

# Bias-Motivated Speech

## ALBANIA

Public [discourse](#) on LGBTI issues escalated during the reporting period, particularly in connection with the draft Law "On Gender Equality" and proposed amendments to civil registry legislation. During parliamentary debate on the Gender Equality Law, political and religious actors framed the draft as a threat to children, family values and national identity. The reform was publicly misrepresented as introducing same-sex marriage or automatic legal gender recognition. Similar hostile narratives accompanied the Democratic Party's proposed civil registry amendments, which were presented as a response to alleged "gender ideology". Although the initiative was not adopted, the public debate was characterised by stigmatising rhetoric and [disinformation](#) targeting LGBTI persons. Organised anti-LGBTI campaigns continued throughout the year, including renewed calls for a referendum aimed at blocking equality-related legislation. Hate campaigns increasingly targeted individual activists and human rights defenders. Personal data, including names and employment details, were circulated online alongside accusations of being "foreign agents" or "anti-family actors". Complaints were filed with the police; however, prosecutorial authorities refused to initiate criminal proceedings. At the institutional level, the Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination examined several complaints concerning hate speech. In one case involving D. Mema, the Commissioner found that public statements constituted discriminatory and degrading treatment against LGBTI persons. The decision was appealed and is pending before a national court. Strategic cases were also initiated against political figures Fatmir Mediu and Silva Caka for alleged bias-motivated public statements (see also under Equality and Non-discrimination).

According to the 2024–2025 nationwide [survey](#) of Aleanca LGBTI, approximately 61% of respondents reported having personally experienced or directly witnessed discrimination or violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics during the previous year. Public spaces and online platforms were identified as the most frequent locations, with 67 cases occurring in streets or other public places and 65 cases online. The Needs [Assessment](#) of Trans People in Albania documented persistent structural gaps in

protection and high levels of insecurity affecting trans people. According to the assessment, 50% of respondents stated that state institutions do not adequately address the security needs of trans people. The assessment further found that 23.5% of respondents had experienced physical and or sexual violence. In 58.3% of reported cases, violence involved multiple perpetrators, indicating patterns of collective abuse. Underreporting remained significant, with 75% of respondents who experienced physical and or sexual violence not reporting the incident to law enforcement. Threats and intimidation were also widespread, with 82% of respondents reporting that they had been threatened with physical violence at least once in the preceding twelve months. The assessment noted that fear of harassment and violence further restricted freedom of movement, with some respondents incurring additional financial burdens due to reliance on private transport to avoid unsafe public spaces.

## ARMENIA

In January, the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) delivered a [judgement](#) in *Minasyan and Others v. Armenia*, a case brought by 14 Armenian human rights defenders and activists who had been targeted by LGBTI-phobic hate speech. The Court found violations of Article 8 (right to private and family life), both alone and in conjunction with Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination), of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The case concerned discriminatory newspaper articles published in 2014, which incited hostility against the applicants and included links to their social media profiles following their public support for Conchita Wurst's Eurovision song contest victory. The ECtHR concluded that the articles propagated hate and incited intolerance against a marginalised group, directly harming the applicants' dignity and psychological wellbeing. It further held that the domestic courts failed to strike a fair balance between freedom of expression and the right to private life, offering no effective protection against hate speech.

In August, [research](#) conducted by Pink Armenia revealed the lack of effectiveness of the Criminal Code article that criminalises public calls to violence, the justification of violence, and violent propaganda,

to protect LGBTI people. The study concluded that the article cannot be regarded as an effective tool for protecting the rights of minorities as the provision has been applied almost exclusively to cases concerning political authorities or, in one instance, influential opposition figures. Notably, incidents involving calls for violence, the justification of violence, or violent propaganda targeting individuals on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity have not attracted meaningful investigative attention. In situations where preliminary reviews were initiated, the proceedings remained incomplete, and no indictments were submitted to the courts.

During the campaign for the March local elections and in subsequent public statements, Vardan Ghukasyan, a candidate for mayor of Gyumri from the Armenian Republican Party, made repeated remarks targeting the LGBTI community. His statements included explicit threats of violence against LGBTI people and those who support their rights, as well as rhetoric that perpetuates harmful gender stereotypes. This case was reported by several activists to the law enforcement bodies. However, no criminal persecution was initiated.

