advisory Commission on Biomedical Ethics published an opinion on medical treatment of minors with gender dysphoria.

The Swiss National Science Foundation launched a National Research Programme on Gender Medicine and Health, leading to 19 funded research projects, including some on trans medicine and health.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In February, the National Council supported a motion by the Legal Affairs Committee of the Council of States, calling for the swift development of medical-ethical guidelines by the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences (SAMS) on the diagnostics and treatment of children born with variations in sex characteristics. Organisations representing intersex persons are to be actively included in this process.

In April, reports from the Zurich Tages-Anzeiger revealed allegations of abuse of power at the Sozialwerk.LGBTI social centre. The allegations were linked to a series of incidents involving two individuals who were accused of engaging in inappropriate sexual relationships with queer adolescents in their care. The investigation into these allegations remains open.

In August, the parliament of the Zürich Canton voted - with a one-vote difference - against the demand for a report on full financial coverage of the support for intersex children and their parents. The report should have focused on psychosocial and psychotherapeutic support, self-support groups, and shared-decision making at hospitals in order to strengthen human-rights compatible alternatives to surgeries.

In November, following the approval of a ban on conversion therapies in the canton of Neuchâtel, the Valais Grand Council also approved a ban on conversion therapies as part of a partial revision of the Health Act.

## DATA COLLECTION

The Swiss army's specialist unit "Women in the army and diversity" launched a short survey amongst non-binary members of the army in order to better understand their reality, experiences, and needs. The results will be published in 2025. Following the launch, the survey and the specialist unit's work on diversity were questioned by a member of parliament from the Group of the Democratic Union of the Centre (UDC) in an interpellation.

In October, the Swiss army published the results of a survey conducted in 2023 on discrimination and sexual violence based on sex/gender and/or sexual orientation in the army, including measures to be taken to strengthen prevention and protection. The survey showed that minorities, i.e. women, and LGBT members of the army, experience more discrimination and sexualised violence and that these are not individual cases but a result of the organisation's culture.

A study by the research institute gfs.bern, on behalf of Amnesty International and several LGBTI organisations, showed a more positive attitude towards gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons, and stronger prejudices as well as less sympathy towards trans and intersex people. In comparison to a similar survey conducted in the EU, LGBT people in Switzerland reported experiencing violence and discrimination more frequently.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In April, the first two officers responsible for LGBTI equality at the Federal Office for Gender Equality took office.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In May, close to 18'000 people supported an open letter "Break the code! For the recognition of non-binary people".

In July, the Federal Office of Justice invited non-binary people to a meeting to learn about their challenges and demands. Federal Counsellor Beat Jans joined the event after having met with Nemo, a non-binary artist, already in June.

In November, the Federal Court decided on an appeal by the parents of a trans minor who refused to issue the child's identity documents to the child's guardian in order to prevent legal gender recognition. The case involved a couple and their child, who sought to change their gender and first name at the civil registry office in line with Article 30b of the Swiss Civil Code (CC), which allows individuals from the age of 16 who are capable of judgment to make such changes independently.

The parents had challenged their duty to provide the child's identity documents and by this their child's decision, arguing that the assessment of a minor's capacity should be left to a psychiatrist, not a civil servant. The Court confirmed that as the child is over 16 and capable of judgment, according to Article 30b Civil Code, parental consent is not required for legal gender recognition. The Court stated also that no medical certificate about the capacity of judgment is required unless the civil register officer has doubts and therefore requires such a certificate.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In October, it was announced that starting in 2026, the city of Bern will implement a FINTA (Women, Intersex, Non-binary, and Trans People) quota for leadership positions in the city parliament, replacing the current women's quota. This change was proposed by the Young Socialists. While the legal framework for the new quota is still being developed, the initiative marks a significant step towards more inclusive representation in local government.

## PUBLIC OPINION

In May, Nemo, a non-binary Swiss singer, won the Eurovision Song Contest, creating intense visibility for non-binary people and their lack of legal recognition. In a poll by YouGov, 75% of respondents thought this win would have a positive impact on the queer community. Polls before and after Nemo's win, by the Gottlieb Duttweiler Institut, showed an increase in positive attitudes towards non-binary people and a decrease in negative attitudes.

In November, following a referendum, the Canton of Basel-Stadt held a public vote on the expenditure for hosting the Eurovision Song Contest 2025. Opponents' arguments included anti-non-binary rhetoric but the expenditure was supported by a majority of 67% of voters.



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# TAJIKISTAN

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Russia's anti-LGBTI laws have significantly influenced Tajikistan, with numerous unofficial social media reports documenting detentions or prosecutions widely perceived as targeting individuals based on their sexuality or gender identity.

Visual evidence has also emerged showing LGBTI people subjected to harassment and physical attacks. These incidents have provoked strong societal reactions, further amplifying anti-LGBTI sentiments and exposing deeply rooted structural and cultural stigmas. However, many crimes against LGBTI people remain unreported due to fears of rejection or harm.

In the Sughd region, more than 10 cases have been reported this year in which law enforcement officers allegedly lured LGBTI individuals into fake meetings to trap them. These unofficial raids are used to falsely register them in a database, gather their personal information—such as social media contacts—and extort money from them.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Tajikistan's anti-discrimination legislation only partially aligns with the minimum standards outlined in the UN Practical Guide to Developing Comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Legislation. Although a working group was established in 2020 to draft the country's first Anti-Discrimination law including sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds, by the time the law was adopted in July 2022, SOGI had been removed, leaving only "sex" as a prohibited ground for discrimination.

Since 2016, there have been reports that security forces in Tajikistan allegedly maintain a registry of individuals with diverse SOGI, subjecting them to systematic discrimination and human rights violations, including forced HIV testing. These actions are often driven by corruption or personal career advancement, linked to performance quotas that require officers to meet a minimum number of arrests or convictions. Authorities have reportedly targeted these individuals under criminal code articles related to HIV transmission (Art. 125) and more recently have shifted to using pornography-related charges (Art. 241). Those charged under Art. 125, particularly LGBTI people, often lack access to free government-provided legal aid and are convicted without sufficient evidence, as Tajikistan lacks the capacity to conduct proper testing to trace HIV transmission.

In 2024, a report prepared by ECOM documented at least 25 cases of human rights violations directed towards LGBTI people. In 15 of these instances, the report underscored that the offenders were law enforcement officers who arranged fake dates to force people to undergo rapid HIV testing, threatening to out them, and in some cases, revealing their HIV status to their colleagues and family members.

## FAMILY

In Tajik society, a family member's sexuality or gender identity becoming publicly known is often perceived as a profound source of shame for the family. Consequently, "coming out" is rarely a viable option for LGBTI people, as it risks subjecting their families to public ridicule, social isolation, and damage to their reputations. This often leads to sham marriages or marriages of convenience. In one specific case, an individual's family discovered their sexual orientation and proceeded to beat them, tie them up in a room, leaving them without food for days. Ultimately, they were forcibly married to a man they had never met. Upon reporting the situation to the police, no action was taken. The victim was eventually manipulated by their family into dropping the accusations, leaving them without legal protection.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Over the span of 18 months in 2022-2023, more than 700 NGOs were dissolved in Tajikistan, with an additional 53 liquidated in the first half of 2024 alone. Among those targeted was "Equal Opportunity," the only NGO dedicated to promoting equality and non-discrimination, including the rights of LGBTI people. This crackdown has drawn international concern, with the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders underscoring that the dissolution of human rights NGOs signals a deteriorating environment for civil society and human rights defence in Tajikistan.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In 2016, Tajikistan's law enforcement agencies reportedly compiled a list of over 300 individuals from the LGBTI community, labelling them as "high risk" for HIV infection. At a press conference on February 15, 2023, Ramazon Rahimzoda, the Minister of Internal Affairs of Tajikistan, categorically denied the existence of such a list, asserting that the Ministry had never compiled or published such records. However, Radio Ozodi uncovered a departmental publication from the Prosecutor General's Office in which Rahimzoda himself reported on the creation of this list. The existence of this list led to widespread human rights abuses during 2024, including torture, blackmail, and extortion, during raids and illegal detentions. Following international pressure, the situation improved temporarily, with reduced instances of violence and harassment against LGBTI people.

## HEALTH

In Tajikistan, although health programs are officially equal for all and public medicine is free, medical care often comes with high costs for consultations, tests, and treatments, making it inaccessible for many. Access to quality care typically requires

visiting private clinics, where most skilled specialists have migrated due to better working conditions. However, for members of the LGBTI community, particularly those with limited financial means, this is rarely an option. In the mid-2000s, a UNFPA-supported project created “umbrella” organisations that distributed grants for health initiatives, including HIV testing and prevention programs aimed at men who have sex with men. However, under state pressure, these organisations were shut down.

As a result, the beneficiaries of these programs became fearful of accessing the services, going “underground” to avoid scrutiny. This fear extended to HIV and STI testing, which led to a spike in infections within the community.