In December, Armenian civil society groups underscored the growing instrumentalisation - by state institutions, political actors, and the media - of LGBTI issues as a tool to discredit political opponents, underscoring that these actors increasingly exploit LGBTI identities for political gain and to actively condemn and prevent intolerance and targeted hostility.

## AZERBAIJAN

In 2025, a study titled 'Licence to Hate' by the local monitoring group QueeRadar analysed hate speech on Facebook and Instagram from January to July, assessing how changes in Meta's content policies affected the Azerbaijani segment of social media. The research documented 100 instances of abusive content, often amplified by influencers, public figures, and semi-public pages, including dehumanising language, moral condemnation, and explicit incitement to violence towards LGBTI people. The study noted that some public commentary welcomed the perceived loosening of moderation rules, further normalising hostility against queer

people online.

Public discourse on LGBTI communities included unfounded and stigmatising narratives promoted by professional figures. In May, Zahid Oruc, chair of the Human Rights Committee of Azerbaijan's Milli Majlis, publicly attacked the concept of gender equality in a parliamentary speech, framing it as a threat to national values, the family and the legal order. In July a lawyer publicly claimed that Azerbaijan was undergoing widespread "gayification", linking the shortage of male teachers in schools to children's upbringing and portraying LGBTI identities as a societal problem.

## BELARUS

On 16 January 2025, Archpriest Andrey Lemeshonok of the St. Elisabeth Convent stated on the state television channel ONT that Western countries promote "an ideology of destroying personality and family," that children are "corrupted" in schools, that "Europe and America have rejected God," and described LGBTIQ+ people as "sick people."

In October 2025, Olga Shpilevskaya, head of the pro-government Belarusian Women's Union and director of the Belarus office of the interstate TV and radio company Mir, stated on the program "Editors' Club" that Belarusian children should use "traditional toys" from a state-linked manufacturer and claimed that Western toys promote "transgender dolls" and foreign ideology among children, describing this as harmful influence.

In July 2025, Oleg Gaidukevich, chairman of the pro-government Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus, commenting on legislative amendments related to restrictions on so-called "propaganda" of gender reassignment, stated that in Belarus one could speak about gender transition "only at a garbage dump," and that such a person would be detained afterward.

In 2025, the state-affiliated regional outlet "Grodzenskaya Pravda" published an article titled "Alien values, or how the Schneider family fled from the praised Western tolerance to Belarus," which portrayed "Western tolerance" as a threat to family and children and contrasted it with Belarusian "traditional values." The same article was republished

on the websites of state institutions and enterprises, including the [Leninsky District Administration](#) of Grodno and the state enterprise [Grodnovodokanal](#).

## BELGIUM

In April, the Conseil Supérieur de l'Audiovisuel (CSA) issued a decision concerning RTBF's broadcast of "Le 128e sexe" on Le Grand Cactus, which parodied the song "Le 3e sexe." The CSA noted that the segment reinforced stereotypes about trans and non-binary people and could be perceived as offensive. RTBF acknowledged the misstep and issued a public apology. The broadcaster also engaged in discussions with LGBTQIA+ associations to improve its practices, and several training sessions were organised for staff.

In August, Belgian tennis player Greet Minnen publicly [shared](#) a homophobic threat she received after her loss at the Prague Open, including violent language targeting her sexual orientation. The case attracted media attention and highlighted the prevalence of online bias-motivated speech against LGBTI athletes.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

In February Sarajevo imam Muhamed Velic [called](#) queer Bosnian singer Božo Vrećo a "monster" and a "freak" during a sermon, accusing him of disrespecting Bosniak cultural heritage through his performances of sevdalinka, a traditional folk genre.

In response, the head of Bosnia's Islamic Community, Husein Kavazović, addressed a letter to Vrećo on January 29, affirming the importance of diversity and Bosnia's legacy of coexistence, though he did not directly condemn Velic's comments.

## CROATIA

In March, the Zagreb County Court [ruled](#) against the Ordo Iuris Foundation, ordering it to remove from its website a petition found to be discriminatory towards LGBTI people and their families. The case was brought by the Rainbow Families association (Dugine obitelji), which claimed that the petition – aiming to ban same-sex adoptions – was discriminatory. The judgment concluded that the petition not only promoted morally unacceptable narratives but also incited discrimination and harassment, thereby breaching legal standards.

In April, the Electronic Media Council (VEM) [rejected](#) a request by the Center for Civic Initiatives (CGI) Poreč to sanction the conservative portal Narod.hr for alleged hate speech and discrimination against LGBTI people. CGI had produced a [survey](#) identifying over 300 controversial articles on the portal, but VEM found the research methodologically flawed and the contested claims to fall under the protections awarded to free speech. The decision was discussed on Croatian Catholic Radio's Arguments programme, where it was framed as an attempt to censor conservative and Catholic voices under the guise of regulating hate speech.

## CYPRUS

In April, an LGBTI-phobic display was [reported](#) at the Church of Saint George Havouzas in Limassol, where the acronym "LGBT" was placed on a traditional Easter bonfire (lampratzia) in the position typically reserved for an effigy of Judas. The incident prompted political and institutional reactions: AKEL Secretary-General Stefanos Stefanou [contacted](#) Justice Minister Marios Hartsiotis and Police Chief Themistos Annaoutis, urging that the matter be investigated. In the aftermath, [calls](#) were made for public vigilance and solidarity, with warnings that the incident could signal heightened risks of anti-LGBTI violence ahead of Cyprus Pride 2025.

## NORTHERN CYPRUS

In September, a court [ruling](#) highlighted serious shortcomings in the police response to online hate speech targeting the LGBTI community, finding that authorities had failed to conduct an effective investigation into harassment related to a Pride march.

## DENMARK

In June, Minister for European Affairs Marie Bjerre (Venstre) was [quoted](#) in the Danish newspaper BT stating that "it is not hate speech or hatred to say that there are fundamentally only two sexes, a man and a woman." The following day, MP Inger Støjberg, chairperson of Danmarksdemokraterne, [published](#) a similar statement in BT, asserting that "it is not hate speech to claim that there are only two sexes."

## FRANCE

In January, the Paris Criminal Court [delivered](#) its

verdict in the trial of five individuals accused of incitement to hatred and homophobic threats against singer Bilal Hassani. Four of the defendants were convicted, with one receiving a €3,000 fine for public incitement to hatred or violence on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. The case stemmed from the backlash following the announcement of a concert by Hassani in the Basilica of Saint-Pierre-aux-Nonnains, a deconsecrated church. The announcement triggered a wave of hostile online comments, including explicit calls for violence against Hassani.

In February, the Bordeaux Court of Appeal upheld the conviction of a far-right activist, for homophobic insults during the 2022 Bordeaux Pride. Previously convicted in May 2024, he was fined €1,000 and ordered to compensate the associations Mousse and STOP Homophobia for disrupting the procession, displaying a banner hostile to LGBTI people, and chanting homophobic slogans.

In May, the Paris Criminal Court sentenced seven people to fines and suspended prison terms for sending homophobic and anti-Semitic hate messages to Thomas Jolly, the artistic director of the opening and closing ceremonies of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games. Jolly had filed a complaint after being targeted with threats and insults on social media.

In May, an investigation was opened in Paris following a complaint by a leader of the women's section of the Stade Français rugby club against the club's sporting director. The complaint accused him of moral harassment and lesbophobic remarks. The Paris public prosecutor's office confirmed that the complaint had been entrusted to the Brigade for the Repression of Crimes against Persons (BRDP). The club's sporting director faced internal disciplinary action, including suspension from his role with the women's team and a formal reprimand.

In June, a 21-year-old soldier was sentenced by the Tulle Criminal Court to one year of probationary prison for publishing a series of online messages promoting extreme violence against ethnic minorities and LGBTI people.

## GREECE

In July, Greek authorities filed a criminal case against a 45-year-old man from Hanioti for an online post inciting discrimination against immigrants and the LGBTI community. The Chania Crime Prosecution and Investigation Sub-Directorate, according to the Hellenic Police, opened the case under legislation addressing certain forms of racism and xenophobia. The preliminary investigation found that the individual's post encouraged discriminatory behavior toward non-EU citizens and LGBTI people. The case file was to be forwarded to the Prosecutor of the Minor Offences Court of Chania. By the end of 2025, there has been no publicly reported update on whether the case has progressed to charges or court proceedings.