Violations of confidentiality by AIDS centre employees, and sometimes even by NGO workers, further eroded trust, causing LGBTI people to avoid essential healthcare services. Confidentiality breaches are particularly dangerous, as they can lead to law enforcement visiting people’s homes and disclosing their HIV status, often followed by an epidemiological investigation to identify and track down their sexual partners. This invasive process generates widespread fear and deters individuals from undergoing HIV testing or seeking medical support.

Additionally, the threat of criminal prosecution under Article 125 of the Criminal Code, which imposes penalties of two to five years in prison for knowingly infecting another person with HIV, exacerbates the situation.

Despite recommendations from civil society and the WHO, the legal framework of Tajikistan continues to criminalise people living with HIV under Article 125 of the Criminal Code (endangerment of HIV transmission). The bill punishes those who knowingly put another person at risk of contracting HIV with penalties of up to three years of restricted freedom or two years of imprisonment.

Access to medical services for trans people in Tajikistan is very limited. Medical professionals and psychologists are generally inexperienced in trans health issues, and there are no official recommendations for professionals to prescribe hormone replacement therapy.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In July, at the eleventh annual meeting of the European Union–Tajikistan Cooperation Committee, the EU reiterated its call for the Tajik authorities to conduct thorough investigations into human rights violations. The Committee particularly expressed concern over the continued imprisonment of human rights defenders, journalists, and bloggers in Tajikistan.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Civil registry offices may also reject the application and insist on considering the request for a gender marker change through

the court system, which is not the best option, as there are no laws regulating LGR in Tajikistan that can be used to obtain such a change through the court system. In practice, given that LGR is neither prohibited nor permitted in the country, it is likely that professionals, including doctors, judges, and civil registry office managers, are hesitant to conduct any procedures regarding LGR for fear of the consequences, as well as the unacceptability of transgender people to the state.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Since the beginning of 2024 human rights organisations have documented over 20 cases involving severe violations of the fundamental rights of LGBTI people, including arbitrary detention, illegal confiscation of personal devices, torture, coercion to testify against fellow community members, blackmail, extortion, and the forced disclosure of sexual orientation or gender identity, including cases of sexual assault. In each documented case, LGBTI individuals were blackmailed with threats that their intimate photos and private correspondence would be publicly disclosed.

In 2024, multiple instances of LGBTI people being arbitrarily detained, having their phones confiscated, and their personal information accessed without court approval by reason of Article 241 of the Criminal Code, have been recorded.

Under Article 241, which addresses the “illegal production and circulation of pornographic materials or objects,” the dissemination of intimate images can be prosecuted as the distribution of pornographic materials, which carries criminal penalties.

After seizing cell phones, law enforcement officers were reported to copy contacts, photos, and messages to lure other suspected LGBTI people into meetings, where they too are detained and subjected to abuse.

When individuals living with HIV are detained, they face further harassment through criminal proceedings under Article 125 of the Criminal Code, which criminalises HIV transmission.

During research visits, the International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) documented dozens of credible cases of intimidation, physical and sexual violence, arbitrary detention, and extortion involving LGBTI people. As reported by IPHR, police continued to threaten LGBTI persons that they would turn them over to family members, neighbors, co-workers, colleagues or others, or initiate criminal proceedings, if they did not pay bribes or provide contact details of wealthy LGBTI acquaintances.



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# TURKEY

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In April, Turkey's Treasury and Finance Ministry denied claims that the cooperation loans between Turkey and the World Bank would be linked to the Istanbul Convention or LGBTI issues. The Ministry stated that the loans will focus on sustainable growth, poverty reduction, and support for vulnerable groups affected by green transformation and financial barriers.

## ASYLUM

During five months in a removal centre, a refugee trans woman was subjected to violations of her fundamental rights. Notably, she was kept in a single ward, could not benefit from social areas, could not access HIV medication, and faced discriminatory behaviours. After her release, her identity and health insurance were cancelled, leaving her unable to access vital medication while awaiting deportation.

In Adana, a refugee trans woman's HIV status was disclosed on social media without her permission and she was subjected to intense hate speech. It was alleged that she was killed after being deported to Syria.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In January, the Human Rights Association (İHD) filed a criminal complaint with the Ankara Chief Public Prosecutor's Office against Fatih Erbakan, the General Chairman of the Yeni Welfare Party. The complaint derived from a video released by the party which incited hatred and discrimination against LGBTI people.

In May, Devlet Bahçeli, leader of Turkey's Nationalist Movement Party, described the appearance of Nemo, the non-binary winner of Eurovision's 2024 edition, as "embarrassing degeneracy" and rejected it as a form of modernity. Following Bahçeli's statement, President Erdoğan further criticised the event, accusing its organisers of promoting "gender neutralisation" and threatening Turkish families by providing a platform for LGBTI performers.

In June, President Erdoğan condemned LGBTI movements, equating their advocacy to the imposition of fascism and arguing that their presence undermines the family structure and contributes to declining birth rates. In response to the statement, associations working with families of LGBTI people issued an open letter to President Erdoğan, demanding an end to policies threatening their family status and calling for a direct dialogue between authorities and civil society.

In June, members of the Republican Women's Association gathered in Konak Atatürk Square, Izmir, to collect signatures for a proposed law banning LGBTI 'propaganda'.

In September, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) came under scrutiny for broadcasting the promotion of an anti-LGBTI march as a "public service announcement" on its official website. The march, organised by the Big Family Platform, was scheduled to take place on September 15 in Istanbul under the slogan "Stop this inhuman incursion." A promotional video accompanying the event portrays the fundamental rights and freedoms of LGBTI people as "socio-cultural terror" and includes footage from the opening ceremony of the Paris Olympics, directly targeting the LGBTI community.

Various organisations, including the IHD Ankara Branch LGBTI Rights Commission, GALADER, DEMOS, SODAP, and DEM Party MP Özgül Saki, issued statements opposing the march and condemning the spread of hate.

In November, the first meeting of the Council for the Protection and Strengthening of the Family, organised by the Ministry of Family and Social Affairs, featured several anti-LGBTI statements from government officials. The Minister of Interior referred to LGBTI people as "deviants" and labelled them as one of the greatest threats to the family. The Minister of Family spoke about a global responsibility to combat "desexualisation," which she described as a "harmful trend against the family." The President of Religious Affairs described marriage equality as part of a "global siege of the family" and referred to LGBTI rights as a "perverted understanding."

In November, President Erdoğan spoke at the TRT World Forum 2024, where he targeted LGBTI people, referring to them as "the enemy of the family." He criticised media representations of diversity, alleging that they "normalise deviant and perverse relationships." At the fourth International NGO Fair, Erdoğan further implied that LGBTI rights are not human rights and reiterated his government's opposition to what he called "the anti-family structure called LGBT."

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In March, a lawsuit was filed against former Istanbul Security Branch Director Hanifi Zengin. The lawsuit stemmed from the beating and forced detention of Ekinsu Daniş, an advisor to Labor Party (EMEP) Istanbul Deputy İskender Bayhan, during a Women's Rights protest.

In Alsancak, a trans woman was attacked by a group of men in the street, receiving no intervention from police or bystanders. Public reaction questioned the lack of police presence and the fact that, despite being detained, the attackers were released shortly after their statements were taken.

In June, the legal battle concerning the 2008 homophobic murder of Ahmet Yıldız reached its 40th hearing, drawing significant attention from the media and representatives of LGBTI

organisations. Despite the case stretching into its 16th year with numerous changes in judiciary personnel, the primary suspect, Ahmet's father, remains a fugitive. The next hearing is scheduled for April 17, 2025.

In July, in Izmir, a trans woman was killed in a knife attack at her home. She received nearly 50 stab wounds in the attack, 27 of which were fatal. The perpetrator is under arrest for attempted premeditated murder.

In November, a trans woman in Samsun was assaulted and robbed of her jewellery. The attacker justified his actions by claiming that the victim had mocked his masculinity, a defence often used to excuse violence against LGBTI people.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In November, the Turkish Medicines and Medical Devices Agency introduced a new regulation requiring an e-prescription to access certain hormones. The regulation specifically affects hormones used by trans masculine individuals, as well as those used to treat diabetes. While the regulation is aimed at standardising the distribution and use of hormones to ensure safer procurement and treatment, it highlights the existing barriers to healthcare for trans people, particularly in accessing trans-specific healthcare services.

## EDUCATION

In May, despite the recommendations from the Turkish Medical Association, the Ankara Yıldırım Beyazıt University Faculty of Medicine modified the oath at a graduation ceremony. The new oath removed references to "gender, sexual orientation, and ethnicity," which are crucial for non-discrimination as per the Declaration.

In June, similar acts of censorship occurred at Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University and Ordu University. At Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal University's Faculty of Medicine, the dean's office prohibited the inclusion of references to sexual orientation in the 'Physician Oath' before the graduation ceremony. At Ordu University's Faculty of Medicine, during the graduation ceremony on June 27, the oath was similarly censored.