## IRELAND

In February, Six O'Clock Show host Brian Dowling revealed that he had hired a hate crime investigator after facing severe online trolling. Dowling and his husband have been targeted with significant online hate since the birth of their children via surrogacy.

In July, the Coalition Against Hate Crime, a network of 22 civil society organisations representing communities commonly targeted by hate crime and hate speech in Ireland, sent a letter to Taoiseach Micheál Martin and Minister for Justice Jim O'Callaghan regarding Ireland's response to an infringement procedure initiated by the European

Commission concerning the transposition of the EU Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia. The Coalition expressed concern at reports that the Department of Justice intended to assert that existing Irish legislation already fully complies with EU obligations, warning that this position appeared to contradict commitments in the Programme for Government and the National LGBTIQ+ Inclusion Strategy to strengthen incitement to hatred legislation. The letter emphasised that effective protections against hate crime and hate speech must be substantive and comprehensive, addressing not only Ireland's EU law obligations but also its broader human rights commitments, including the protection of LGBTIQ+ people and other communities targeted by hate. It called for transparency around the infringement process

and for the development of a holistic approach to combating hate, including the adoption of a National Action Plan to Combat Hate beyond the criminal law.

## ITALY

For the second consecutive year, the [Ministry of Education](#) omitted any reference to the persecution of LGBTI people during the Holocaust in its official circular for Holocaust Remembrance Day.

In September, Cardinal Gerhard Ludwig Müller, Prefect Emeritus of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, [commented](#) on Church teaching regarding homosexuality during a ceremony in Belmonte del Sannio, Molise, where he was being granted honorary citizenship. Speaking to reporters, Müller stated that "homosexual acts are a mortal sin" and that the Church "must reject this policy," referring to individuals entering the Holy Door "to propagandise for themselves and not to receive penance through a change of life." He also said that, "according to the Book of Genesis, God blessed marriage between a man and a woman; sin cannot be blessed." Müller argued that it was necessary to "correct the misunderstanding that the Church had almost accepted this behavior as something to be blessed and upon which to invoke God's blessing."

## KAZAKHSTAN

In February, a coordinated defamation campaign targeted the LGBTI community through the circulation of a fabricated end-of-term video purporting to present USAID's "achievements" in Kazakhstan. The video falsely alleged that LGBTI organisations and individual activists had received millions of dollars in foreign funding. These unsubstantiated claims were widely disseminated and contributed to renewed hostility towards LGBTI groups, reinforcing existing prejudice through deliberate disinformation and further stigmatising human rights defenders working in the country.

In March, Nauryzbay kazy Taganuly, head of the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (DUMK), issued a public [statement](#) opposing LGBTI equality. In a video published on the DUMK's official Instagram account, he claimed that initiatives

framed around women's rights and combating violence were being used to promote what he described as an unacceptable movement. Taganuly characterised LGBTI identities as immoral and foreign to Kazakh society, calling for their rejection in the name of tradition and cultural values.

In mid-March, during a meeting of the National Kurultai, President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev [commented](#) on global political developments, arguing that "globalism is losing its relevance" and that state nationalism and regional power dynamics were becoming more prominent. He criticised what he described as the long-standing promotion of "so-called democratic moral values, including LGBTI," through international NGOs and foundations, claiming that such efforts had interfered in countries' internal affairs. Tokayev also expressed support for the policies of the United States administration under President Donald Trump, praising its stated commitment to opposing what he referred to as the "deep state" and restoring "traditional moral values."

In late October, a group of members of the Majilis, Kazakhstan's lower chamber of parliament, established a working group to promote draft [legislation](#) aimed at banning what it described as LGBTI and paedophile "propaganda". Several ministries publicly indicated their support for the proposal and signalled their readiness to enforce it. On 12 November, the Majilis adopted the draft law, which prohibits the dissemination of information relating to so-called "non-traditional sexual orientation" in public spaces, media and online, and provides for administrative penalties. In December, the Senate [approved](#) the legislation, and it was signed into law by the President at the end of the year.

## KOSOVO

Throughout the year, bias-motivated speech against LGBTI persons [remained](#) widespread, particularly during election periods and on social media. Hate speech was often disseminated by public figures, political actors, and media outlets.

## LATVIA

In late December 2024, a singing [protest](#) was staged in front of the Saeima House in Riga to highlight the

persistence of hate speech in Latvian society. The protest was organised by the informal youth group Harp in cooperation with the Riga Queer Choir and the association Safe Space. Participants and organisers drew particular attention to hate speech directed against the LGBTI community, stressing that victims often face dismissal of their complaints by law enforcement, reflecting institutional indifference and further discouraging reporting.

## LITHUANIA

In October and November, Lithuanian law enforcement initiated two separate pre-trial investigations into online hate speech targeting LGBTI people following complaints by activists Lina Plieniūtė, director of "Mothers for LGBTQ+ Children," and Jonas Valaitis, editor of the LGBTI news portal jarmo.net. The investigations, conducted under Criminal Code Article 170 addressing incitement to hatred based on sexual orientation, concern repeated derogatory, threatening, and inciting comments posted on Facebook pages associated with the LGBTI community.

In July, media reported that TV host Paulius Ambrazevičius filed a complaint after police declined to open a criminal investigation into homophobic and threatening comments posted under a photo from Baltic Pride 2025. Law enforcement authorities determined the comments did not meet the threshold for prosecution under hate speech provisions, and Ambrazevičius announced he would appeal that decision.

In 2020, the European Court of Human Rights found that Lithuania's refusal to initiate a pre-trial investigation into discriminatory comments on a Facebook post violated the prohibition of discrimination under the European Convention on Human Rights. In 2025, authorities upheld the refusal to initiate a pre-trial investigation into two anti-LGBTQ+ hate speech comments posted on the GayLine.lt Facebook page in March and June. Although the court acknowledged that the comments were discriminatory and offensive, it held that they formed part of a continuous offence for which the perpetrator had already been convicted in October 2025.

## MALTA

In May, the hosts of the comedy podcast Bajdu Bejken publicly addressed criticism over a transphobic joke made during a live performance earlier in the month. In a subsequent interview, they acknowledged that the content, while having been reviewed for legal compliance, was inappropriate and ethically wrong, and expressed regret for the harm caused.

## MOLDOVA

In April, former Moldovan President and Socialist Party leader Igor Dodon publicly accused the ruling Action and Solidarity Party (PAS) of promoting LGBTI rights at the expense of traditional Christian values. Dodon claimed that PAS, having consolidated control over the judiciary, is now using legal mechanisms to target the Orthodox Church and its followers. His remarks followed a court ruling that rejected a complaint challenging a 2022 decision by the Equality Council that found the Church's opposition to an LGBTI parade in Chisinau to constitute incitement to discrimination based on sexual orientation.

## NORWAY

In May, Håvard Jensen, group leader of the Progress Party (FrP) in Indre Østfold, was reported to the police after making a threatening statement about people carrying a rainbow flag. During a break in a municipal council meeting, he stated that he would "chase [someone] with an axe" if a person carrying a rainbow flag came onto his road. The remark was directed at a representative of FRI - the Organisation for Gender and Sexual Diversity - who was present at the meeting, and the organisation subsequently filed a police report. There have been no further public developments reported on this incident since the police report was filed.

## POLAND

The Regional Court in Warsaw upheld a lower court judgment convicting journalist Rafal Ziemkiewicz of defamation against LGBTI activist Bart Staszewski. The case concerned social media statements published in January 2023, in which Ziemkiewicz used degrading language towards Staszewski and accused him of accepting foreign funding to fabricate allegations against Poland. The

court sentenced Ziemkiewicz to four months of community service, ordered him to pay PLN 5,000 (approximately €1,150) to the Victims Assistance and Post-Penitentiary Assistance Fund, and required him to issue a public apology to Staszewski.

In February, Polish MEP Grzegorz Braun was sanctioned by the European Parliament for anti-LGBTI remarks. Braun publicly stated that there are only "men, women, and people with personality disorders" and made additional derogatory comments targeting LGBTI people. The sanctions were imposed under the Parliament's disciplinary rules.

In February, an appellate court upheld a ruling in favour of Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski in a defamation case brought by the conservative legal organisation Ordo Iuris. The case stemmed from a 2020 post in which Sikorski referred to Ordo Iuris as a "fundamentalist sect" while criticising its support for local resolutions targeting so-called "LGBT ideology." A first-instance court had found the statement to fall within the limits of political criticism and freedom of expression; the appeal was dismissed, making the judgment final.