In June, President Erdoğan introduced a new school curriculum focusing on family values and moral order. The curriculum received criticism from teachers' unions, who argued it promotes Islamisation of education.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In May, it was revealed that Mey alcohol expressed its support to LGBTI initiatives and its willingness to sponsor the KuirFest, organised by the Pembe Hayat LGBTI Solidarity Association.

In May, the Provincial Civil Society Communications Office imposed fines on board members of the May 17 Association. The fines were justified through claims that international network membership fees and foreign services should be declared under the national foreign grant system.

In June, the Constitutional Court ruled that LGBTI activist Efruz Kaya had their right to privacy under Article 8 of the ECHR violated when their request to the Criminal Judgeship of Peace to remove targeted LGBTI-phobic content from various media outlets was rejected. Kaya was targeted by derogatory content from Yeni Akit and other media outlets after participating in an event about the Trans Day of Remembrance on 20 November 2019. The court granted an access ban on content with derogatory character and awarded Kaya 10,000 TL (270 Euro) in compensation for moral damages.

In June, the Turkish Radio and Television Corporation World prepared a documentary titled "True Colours."

The documentary portrayed the LGBTI movement as "imported from the West" and perpetrating false information about LGBTI individuals.

The Presidency of Religious Affairs has unveiled a Four-Year Strategic Plan that designates LGBTI identities as "gender-based deviant ideologies that threaten the family." As part of the Plan, a budget of 2 million TL (54,000 Euro) was allocated to fund a campaign against LGBTI people and other activities aimed at promoting this agenda.

In October, the Turkish delegation to the United Nations Human Rights Committee stated that LGBTI people are seen as a "threat to the family structure" in Turkish society.

## FAMILY

In May, the Ministry of Family and Social Services unveiled its Vision Document and Action Plan for the Protection and Strengthening of the Family. The plan characterised LGBTI people as part of "harmful trends and habits" that pose a threat to the family unit, and describing them as components of a "desexualisation project."

The Action Plan outlined several strategic objectives, including "increasing international efforts to defend and reinforce the family," "protecting family values in media and digital platforms," and "promoting and expanding access to family-friendly media content."

Sabah newspaper reported that the Ministry of Family and Social Services is drafting a detailed roadmap for implementing the Action Plan.

In September, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan addressed the 79th General Assembly of the United Nations, where he declared, “The issue of desexualisation is no longer a matter of orientation but a global imposition, a war against the sacred and against human nature.”

In September, the final report from the “Family Institution Workshop,” organised under the leadership of Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) Chairman Devlet Bahçeli, was released. During the event, MHP Deputy Chairman Ahmet Selim Yurdakul presented proposals for anti-LGBTI constitutional amendments. Yurdakul advocated for revising the definition of family in the Constitution, suggesting that it should explicitly include the terms “woman” and “man” to reinforce a traditional understanding of family structure. Following the release of the report, MHP Deputy Chairman Ahmet Selim Yurdakul outlined the party’s anti-LGBTI stance. In a statement to the press, Yurdakul referred to the LGBTI community’s calls for equality, freedom, and justice as “propaganda” and a “threat.”

In October, the 2025 Central Government Budget Proposal, signed by President Erdoğan, was submitted to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey (TBMM). Discussions on the proposal began on October 22 in the TBMM Plan and Budget Commission and are expected to continue for about two months. The budget includes an allocation of 16 billion liras for the “protection and strengthening of the family.”

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In February, following a call to action by the Istanbul Trans Pride Week Committee, the Kadıköy District Governorate imposed a one-day ban on demonstrations and gatherings, detaining several LGBTI people who attempted to make a press statement despite the ban.

On February 14, the first hearing of the case against 18 people detained during the 2023 Pride Week in Eskişehir took place. Participants emphasised that unlawful bans, which have been in place since 2015, were once again enforced, resulting in the unjust detention of the rights defenders.

In February, the Istanbul Criminal Court issued arrest warrants for two foreign students and ordered that five others be forcibly brought to the next hearing in connection with their participation in the 2022 Pride March at Boğaziçi University. In late February, Turkish police fired tear gas and rubber bullets to disperse around 50 people who had gathered near Taksim Square in Istanbul to advocate for trans rights.

In March, a number of people gathered for the Feminist Night March in Siraselviler, near Istanbul’s Taksim Square. In response to the gathering, authorities blocked off several streets to vehicle

traffic, conducting identity checks at various crossings and preventing passage.

In March, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights issued a memorandum noting that the right to peaceful assembly in Turkey had been significantly undermined by systematic bans, excessive use of force, mass arrests, and frequent criminal charges against demonstrators. The memorandum specifically pointed out that these restrictions have disproportionately targeted events organised by or in support of LGBTI people, women, and environmental human rights defenders.

In Istanbul, local authorities banned events related to Pride week, using the term ‘illegal groups’ for LGBTI organisations in its decision to ban the march. On the day of the march, the Istanbul Governorship announced the closure of Taksim-Şişhane metro stations and the Taksim-Kabataş Funicular Line, forcing activists to shift the march to Bağdat Street in Kadıköy. The march lasted about ten minutes before police intervention, leading to the arrest of 11 individuals, including three minors who were handcuffed in violation of the Child Protection Law. All were released after eight hours.

In December, a criminal case was opened against eight of the involved people and the first trial was set for 8 May 2025 by the Istanbul Anadolu Assize Court under the charge of “participating in unlawful meetings and demonstrations”.

In Ankara, during the June Pride march, the Pride committee rerouted their path to evade police interference, resulting in no detentions.

In Eskişehir, ten activists were subjected to torture after being detained at a Pride March. Four of these activists were initially brought to court with a demand for their arrest, but they eventually were released under judicial control.

In Antalya, protests and events related to Pride week were banned by the authorities. Nonetheless, on July 14, the Pride march took place before being attacked by police, who arrested four participants.

In November, several demonstrations in Turkey were met with police repression. For instance, police blocked a demonstration in Ankara marking the International Trans Day of Remembrance, which honors victims of transphobic violence. Four people, including a member of the Ankara Bar Association, were arrested.

On November 23rd, police intervened in a protest in Istanbul against a new e-prescription regulation affecting hormone access (See also under Bodily Integrity), detaining 38 individuals. They were later released after providing statements to the police.

During the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, protests erupted across Turkey. In Istanbul, the Governor's Office banned all demonstrations for the day, and police action led to the arrest of 169 people. While most of those arrested were released, two LGBTI persons from Azerbaijan were taken to repatriation centres and, after being subjected to severe ill-treatment, including being denied food and medications, they were forced to "voluntarily return" to Azerbaijan.

In December, a lawsuit was filed against eight people who participated in the 22nd Istanbul Pride march on June 30, 2024, for allegedly violating the Law No. 2911 on Meetings and Demonstrations. The indictment referred to the participants as "LGBT people" and described the Pride march as a "so-called" event. The first hearing is scheduled for 8 May 2025 at the Istanbul Anatolian Courthouse.

## FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In March, Fatih Erbakan, the President of the New Welfare Party, vowed to close 17 LGBTI associations, emphasising his commitment to preventing what he described as "LGBTI perversion" in Turkey.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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 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](http://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 Kadikoy 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.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In March, the first hearing concerning the arrest of 11 people who had gathered in Kadıköy's Yeldeğirmeni District before the Istanbul Pride March in 2022 took place. While the defendants were charged with violating the Law on Meetings and Demonstrations, they described facing disproportionate physical violence, including being handcuffed, beaten, and verbally abused.

## HOUSING

In March, following a district governor's order, police sealed the homes of trans women on Bayram Street in Istanbul's Beyoğlu district. Bayram Street has been a vital refuge for trans women for decades, and the sealing left many trans people homeless. Following the decision, police also prevented a public iftar from taking place on Bayram street and nine people, including former Pink Life Association President Buse Kılıçkaya, were detained. Police also deleted footage taken by journalists.

In July, a trans woman in İzmir was forced to move after enduring severe transphobic and homophobic attacks from her neighbours, who also acted as apartment managers. She recounted that they cut off her water and electricity and made living conditions intolerable.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In May, the final hearing of the Kobanê case confirmed the 16-year prison term of LGBTI activist Cihan Erdal, who was initially in 2020.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In August, the ECtHR announced that it would review two combined cases filed by Kaos GL, a Turkish LGBTI rights organisation, challenging the bans on LGBTI marches imposed by Turkish authorities in 2016 and 2017.

Kaos GL turned to the ECtHR claiming that the ban on a 2016 Pride March and the subsequent indefinite prohibition on all LGBTI events during the state of emergency in 2017 infringed on fundamental freedoms such as assembly, association, and non-discrimination.

Turkey was initially expected to respond to the ECtHR queries or propose a friendly settlement by October 1, 2024. However, the deadline has been extended to January 12, 2025, with no response from the government as of now.