In February, a Warsaw court ruled that conservative activist Kaja Godek must apologise to the LGBTI people she insulted as part of repeated claims in media interviews that homosexuality is a "perversion" often linked to paedophilia. She had also criticized openly gay figures, such as former Irish Prime Minister Leo Varadkar, for "flaunting his strange orientation." In 2019, she claimed the "homosexual lobby" sought to sexualise children and adopt them for abusive purposes.

In June, the District Court in Gdańsk ruled against the use of so-called "homophobe vans," vehicles circulating with homophobic slogans. The case, brought forward by the Tolerado Association, a Tricity-based LGBTI rights group, had been ongoing since 2019 and targeted the Pro Right to Life Foundation, the organisation responsible for both anti-abortion and anti-LGBTI campaigns. The court found that the foundation's materials promoted disinformation and anti-scientific theories, including claims about a supposed shorter life expectancy for

homosexual men and false associations between LGBTI identities, paedophilia, and sexualisation of children. In its ruling the court ordered the foundation to cease disseminating such slogans, issue a public apology to both Tolerado and the wider LGBTI community, and pay PLN 30,000 (approximately €6,900) in damages plus interest.

In late August, Sejm (the lower house of parliament) Speaker, Szymon Hołownia opposed the organisation of an exhibition and intervened during the debate on the "Stop LGBT" bill, both of which sought to present LGBTI people in the context of paedophilia. Hołownia refused to allow the controversial exhibition to take place in the Sejm building, where it was to be organised by the Life and Family Foundation, and stepped in during the first reading of the citizens' bill of the same name.

## ROMANIA

During the 2025 presidential electoral campaign, anti-LGBTI rhetoric intensified and was repeatedly instrumentalised for political mobilisation. In February, presidential candidate Călin Georgescu publicly declared that he was "against LGBTQ". Prime Minister Marcel Ciolacu stated that he would not want Nicușor Dan to win the elections because he "does not want to be forced to wear a skirt", and made additional remarks suggesting that amendments to identity documents to accommodate legal gender recognition would create confusion and erode traditional norms.

In June, ACCEPT lodged a complaint with the National Audiovisual Council (CNA) concerning the debate programme "News Pass", broadcast by B1 TV on 5 June 2025 in the context of Bucharest Pride. The complaint addressed on-screen captions and statements framing Pride as a "provocation" against religious celebrations and portraying LGBTI visibility in derogatory terms. Following monitoring and public deliberation, the CNA issued a public warning to B1 TV in August for breaching provisions of the Audiovisual Code prohibiting generalised defamatory statements against groups defined, inter alia, by sexual orientation.

In August, the Deputy Mayor of Ploiești, member of

the far-right AUR party, [announced](#) on Facebook that he would "never accept" the organisation of an LGBTI event in the city, signaling continued institutional hostility at local level.

In October, following the publication by the European Commission of the LGBTI Equality Strategy 2026–2030 recommendations, several Romanian political figures [contributed](#) to misinformation on social media, claiming that children would be able to "choose their gender without parental consent."

In October, Nicolae Păun, leader of the Party of the Roma and former Chair of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights, Religious Affairs, and National Minorities, was [removed](#) from his position as head of the Human Rights Committee. In the weeks preceding his dismissal, Păun published a series of social media posts targeting LGBTI people and Romani organisations. He alleged that several Romani NGOs had been "founded and financed by Soros" to "poison the minds of young Roma" and called to "stop the campaigns promoting homosexuality in Roma communities." In his statements, Păun characterised homosexuality as a "sin" and associated it with "Satan," asserting that he could not be compelled to "sit at the table" with LGBTI people or organisations. He also publicly defended early child marriage as a purported means of preventing homosexuality, in contradiction to Romania's obligations under the Istanbul Convention. In addition, he circulated a list naming Romani, human rights, feminist, and LGBTI organisations, further contributing to a climate of hostility and stigmatisation.

## SERBIA

Throughout 2025, hate speech by politicians and religious officials -particularly from the Serbian Orthodox Church – remained unpunished, as reported by [Human Rights Watch](#) and by [Rainbow Ignite](#), which further documented similar institutional tolerance for homophobic discourse and the normalisation of anti-LGBTI rhetoric in media and politics.

## SLOVAKIA

In October, Prime Minister Robert Fico [declared](#) that "the left cannot be about homosexuals" in response

to the European Socialists' decision to expel his party, Direction-SD (Smer-SD), from the Party of European Socialists (PES). The expulsion, confirmed at the PES congress in Amsterdam in October 2025, marks the culmination of years of estrangement between Fico's party and mainstream European social democracy. Fico used the occasion to denounce Brussels and frame his movement as an "authentic Slovak left" that rejects what he described as imposed "European values." He accused EU institutions of failing to understand Slovakia's needs and reaffirmed his party's opposition to progressive social policies, including supporting LGBTI rights.

## SLOVENIA

In March, the TransAkcija Institute [published](#) a report analysing media reporting on LGBTI issues in Slovenia over the past year. The analysis identified a significant increase in hostile and stigmatising narratives targeting sexual minorities, including the use of inflammatory language, the framing of LGBTI people as a societal threat, and the repetition of misleading or negative stereotypes. The report linked these media trends to a broader climate of intolerance, noting their contribution to the normalisation of bias-motivated hostility and violence against LGBTI people.

In July, the Journalists' Tribunal of Honour (NČR) – a joint body of the Slovenian Journalists' Association and the Journalists' Union – issued its [decision](#) in the case of Legebitra Society v. journalist and Nova24TV's editor-in-chief Marko Puš. The complaint argued that a piece published by Nova24TV contained factual inaccuracies, misleading images, opinion presented as fact, and the promotion of stereotypes and intolerance towards LGBTI people. The NČR found that the article in question violated multiple provisions of the Code of Journalists of Slovenia.

## SPAIN

Throughout 2025, Spanish courts issued several convictions for homophobic abuse and harassment. In February and March, courts in [Lugo](#), [Madrid](#) and [Cáceres](#) sentenced individuals to prison terms and fines for directing homophobic insults and degrading treatment at victims in public spaces.

In one ruling, the Supreme Court confirmed that repeated homophobic insults constitute an attack on moral integrity based on sexual orientation under the Criminal Code.

In March, the Córdoba Prosecutor's Office referred a complaint to Madrid concerning the campaign "Women are born or made", promoted by the Catholic Association of Propagandists, following allegations of hate crimes and violations of the rights of trans people. The case remained under examination by the end of 2025.

In May, a court in Granada ruled in favour of trans activists Juani Bermejo and Néstor Román, finding that a media outlet had violated their right to honour by mocking and misgendering them in coverage linked to debate around the LGBTI Law.

In June, political controversy arose after Vox spokesperson Antonio Ortolá publicly questioned the prohibition of so-called conversion practices, prompting criticism from civil society for echoing narratives associated with such practices. That same month, transphobic remarks by former minister José Luis Ábalos sparked public condemnation, including from Daniela Requena of the Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE).

## SWEDEN

In July, the Court of Appeal of Skåne and Blekinge upheld the conviction of a 15-year-old Landskrona student for incitement to hatred, confirming in full the sentence by the Lund District Court imposing 30 hours of youth service. The case stemmed from an incident in October 2024, when the student delivered a speech that included calls for violence against LGBTI people.

In October, the Svea Court of Appeal upheld a conviction for incitement against a group of people in connection with hateful comments directed at the children's storytelling initiative Bland drakar och dragqueens. The original judgment, issued by the Nacka District Court on 23 April, concerned a 61-year-old man who posted comments in a Facebook thread alleging that drag artists were engaged in abusive behaviour. The District Court found him guilty of a lesser form of incitement against a group of people

and sentenced him to 80 day-fines. The Court of Appeal rejected the appeal and upheld the ruling in full.

## TAJKISTAN

As of 2025, Tajikistan continues to lack legislation explicitly prohibiting incitement to hatred or bias-motivated violence based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The lack of legal guarantees and effective government responses contributes to impunity and further exacerbates the problem of underreporting of violence and persecution against LGBTI people. For instance, in 2025, civil society reported that various LGBTI bloggers were directly targeted by online hate speech. These bloggers were subjected to numerous hostile, derogatory, and offensive comments.