Turkey was initially expected to respond to the ECtHR queries or propose a friendly settlement by October 1, 2024. However, the deadline was extended to January 12, 2025. The Turkish government has since submitted its response, denying discrimination and citing “security concerns” as the basis for the bans. The government also claimed that some events were allowed during the ban period, though this is contradicted by evidence of police intervention and court rulings deeming such actions unlawful.

In the meantime, ILGA-Europe and SPoD have jointly submitted a third-party intervention, along with six other Turkish organisations who also submitted their interventions on the case.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In December, media outlets targeted Samsun Ondokuz Mayıs University over gender reassignment surgeries, labelling them as “murder” and calling for a ban. Doctors involved in these surgeries were criticised by the same media outlets.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

Turkey’s Culture and Tourism Ministry has withdrawn support from the Istanbul Film Festival after pro-government media and social media users started criticising sponsors for featuring LGBTI themed movies.

Reacting to LGBTI films being featured on the Medyascope website, the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) President Ebubekir Şahin asserted that he would continue fighting “against productions that contradict beliefs, culture, customs, and traditions”.

In May, a beauty contest exclusively for trans people in Antalya gained significant attention when a video went viral on social media, becoming a trending topic.

The exhibition “Dön-Dün Bak: A Look Back at the History of the Trans Movement in Turkey,” was banned in early July following an official notice from the Beyoğlu District Governor’s Office. The exhibition, organised by the Trans Pride Week Exhibition Collective, was scheduled to run until July 27th at Depo İstanbul in Beyoğlu.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In February, the legal proceedings filed against those responsible for targeting the 2022 Pride Week in Gaziantep were initially stalled at the Prosecutor’s Office, and later at the Gaziantep 5th Criminal Court of Peace. The Prosecutor eventually chose not to pursue the case, a decision that was appealed by rights advocates. However, the court sided with the Prosecutor and dismissed the appeal. In light of this, LGBTI rights advocates from Gaziantep Pride Week are now preparing to take the case to the Constitutional Court, seeking a resolution.

In May, a report by Media and Law Studies Association (MLSA) highlighted episodes of police brutality against LGBTI people during the 2022 Ankara Pride March. The report documented physical assaults by officers, including kicking and slapping, as well as excessive use of force, such as using pepper spray at close range.

In October, police forces intervened and shut down a private party at an LGBTI bar in Istanbul, detaining 30 individuals present at the venue. According to a joint statement by Istanbul LGBTI+ Pride Week and Trans Pride Week, two migrant LGBTI people among those released were sent to the Arnavutköy Immigration Administration. The statement also highlighted that the detainees were subjected to torture and mistreatment during their detention.

## SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In April, Again Welfare Party (Yeniden Refah Partisi) became the third party in the local elections held on 31 March 2024 and won 65 municipalities. In the 24-point ‘moral municipalism’ protocol of the Again Welfare Party, it is stated that “The LGBT project, which threatens our generations, will be fought in the most effective way, and necessary work will be carried out to protect our youth and children from this disaster.”



MORE INFORMATION ON [WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG)



# TURKMENISTAN

## ASYLUM

Asylum remains one of the most urgent needs for the LGBTI community in Turkmenistan.

## DATA COLLECTION

In Turkmenistan, the state exerts strict control over media and heavily monitors internet activity, with journalists facing arrest for attempting to exercise freedom of expression. The only documented research on LGBTI issues was conducted in 2019. Collecting data remains almost impossible due to the significant safety risks it poses.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

A report by Amnesty International unveiled systemic discrimination against LGBTI people in Turkmenistan. The report underscored how the Turkmen government, under the pretext of upholding national culture, perpetuates significant oppression against sexual minorities.

Despite recommendations by international bodies like the UN Human Rights Committee, consensual same-sex relations continue to be criminalised in Turkmenistan. Despite previous indications of reform, a new version of the Criminal Code in April 2022 not only kept the “sodomy” provisions but increased both the severity and scope of punishments.

## FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

Torture and inhumane treatment remain present throughout the country. In many instances, relatives have reported that LGBTI people were subjected to torture and violence by law enforcement authorities, and several public cases of LGBTI people being forced to flee from the country to seek safety were recorded.

## HEALTH

Reports indicate that the Ministry of National Security is collaborating with regional AIDS centres, meaning that data of the people who are tested for HIV, including LGBTI people, is shared with the authorities, which means a risk of criminal prosecution for a same-sex act. Such collaboration often entails requesting information about individuals seeking treatment for HIV/AIDS, which is then used to target and arrest members of the LGBTI community.

## HOUSING

Reports indicate that the Housing Department might be involved in investigations targeting LGBTI people. According to the findings, authorities engage in the collection of information

on residents, especially if only young men live together, and in questioning neighbors about visitors before the police conduct surprise raids.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Amnesty International reported that the government’s refusal to acknowledge and address discrimination against LGBTI people and women underscores a troubling disregard for international human rights standards.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Human rights advocacy is heavily restricted, with international human rights defenders being barred, unregistered organisations deemed illegal and substantial hardships in registering rights groups.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Turkmenistan has no legally approved procedure for medical or legal transition for trans people.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In July, Radio Azatlyk released the documentary “Invisible Rainbow of Turkmenistan,” spotlighting the activism of David Omarov, the first openly gay advocate for LGBTI rights in Turkmenistan.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Without formal channels for complaints, LGBTI individuals face significant barriers in seeking justice. Complaints require personal details that many fear will lead to further harassment.

Law enforcement agencies sometimes exploit dating apps to extort money from victims or coerce them into providing information about others. Those who do not cooperate face severe penalties, including physical abuse and forced medical examinations.

In Turkmenabad, Lebap province, police raids of private homes and businesses have targeted sex workers and members of the LGBTI community as part of a campaign to “ensure public order and maintain morality.” Police forces often conduct surprise raids, scrutinising mobile phone apps and investigating contacts with known LGBTI activists or human rights organisations to identify members of the LGBTI community.

In early July, following the release of the documentary ‘Invisible Rainbow of Turkmenistan’, authorities ramped up efforts to identify LGBTI people, including organised raids. (See also under Participation in Public, Cultural, and Political Life)

## PUBLIC OPINION

The topic of same-sex relations remains a taboo subject in media and education, preventing any formal acknowledgment or protection of LGBTI rights.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The Criminal Code of 1997 bans same-sex sexual relations, categorising 'sodomy' as a criminal offense. The law carries a maximum punishment of two years in prison and targets only men.

Since the 2022 power transition, reproductive rights have notably declined, with police intimidation and legislative changes making abortion virtually inaccessible.



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# UKRAINE

During the third year of Russia's full-scale, Ukraine's LGBTI community faced intensified challenges while continuing to demonstrate resilience. The ongoing war has exacerbated pre-existing issues such as discrimination, displacement, and limited access to essential services, all of which disproportionately affect LGBTI people. The conflict has also underscored the pressing need for legal recognition of same-sex partnerships, particularly for LGBTI military personnel whose partners lack rights to make critical decisions or access state support in cases of injury or death. Despite constitutional prohibitions on same-sex marriage and resistance to civil partnership legislation in parliament, public attitudes toward LGBTI equality have continued to shift, driven in part by the visible contributions of LGBTI people on the front lines. In the face of these adversities, Ukraine's LGBTI community remains steadfast in advocating for legal and social reforms, even as the war compounds the urgency of addressing these inequities.

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In 2024, access to goods and services for LGBTI people in Ukraine remained a critical issue, influenced by both the ongoing conflict and societal attitudes.

The ongoing war in Ukraine has exacerbated the already difficult circumstances for many trans people. Rising inflation and the economic downturn have made access to medical treatment increasingly inconsistent, with the costs of hormone therapy escalating significantly.

During the first half of the year, five cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity were reported by the Nash Svit Centre. These included: refusals of service, denial of rental agreements, illegal evictions, biased treatment, as well as insults, humiliation, and threats.

The Handbook on Preventing and Combating Discrimination by Iryna Fedorovych was published, to support civil servants and service providers in Ukraine, as part of the Combating Hate Speech in Ukraine initiative under the Partnership for Good Governance project.

In August, CARE International, in collaboration with the Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group (GiHA WG), released the Rapid Gender Analysis Ukraine (RGA). It highlighted the gendered impacts of the ongoing war, particularly the compounded vulnerabilities of women, children, Roma communities, and LGBTI people, and underscored the need for gender-sensitive humanitarian programming.

## ASYLUM

A policy brief by Gender Stream, for the Global Public Policy

Institute highlighted the severe impact of Russia's full-scale invasion on the lives of LGBTI IDPs in Ukraine. The study underscored that LGBTI IDPs contend not only with the general difficulties of displacement but also with heightened risks of queerphobic violence and stigma. The study further confirmed that no centralised action exists to specifically assist LGBTI Ukrainians arriving in the EU due to the war in Ukraine and that there are no dedicated programmes at the national level of host countries to help them with border crossing, arrival, accommodation, and integration.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In March the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting determined that the online publication of an article entitled 'LGBT Movement and Pedophilia: A Historical Connection' by the movement All Together! violated the Law on media, following a complaint from Nash Svit Centre. Article 36 of the law prohibits the dissemination of content that incites discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The Council has required the organisation to address these violations. On March 14, All Together! challenged this order by appealing to the Kyiv District Administrative Court, which has yet to rule on the case.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Since 2021, civil society groups have advocated for Draft Law No. 5488, which aims to define "intolerance" as an aggravating factor in offences, including those based on gender and sexual orientation. Throughout 2024, organisations including Gender Stream engaged national and international stakeholders, leading to official appeals from the European Parliament and Commission. On the draft law's third anniversary, over 35 human rights organisations issued a joint appeal to the Verkhovna Rada, urging its adoption. In October, Gender Stream, alongside the Council of Europe and Ukraine's Commissioner for Human Rights, hosted a forum where the Ministry of Internal Affairs voiced clear support, emphasising its importance for vulnerable groups and Ukraine's international obligations. Despite this, the draft law remains under review, reflecting ongoing legislative stagnation.

In the first half of 2024, the Nash Svit Centre reported a notable rise in homophobic and transphobic aggressions, with 29 incidents compared to 25 in all of 2023. The increase included physical violence and attacks on LGBTI centres, events, and activists.

In February, the exterior of the Zhovten cinema, which was set to show *Lessons of Tolerance*, was vandalised with homophobic messages and nationalist symbols. Meanwhile, in Kharkiv, a group of youths tried to obstruct the film's screening, using similar discriminatory slogans and imagery. On February 17, a screening



of the movie [took place](#) regardless of the threatening acts. In February, a lawyer from Gender Stream was assaulted by three people at a shopping mall in Kharkiv. The attackers forcibly removed an LGBTI flag patch from his clothing and issued threats of physical violence before fleeing the scene. The incident was reported to the police, who initially classified it as “hooliganism.” Despite Andriy’s appeals to have the incident reclassified as a hate crime, the Prosecutor’s Office did not find sufficient grounds to support this. The attackers remain unidentified, and no further action has been taken in the case.

In March, a gay man was [violently attacked](#) by a group of youths in a park in the capital after he declined to answer their question about his views on LGBTI issues.

In March, a gay couple residing in a Kyiv suburb was [assaulted](#) by two neighbours. The couple believes the attack was motivated by homophobia, noting that similar incidents had occurred previously.

From early April to late June, [21 incidents](#) of bias-motivated violence across Ukraine were recorded by Freedom House.

In April a LGBTI couple was [pursued and attacked](#) in Kyiv by a group who shouted homophobic slurs and threatened to beat the couple before physically assaulting them. Although the victims reported the incident to the police, law enforcement did not acknowledge the hate-motivated nature of the attack.

In April a LGBTI couple was [attacked](#) in Kyiv by a group who approached them and demanded to see the LGBTI badges on one of the victim’s backpacks before escalating the situation into a violent assault.

In April unknown assailants [attacked](#) a local artist on the grounds of a synagogue in Lviv. The attackers struck him in the face and attempted to use pepper spray. The victim, who had previously received homophobic threats, suspects that the assault was motivated by anti-LGBTI sentiments.

In May 2023, a trans woman in occupied Oleshki, Kherson Oblast, experienced [physical violence](#) and threats of a sexual nature by Russian military personnel.

## DATA COLLECTION

A [survey](#) conducted by the Kyiv International Institute of Sociology confirmed that Ukrainian society’s attitude towards LGBTI people remained predominantly neutral or positive. The survey reported that 70.4% of Ukrainians support equal rights for LGBTI people and that 28.7% support the introduction of registered civil partnerships for same-sex couples.

In March, the National Democratic Institute (NDI) [released](#) a retrospective analysis to mark the second anniversary of Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The analysis compiled data from NDI’s semiannual public opinion polls, which have been conducted in Ukraine since the 2014 Revolution of Dignity and offered a comprehensive look at how Ukrainian public opinion has evolved over the past eight years. Notably, the report showed significant increases in support for gender equality and LGBTI rights, with 72% of Ukrainians supporting equal rights for LGBTI people (up from 29% in 2019).

In October, Centre for Analysis and Sociological Research (CISR) of the International Republican Institute (IRI) [released](#) a [report](#) as part of the “Youth as Drivers of Ukrainian National Identity” (UNITY) program in cooperation with the Council for International Research and Exchanges (IREX) and with the support by USAID, revealing positive shifts in the perception of the LGBTI community among Ukrainian youth. The survey, which targeted people aged 16–35, found that 70% of respondents believe members of the LGBTI community should be accepted by society, with 31% strongly agreeing and 39% somewhat agreeing. The data also showed an increase in comfort when interacting with LGBTI people, with 61% of respondents reported feeling comfortable engaging with LGBTI community members, a slight rise from 59% in 2023.

Alliance Global released a [report](#) examining the state of LGBTI rights in Ukraine, highlighting noticeable strides in securing civic equality for LGBTI people, especially those living with HIV, despite the challenges imposed by the war and its impact on marginalised communities.

The NGO We Are! released the [report](#) “The Impact of Full-Scale War in Ukraine on LGBTI”, which used a survey of 353 LGBTI people from various regions of Ukraine to analyse the current state of LGBTI rights amidst the ongoing war. The findings underscored that the war has not only caused immense grief and destruction but has also worsened existing issues such as discrimination and social isolation within the LGBTI community. Key problems identified include loss of housing, forced displacement, and limited access to medical care, which are further compounded by the unique challenges faced by LGBTI people.

## EMPLOYMENT

Despite anti-discrimination laws, LGBTI people in Ukraine face significant workplace challenges, with many choosing to hide their identity due to fear of discrimination or stigma, a [report](#) by Fulcrum UA revealed. Trans people and those in rural areas or sectors like education are particularly vulnerable, facing heightened barriers to employment and inclusion. Inclusive work environments with clear non-discrimination policies

and supportive management significantly improve safety and wellbeing for LGBTI employees.

The Nash Svit Centre [documented](#) two cases of discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in the workplace. In one instance a worker faced insults and pressure from a superior, ultimately leading to their voluntary resignation. In another, a job advertisement was found to include discriminatory criteria, implicitly excluding certain individuals based on their sexual orientation or gender identity.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Since the beginning of the invasion, the participation of LGBTI soldiers to the conflict has highlighted significant [inequalities](#). Partners of deceased LGBTI soldiers find themselves still lacking the right to make decisions about their loved ones' remains and are ineligible for state support.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church of Kyiv [revoked an award](#) given to a prominent LGBTI activist and leader of the LGBTI military association, citing their disapproval of his "sinful preferences and LGBTI agitation."

In January, the Nash Svit Centre released a [report](#) on the social, legal, and political challenges faced by Ukraine's LGBTI community, noting an increase in openly LGBTI military personnel despite restrictive laws. While most experience tolerance from peers and commanders, cases of homo/transphobic discrimination and violence still occur.

In February, Kharkiv Pride [revealed](#) that the advertising firm Megapolis abruptly ceased communication about an LGBTI military support campaign. The campaign intended to feature portraits and stories of LGBTI military personnel on advertising billboards in Kyiv and Kharkiv.

In March a 23-year-old man in occupied Yalta was [fined](#) 100,000 rubles (1,000 Euro) under Russia's "LGBTI propaganda" laws for appearing in women's clothing at a nightclub, reported Nash Svit Centre.

In March, the Ombudsman's Office released a [guide](#) for public officials and service providers on preventing discrimination, highlighting the inclusion of sexual orientation and gender identity under Ukraine's anti-discrimination laws. It outlines obligations to address discrimination against LGBTI people and provides recommendations for fostering equality and inclusive policies.

On May 17, the National Council of Ukraine on Television and Radio Broadcasting [issued a statement](#) for the International Day Against Homophobia and Transphobia, emphasising the importance of

upholding principles of equality and non-discrimination in the media.

In December, the Verkhovna Rada [adopted Bill](#) 11456, amending Ukraine's law "On Free Legal Aid" to include victims of hate crimes based on factors like race, religion, and disability but notably [excluding](#) sexual orientation and gender identity. Despite [appeals](#) from Gender Stream and other human rights organisations to address this omission, the bill, criticised for neglecting LGBTI rights and violating European Commission recommendations, was adopted in just 13 minutes.