In December, a trans woman was arrested on charges of distributing pornographic materials. The case received widespread coverage in national media and online platforms, alongside numerous hostile and derogatory comments which led to a significant wave of hatred against LGBTI people.

## TURKEY

In March, psychiatrist Mustafa Merter made several media appearances in which he disparaged queer identities, describing the process of transitioning as "madness," and denying the existence of LGBTI people.

In March, President Erdoğan accused opposition-led municipalities of sponsoring LGBTI people and movements and declared that "protecting the family and keeping family values alive is a national duty."

In May, Minister of Family and Social Services Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş, during the opening of the 3rd International Family Symposium, argued that "degenderisation, individualisation, weakened social ties under the impact of digitalisation, and the transforming family structure are no longer just individual issues but a problem that concerns the future of our country."

In November, President Erdoğan delivered a speech at the "Family and Culture-Art Symposium" held at the Beştepe National Library, in which he targeted LGBTI people while framing the protection of the

family as a core state priority. In his remarks, he portrayed LGBTI identities as a threat to social and moral values and stated that the government was taking measures against what he described as attempts to undermine the family structure. He also emphasised the need to combat digital and social media content that he claimed endangered the family, society, and "sacred values".

In November, President Erdoğan, answering journalists' questions while returning from Azerbaijan, targeted LGBTI people by stating that Turkey would "never allow perversions like LGBTI." Erdoğan emphasised that the family institution was under pressure, citing efforts to weaken it through LGBTI activities, and highlighted government initiatives to encourage marriage and childbirth.

## UKRAINE

In August, Ukraine's government introduced a bill aimed at strengthening legal protections against discrimination, hate crimes, and hate speech, explicitly including sexual orientation and gender identity. The initiative forms part of Ukraine's commitments under its Association Agreement with the European Union. Registered as draft law No. 13597, "On Amendments to the Code of Administrative Offenses and the Criminal Code of Ukraine to Combat Manifestations of Discrimination," the bill seeks to enhance accountability for hate-motivated crimes and expand the legal tools available to combat discrimination. The draft legislation introduces criminal liability for acts of discrimination and broadens the list of protected groups as existing laws often classify hate-motivated crimes as administrative offenses or simple "hooliganism," allowing perpetrators, including those committing violence against activists, to avoid meaningful criminal responsibility.

Ukrainian civil society organisations, including Gender Stream, continued to advocate for the adoption of the draft law, engaging with members of parliament, law enforcement bodies, and international partners to strengthen accountability for hate-motivated offences. By the end of 2025, the draft law remained pending before parliament and had not been adopted.

## UNITED KINGDOM

In January, a man appeared in court in London

after verbally abusing comedian Matt Lucas with homophobic slurs while he was on his way to a football match. The defendant was also charged with racially aggravated harassment of police officers. He was granted bail, with the case set to continue at Crown Court.

In March, the Football Association launched an investigation into homophobic abuse allegedly directed at Crystal Palace defender Ben Chilwell by Millwall fans during a match. Chilwell was targeted with homophobic chants from a section of the away support. The FA confirmed it will examine the incident under anti-homophobia rules.

In April, Tranmere Rovers midfielder Sam Finley received a 13-match ban after admitting to using a homophobic slur against Walsall's Jamille Matt during a league fixture. The sanction was lengthened due to two previous aggravated breaches of FA Rule E3 on his record.

In May, comedy writer Graham Linehan pleaded not guilty to charges of harassment and criminal damage against a 18-year-old trans activist. The charges relate to abusive social media posts made in October 2024 and the alleged destruction of the activist's phone during a conference in London, where Linehan was a speaker. He was granted bail on condition that he has no contact with the complainant. In September, Linehan faced trial in London over accusations that he persistently posted abusive comments online targeting a trans woman. Nonetheless, in late November, he was cleared of harassing the victim on social media but found guilty of criminal damage of their mobile phone outside a conference in London and ordered to pay costs of £650 (approximately €760) and a statutory surcharge of £200 (approximately €235).

In June, Tottenham Hotspur were fined £75,000 (approximately €87,750) by the Football Association over homophobic chants from their supporters during a September 2024 match against Manchester United. The chants, directed at Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta and United midfielder Mason Mount, prompted the FA to charge Spurs with misconduct in November.