## FAMILY

In March, [Draft Law](#) No. 9103 on the Institute of Registered Partnerships was introduced, aiming to allow couples of any gender to gain legal recognition similar to that of close relatives. Since then, the bill has received endorsements from five parliamentary committees. Approval of the law would align the Ukrainian legal system with the ECtHR [decision](#) in Maimulakhin and Markiv v. Ukraine, which found Ukraine's lack of legal recognition for same-sex couples to be a violation of Articles 8 and 14 of the ECHR. In June, the Legal Policy Committee included the bill on registered partnerships in its agenda. However, rather than addressing it procedurally, committee members engaged in extensive debate, voicing numerous objections and effectively stalling the bill's progress. The committee then decided to postpone further discussion, leaving the bill in limbo and potentially shifting its fate to be decided behind closed doors. In August, the Parliamentary Committee on National Health, Medical Assistance, and Medical Insurance also [endorsed](#) the proposal.

In November, a new draft was registered in the Verkhovna Rada. [Draft Law No. 12252](#), which introduced a framework for registered civil partnerships, allowing both same-sex and different-sex couples to formalise their relationships. The bill aims to address long-standing gaps in legal protections, such as inheritance rights, medical decision-making, and property ownership, which disproportionately affect same-sex couples. Despite its alignment with international human rights standards and recommendations from the European Commission, the draft has yet to progress through parliamentary committees or be included in the legislative agenda.

In 2024, the Cabinet of Ministers [revised](#) the procedure for awarding one-time financial benefits to the families of deceased military personnel, theoretically enabling same-sex partners of deceased soldiers to receive financial compensation. However, the requirement to prove their relationship in court highlights the state's ongoing discriminatory approach toward same-sex couples. The war has amplified the urgency for [legal recognition](#) of same-sex partnerships, particularly for LGBTI military personnel, whose partners lack legal [protections](#) in cases of injury or death.

Metropolitan Epiphany, the head of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU), declined a proposal to follow Pope Francis' lead in permitting priests to bless same-sex couples. He noted that even the Roman and Greek Catholic bishops in Ukraine do not support this stance taken by the Pope.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In June Kyiv hosted its first Pride march since the Russian invasion, organised with joint efforts of Gender Stream and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. The march only covered a distance of 100 metres and participants were then redirected to the underground and trains for safety. Police cited the risk of a potential air attack and the presence of radical anti-LGBTI groups in the city as reasons for the early dispersal.

In September, over 60 people participated in a Pride event organised by activists in Kharkiv, Ukraine. The event featured a car procession, with 13 vehicles driving along one of the city's main avenues, to raise awareness about the importance of upholding human rights and to garner international support for the defence and recovery of Kharkiv.

## FOREIGN POLICY

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has intensified its efforts to protect LGBTI rights by establishing the Council on Human Rights, Gender Equality, and Diversity, and electing a prominent Ukrainian LGBTI activist as the Council's secretary.

## HOUSING

The war in Ukraine has intensified the displacement crisis, significantly impacting the LGBTI community, with many forced to flee occupied territories or frontline areas. Shelters have become essential for survival, particularly for marginalised groups within the community. Throughout the year, a dedicated shelter for trans and non-binary people continued to operate in Odesa, supported by the collaborative efforts of local LGBTI activists and civil society. Additionally, Insight Ukraine's shelters in Lviv and Chernivtsi, along with Gender Stream's shelter in Uzhhorod, remained operational, providing vital services to LGBTI people.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Dmytro Lubinets, the Commissioner of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Human Rights, released the Annual Report on the State of Observance and Protection of Human and Citizen Rights and Freedoms in Ukraine for 2023.

In April the ECtHR ruled in the case of Karter v. Ukraine. The Court found that treating hate crimes based on sexual orientation as ordinary crimes, without considering the motives of intolerance, breaches Article 3 in conjunction with Article 14 of the ECHR.

In June the European Union officially commenced accession negotiations with Ukraine, marking a pivotal step in Ukraine's path toward EU membership. A critical component of these negotiations is the alignment of Ukraine's human rights standards with EU norms, including the protection of LGBTI rights.

In June, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, the Ukrainian Institute, the Ukrainian Cultural Fund, the Ukrainian Youth Fund, Ukrposhta, as well as a number of businesses and media showed support for Pride month by expressing solidarity with the LGBTI community.

In June, the Council of Europe met with Ukraine's First Deputy Chairman of the Verkhovna Rada Oleksandr Kornienko to discuss legislative alignment with European anti-discrimination standards through the criminalisation of hate crimes based on SOGI including and the establishment of a Civil Partnership Institute.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

An assessment by ECOM on the Needs of Trans People in Ukraine highlighted worsening challenges due to the war, including financial barriers to accessing hormones, medical care, housing, and employment, further exacerbated by discrimination. The report noted that the need for financial aid has shifted from food to essentials like warm clothing and power alternatives, while access to healthcare, including gender-related care and mental health services, has deteriorated.

Trans people have reported that doctors have largely ceased diagnosing conditions such as "gender dysphoria." Many medical professionals are wary of potential scrutiny from law enforcement, who might view these diagnoses as aiding conscription evasion. Furthermore, according to Insight Ukraine the diagnostic process is frequently delayed and made more complex and there have been cases where medical professionals have demanded bribes in exchange for providing the necessary diagnosis. As a result, the formal process for gender transition for trans people in Ukraine has been effectively on hold.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In October, Kyiv's bookstore Collection started receiving threats following the announcement of a presentation for the photo book "Fragile As Glass," which shares the stories of queer Ukrainians. The bookstore's founder, Natalka Kuzmenko, revealed the threats via a Facebook post, explaining that several Telegram channels encouraged people to target the bookstore for promoting "perverse" views.

In November, the Readeat bookstore, in partnership with Pydyvanstvo, planned an event titled Queer-bate: Lessons of

Tolerance in Ukrainian Culture, but had to cancel it after receiving threats hours before. Dmitry Feliksov, Readeat's founder, explained that ensuring security for the two-story venue became unfeasible after the publisher notified them of the threats.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 2024, the Nash Svit Centre revealed that in at least two cases, Ukrainian police and prosecutors disregarded precedents from previous court rulings and the April 2024 ECtHR decision in *Karter v. Ukraine*. In these instances, the Prosecutor's Office of the Solomianskyi District of Kyiv and the Bucha District Prosecutor's Office rejected requests to reclassify the cases from minor bodily harm to violations of equality.

In January, the District Prosecutor's Office of Sumy reopened the investigation into threats made against journalists from the local publication "CUKR," who had reported on issues related to the LGBTI community, after the case had been closed by police authorities in December 2023.

In April, Gender Stream and the Department of Main Inspection and Human Rights Compliance of the National Police signed a Memorandum of Cooperation to develop guidelines for ethical communication with LGBTIQ+ individuals and organise training sessions for police officers. This collaboration ensured security at several events, including Prides and a national conference.

In June, the Territorial Recruitment Centre visited the Closer Art Centre in Kyiv's Podil district during preparations for a Pride month event, checking documents of attendees and attempting to detain men who could not provide proof of completing the military medical commission.



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# UNITED KINGDOM

## ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Manchester City Council has approved [plans](#) to develop a LGBTI care home in the city.

In October, Craig Jones, Campaign Director for Fighting With Pride, noted that while in opposition, Labour committed to debating reparations for LGBTI veterans who suffered under the UK's historical "gay ban" before it was lifted in 2000. In October, after reports emerged that LGBTI veterans affected by the ban fear the Labour government may not fulfill its promises of reparations, a Ministry of Defence spokesperson reaffirmed its commitment to providing appropriate financial redress. They stated that the government is working with experts to finalize the details of the compensation scheme. Labour MP for Burnley Oliver Ryan, [claimed](#) that the allocated £50 million compensation scheme fund would inadequately compensate the estimated 4,000 LGBTI veterans and those affected by discriminatory practices.

## ASYLUM

In March, the House of Commons [rejected](#) the House of Lords' attempt to amend the Safety of Rwanda Bill, including the proposal to remove the government's mandate requiring judges to deem Rwanda as a safe country of return. The bill, adopted in January, seeks to deter unlawful immigration by enabling the implementation of deportation policies towards Rwanda.

Since its adoption, the bill was subjected to criticism by the Council of Europe's Commissioner for Human Rights, local and international NGOs, and various UN agencies, who [claimed](#) that the arrangement seeks to shift responsibility for refugee protection, and [noted](#) that although homosexuality isn't criminalised in Rwanda, many LGBTI people keep their identities hidden to avoid discrimination and abuse, which denies them basic human rights. RainbowMigration also [noted](#) that Rwandans have sought asylum in the UK due to discrimination experienced because of their sexual orientation.

In June, Metro [reported](#) that while LGBTI refugees often find refuge from severe persecution in Britain, the process of arriving and staying in the country leads many to encounter homelessness and abuse.

In June, a 26-year-old non-binary social media influencer fleeing persecution in Saudi Arabia had their UK asylum claim [denied](#). The Home Office alleged doubts about the authenticity of the applicant's LGBTI identity.

In July, the Supreme Court [ruled against](#) an Albanian asylum seeker, allowing her deportation after a six-year litigation process.

The applicant had argued that returning to Albania would lead to persecution due to her sexuality and religion, but the tribunal declared not to have found any evidence of such risks.

In October, a gay asylum seeker from Bangladesh [appealed](#) his asylum request after it was rejected multiple times due to the Home Office's belief that he lacks a well-founded fear of persecution upon being returned to Bangladesh.

In March 2018, a judge had [concluded](#) that an asylum applicant was "trying to pass himself off as gay," dismissing his claim. The judge, who referred to being gay as a "lifestyle," criticised the lack of documentary evidence supporting the applicant's claims and questioned why he did not provide a witness who could corroborate his behavior as a gay man.

In November, Asylas and Rainbow Migration urged the UK government to [reconsider](#) Georgia's designation as a 'safe' country under asylum regulations. This followed Georgia's contested elections, the Georgian Dream party's anti-LGBTI legislative campaign, and the introduction of repressive laws that severely restrict the rights of LGBTI people. Concerns were raised that the 'safe' designation increases the risk of returning individuals to a country where they may face persecution and violence.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In March, a judge faced [disciplinary action](#) after referring to a trans rights campaigner as a "stupid, condescending fool." The judicial conduct investigations office conducted an inquiry, resulting in the judge being found guilty of misconduct for failing to uphold the standards expected of his position.

In April, Scotland's new [Hate Crime and Public Order Act](#) took effect. The act seeks to criminalise behaviours that are threatening or abusive, and intended to incite hatred against individuals based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and variations in sex characteristics. Within two days of the Act taking effect, over 3,000 complaints were lodged under it to police. Some of these were related to JK Rowling's [comments](#), which referred to prominent trans women activists as "men", but these were deemed not to infringe the new law.

In November, Tottenham Hotspur was [charged](#) by the Football Association (FA) over homophobic chanting by their fans during a 3-0 victory against Manchester United on 29 September. The club faces two charges under FA Rule E21, which relates to the behavior of supporters at matches, specifically "misconduct in relation to crowd control."

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In June a 29-year-old man was sentenced to life in prison for the murder of retired Fettes College teacher, Peter Coshan after luring him to a flat in Leith using a fake profile on a gay encounter site.

In April, a group of teenagers appeared in court in connection with an attempted murder case involving a trans woman. The 18-year-old victim was reportedly stabbed 14 times on February 10, after allegedly being subjected to transphobic abuse. In late September, some of the perpetrators admitted to their involvement in the attack and pleaded guilty.

In May, police reported seeking information following an alleged homophobic attack that took place in Cardiff in April, where a drag artist and her partner were assaulted by two men after being seen holding hands.

In June, Liverpool Magistrates Court sentenced a man to 12 months in prison, suspended for 18 months, for subjecting a gay throuple to homophobic abuse.

In July, the deaths of two men were classified as a hate crime by the Metropolitan Police, which revealed that the victims, who had been in a relationship and lived together, were known to the perpetrator.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

In January, the Scottish Government launched a consultation on detailed proposals to ban conversion practices in Scotland, covering sexual orientation and gender identity. The results analysis is expected to be published early in 2025. The Law Society of Scotland (solicitors' professional body) welcomed the proposed legislation, as did the Church of Scotland, but both emphasised that clarity is needed in the law as, according to their perspective, non-directive counselling should not be banned.

In September, the Scottish Government announced that they would discuss the ban on conversion practices with the new Labour UK Government, and then decide whether to legislate in the Scottish or UK Parliament.

In March, Equalities Minister Maria Caulfield announced that draft legislation on the criminalisation of conversion therapies in England and Wales would be introduced. Caulfield stated that the initiative would develop following the completion of a review on gender identity services for children and young people – known as the Cass Report.

In July, following delays in the efforts promised by the Sunak-led cabinet, the newly appointed UK government reintroduced a plan to outlaw conversion therapy.

In the King's Speech, Sir Keir Starmer's administration announced a draft Conversion Practices Bill aimed at a comprehensive ban, including protections for trans people.

In October, the Labour government replaced the Equality Hub with the newly established Office for Equality and Opportunity, announcing several "key immediate priorities," including the introduction of a full, trans-inclusive ban on so-called 'conversion therapy.' The government emphasised that the new office would be focused on breaking down barriers, promoting opportunities, and ensuring that equality remains central to all of its missions.

## DATA COLLECTION

According to a report compiled by the charity Trans Actual and published in October, over 200 trans people in the UK have been denied hormone replacement therapy by their GPs in the past year. Under current care pathways in the UK, once trans patients are discharged from an NHS gender clinic, they are supposed to continue receiving care through their GPs, including prescriptions for HRT.

## EDUCATION

In May, new draft guidance from the UK government advised teachers in England not to teach school children about gender identity and proposed banning sex education for children under nine. The then Education Secretary Gillian Keegan emphasised the importance of providing children with "the right information at the right time," while also stressing that the topic of gender identity should not be taught at all.

In August, research conducted by The Independent and Index on Censorship revealed that over half of school libraries in the UK have faced parental demands to remove books about sexual orientation and gender identity. Books such as Julian is a Mermaid', 'Heartstopper', and 'ABC Pride', were frequently targeted, with complaints focusing on content promoting acceptance and love for LGBTI identities. In half of these cases, the complaints led to the removal of the books, with several librarians also reporting threats from parents, including demands for their dismissal if their requests were not met.

## EMPLOYMENT

In January, a former school worker won the right for her appeal to be heard by senior judges. The appellant was fired after posting critical comments on Facebook about teaching LGBTI relationships in primary schools and alleged her dismissal from her employment was due to her Christian beliefs. In October, the Court of Appeal ruled that the teacher had her right to free speech violated and faced 'direct discrimination'.

In March, a Wiltshire teacher pressed charges against his former employer after being dismissed for gross misconduct.

The dismissal followed reports that the teacher had repeatedly humiliated a student regarding their gender identity and preferred pronouns.

In May, a tribunal ruled that a woman, who was dismissed by her employer at the Edinburgh Rape Crisis Centre for her critical views on gender identity and biological sex, faced discrimination. The tribunal ruled that the charity had targeted her in a “heresy hunt” after she expressed her views, which led to her dismissal, awarding her £70,000.

In July, a tribunal ruled that a Christian social worker faced direct discrimination when Touchstone Leeds withdrew his job offer after discovering his negative views on homosexuality. However, the tribunal rejected the additional claims of discrimination related to the second interview and the final decision not to hire him.

As part of the proceedings, a former Trades Union Congress president was removed from the employment tribunal panel due to colleagues’ concerns about his potential bias in favour of LGBTI stances.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In July, Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer stated that trans women with Gender Recognition Certificates should not have the right to access women-only spaces. Starmer further emphasised the need to protect “biological women’s spaces.”

In February, the group For Women Scotland lodged an appeal against the 2023 Scottish court ruling that “sex” in British equality law means sex as amended by gender recognition. They want the UK Supreme Court to rule that it only means “biological sex”. In March, the UK’s first trans judge sought permission to intervene in this appeal, but was refused. The UK Supreme Court heard the case on 26 and 27 November, and judgement will be issued in 2025.

In March, Sports Minister Lucy Frazer from the Conservative Party urged all British sporting bodies to review their policies on trans athletes in women’s sports to ensure fairness and integrity in competition. Emphasising the need for a thorough assessment of existing rules and regulations, the government has also requested an explanation from the Football Association regarding its current policy, which aims to balance inclusivity for transgender players with safety and fairness in women’s football.

In October, following the appeal, the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) announced that trans women who have gone through male puberty will be excluded from Tiers 1 and 2 of the new women’s county competition, as well as from the women’s

Hundred. This decision aligns the ECB’s eligibility policy with that of the International Cricket Council (ICC), which introduced similar guidelines in 2023.

Shadow Education Secretary Bridget Phillipson endorsed allowing trans women who have undergone gender transitions to use female toilets, addressing concerns about safe spaces for women.

In May, a group of 26 female hospital nurses announced their intention to sue the NHS after being required to share a changing room with a trans colleague who had not yet undergone gender reassignment surgery.

In May, Scotland’s deputy First Minister Kate Forbes pledged to “serve all communities” in Scotland after the Scottish Greens expressed concern over what First Minister John Swinney’s decision to appoint her as his deputy could mean for LGBTI people.

In May, the UK Government proposed new regulations requiring single-sex restrooms in all newly constructed pubs, restaurants, offices, and shopping centres in England. The decision followed a public consultation conducted by the UK Government in which 81% of respondents supported separate single-sex toilets, and 82% backed universal toilets where space permits.

In June, Women and Equality Minister Kemi Badenoch criticised LGBTI advocacy groups for allegedly misusing Britain’s equalities laws. Badenoch pledged to uphold the “privacy and dignity of women and girls” against interpretations of sex and gender that go beyond biological characteristics.

August marked the 18th anniversary of the UK Black Pride, with thousands of participants joining the march in Stratford.

## FAMILY

In June, the Court of Appeal heard claims that same-sex male couples in Northern Ireland are experiencing unlawful discrimination when seeking publicly funded fertility treatment.

## HEALTH

In February, a consultation draft of new guidelines for Scotland’s publicly funded healthcare system, NHS Scotland, suggested that permitting trans patients to change their gender marker on medical records might lead to “unintended negative consequences” for their health. The draft was shared with stakeholders for feedback.

In March, NHS England announced new guidelines restricting access to puberty blockers for children, limiting their prescription to clinical trials or specific cases requiring approval from a

national panel of experts. The move followed a 2022 review and the findings of a new review commissioned by the NHS on gender identity services for young people in England. Best known as the Cass Report, the study allegedly reported inadequate evidence to support the routine use of puberty-suppressing hormones in minors.

In March, NHS England was accused of exposing trans teenagers to “unreasonable risk of irreversible harm.” The lawsuit was submitted by two mothers concerned about the transition from adolescent to adult gender clinics and requesting that the latter adhere to similar protections as those required for younger patients. Following the filing, a High Court judge decided to pause the legal action to allow time for the possible release of the research project that later became known as the ‘Cass Report’.

In April, the Health Secretary revealed plans to revise the NHS England Constitution to “ensure that biological sex is respected.” The Secretary emphasised the alleged need to remove gender-neutral language and guarantee hospital patients in England the right to request single-sex wards, with trans patients being accommodated in separate rooms.

In April, the Sandyford Clinic in Glasgow, Scotland’s sole provider of trans healthcare for young people, halted new prescriptions of puberty blockers and cross-sex hormones for trans people under 18, following the publication of the Cass Review. Scotland’s Public Health Minister Jenni Minto assured Members of the Scottish Parliament that while the Cass Review focused on NHS England, its findings would be carefully considered in Scotland. Furthermore, Minto defended the decision to inform young trans people and their families of a temporary ban on puberty blockers before notifying elected representatives.

At the end of May, the Conservative UK government introduced emergency legislation to temporarily ban the prescription of puberty blockers for trans people under 18 in England, Scotland and Wales. The emergency order was renewed by the new Labour government in August, and again in November, also extending it to Northern Ireland.

In June, as one of the final measures by the outgoing Conservative Party before the general election, the Department of Health and Social Care imposed restrictions on prescribing puberty blockers to under-18s, effective until at least September 3, 2024.

In July, Health Secretary Wes Streeting, from the Labour Party, defended his decision to extend a ban on puberty blockers despite backlash from Labour MPs.

In July, the UK High Court upheld the ban on puberty blockers introduced by former Conservative Health Secretary Victoria

Atkins. This decision followed a legal challenge initiated in June by TransActual UK, a trans rights advocacy group, and an anonymous trans young person. The judicial review proceedings were aimed at contesting the emergency legislation that restricts access to puberty blockers for trans youth.

In August, Scotland’s gender service for young people in Glasgow announced it would no longer accept self-referrals. This decision aligned with recommendations from the UK Chief Medical Officer, following a review of how the Cass Review on gender services for children and young people could be applied in Scotland. (See also under Bodily Integrity.)

In September, the NHS in Scotland published three documents on trans health: gender identity healthcare standards, a trans care knowledge and skills framework, and an updated gender identity healthcare protocol.

Following a UK government consultation (in which most respondents opposed the ban), the government made the ban on puberty blockers for under 18 year olds permanent in December. There are two exceptions to the ban: young people who were already using puberty blockers prior to the ban and young people who agree to be part of a future research trial, due to start in 2025, (who may be able to receive them). In addition, puberty blockers can continue to be prescribed to cisgender young people, for example to treat precocious puberty.

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The charity Fighting With Pride announced the creation of the UK’s first memorial honouring the “lost legion” of LGBTI people who served in the armed forces at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The photo ID requirement for voting underscored difficulties for trans people registering to vote, as many lack a gender recognition certificate due to its cost and complex process.

In May, Scotland’s Prime Minister John Swinney admitted that the bill aimed at simplifying gender changes without requiring a medical diagnosis, passed by the Scottish Parliament in 2022, could not be implemented while it was blocked by the previous Conservative UK Government.

In June, the Conservatives had vowed to amend the 2010 Equality Act to define “sex” strictly as biological sex assigned at birth in case of victory in the general elections. The new Labour UK Government has no such plans.

In November, Scottish Secretary Ian Murray faced criticism for



refusing to lift a Tory-imposed veto on the Gender Recognition Reform Bill, despite the bill having the support of Scottish Labour. The bill, which passed in December 2022 with backing from all parties in the Scottish Parliament, sought to simplify the gender recognition process for trans people by allowing self-determination. However, then-Scottish Secretary Alister Jack used a Section 35 order to block the legislation, a power under the 1998 Scotland Act. Murray, who became Scottish Secretary in July, sided with the Tories, stating that while he didn't believe the use of the Section 35 order was correct, Labour would not revoke it.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In November, the NHS proposed new plans that prioritise IVF access for trans men and lesbians, potentially coming into effect as early as next year and placing them at the forefront of the priority list for fertility treatments.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In May, the Scottish Greens expelled 13 activists for signing a declaration advocating for sex-based rights and expressing concern over the suppression of gender-critical views. The Greens argued that these members posed a risk to the "safety of all trans and non-binary members" and pointed to a 2018 rule excluding "trans-exclusionary" individuals from membership.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In February, a group of police officers launched the "Police Sex Equality and Equity Network" to challenge what they describe as the dominance of "pro-trans ideologies" within UK policing. The network accused police chiefs of embedding gender ideology in their practices, which they claim fosters a "culture of fear" for those who do not support trans rights. According to the group, this focus on gender issues risks undermining public confidence in the police, and officers who believe in the immutability of biological sex feel unable to express their views without fear of disciplinary action due to the influence of alleged lobby groups and activists.

In March, Eddie Ratcliffe, one of the individuals convicted of the murder of trans teenager Brianna Ghey, expressed his intention to appeal his life imprisonment sentence. The Mirror reported that the appeal was rejected as the minimum terms were deemed acceptable.

In April, a senior police officer expressed concerns that Scotland's new Hate Crime and Public Order Act could erode public trust in the police as individuals might feel unfairly targeted if their details are recorded under the new legislation. The Scottish government

responded by assuring that the law includes protections for free speech and that a comprehensive training and guidance programme would be provided.

In September, the Metropolitan Police rejected plans to introduce gender-neutral uniforms after consulting with 30,000 officers. As a result, the force decided to continue using separate male and female uniforms, extending the current supplier contract for uniforms until 2026.

## SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

A group of nearly 1,300 individuals filed a class action civil lawsuit against the US-owned dating app Grindr for improperly using and sharing users' private information, including HIV status and testing history, with third parties for commercial gain, violating UK data protection laws.



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# UZBEKISTAN

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In Fergana, a young man was stripped, beaten, and forced to endure severe abuse by a group of LGBTI-phobic men.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In Uzbekistan, trans individuals face severe discrimination, harassment, and violence, exacerbated by both societal and governmental homophobia. A trans woman shared with Ozodlik having to present as male in public due to her official documents, which list her as male. As part of her testimony she cited encounters with law enforcement that often mock, humiliate, and physically abuse trans people.

The Uzbek government remains opposed to legalising same-sex relationships, citing concerns about public backlash and preserving the country's image within the Muslim world. Uzbekistan, with its close ties to Russia and historical tendencies to emulate Russian legislation, may use the Russian criminalisation of LGBTI identities to further marginalise LGBTI people. Russian and Georgian laws reinforce a narrative that could gain traction in Uzbekistan, where same-sex relations between men are already criminalised under Article 120 of the Criminal Code.

## FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

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."

## INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The situation of LGBTI people in Uzbekistan has drawn international concern, with human rights organisations condemning the ongoing persecution of sexual minorities under the country's harsh laws.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In Uzbekistan, homosexuality is criminalised, with penalties of up to three years in prison. However, the law does not recognise trans identities, leading to further mistreatment as trans people are often misclassified and persecuted as gay men.

## PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

From November, in Uzbekistan, all films, TV series, cartoons, and musical works—both domestic and international—will undergo a "spiritual examination" before being aired. This was announced by Otabek Khasanov, head of the Centre for Spirituality and Enlightenment. The expert group will assess whether content aligns with state policies, national and universal values, and moral criteria, with particular focus on scenes promoting immorality or obscenity that could negatively influence personal qualities.

## PUBLIC OPINION

Political figures in Uzbekistan have made derogatory remarks against the LGBTI community. Alisher Kadyrov, leader of the National Revival party and vice-speaker of the Legislative Chamber, suggested stripping LGBTI people of citizenship to force them to emigrate. Rasul Kusherbayev, an adviser to the Minister of Natural Resources, declared that legalising same-sex relationships would mark "the day of our death."

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Ozodlik documented an incident where police in Samarkand set a dog on a group of trans people.

In another case, a trans woman was imprisoned on charges of sodomy, having returned from Moscow to change her passport.



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