



Bulgaria

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In April, in the centre of Sofia, a trans woman was attacked by a man wielding a machete. The incident occurred late at night, while the victim was returning from a gathering with friends. She was approached by a man with a bicycle who started hurling threats at her, saying that "freaks like her should not live" before slashing her on the head and legs. Once she fell to the ground, he continued by kicking her repeatedly. She has since filed a complaint with the police.

EMPLOYMENT

In April, disinformation circulated on Bulgarian social media claiming that the Ministry of Agriculture and Food (MAF) had introduced a quota system requiring farms to employ at least 10% "homosexual, bisexual, or trans workers by 2026. The Ministry issued an official rebuttal, condemning the story as gross misinformation intended to mislead the public and damage the institution's credibility. The statement stressed that the Ministry had never adopted, discussed, or agreed upon any measures related to collecting data on the sexual orientation of agricultural workers.

EDUCATION

In August, one year after Bulgaria's parliament banned the discussion of LGBTI issues in schools, students and teachers reported that the law has deepened fear and anxiety in the classroom. The amendments prohibit so-called "propaganda" of "non-traditional sexual orientation" in schools. Educators, experts, and international organisations had warned that the law was vague, unnecessary, and likely to fuel bullying rather than prevent it. Students interviewed by national news outlets reported the law has instead introduced more stress into schools without addressing any real problems.

Previously, in February, the Prosecutors pardoned members of the Revival Party for blacklisting teachers by posting calls on Facebook to hold teachers accountable for opposing the law amendments. In September, LGBTI organization Deystvie, Single Step Foundation and Assoc. Prof. Deyana Marcheva submitted a formal request to the

Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria insisting on referring the law to the Constitutional Court in order for it to be repealed.

HEALTH

In October, Single Step Foundation successfully established the first LGBTI-friendly healthcare partnership with a focus on preventative care in the areas of gynecology, internal medicine, dermatology, psychology and otorhinolaryngology with a local private health centre. The service offers free checkups and discounted cosmetic procedures delivered by supportive medical professionals. In addition to that, Single Step established the first network of LGBTI-friendly general practitioners in Sofia and expanded its trans healthcare support programme by establishing partnerships with additional endocrinologists in Sofia; thus, counteracting the lack of state-funded LGBTI-oriented healthcare

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In February, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) presented its assessment of Bulgaria's progress on two high-priority recommendations from its 2022 monitoring report. ECRI rapporteur Jens Vedsted-Hansen noted that while Bulgaria has taken steps to expand the number and regional distribution of Roma mediators in healthcare, education, and employment, it has failed to implement the recommendation concerning the rights and equality of LGBTI people. Specifically, Bulgaria has neither established a working group nor adopted a national action plan to protect LGBTI rights, as ECRI had urged.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In May, the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) held a hearing in the Shipov case (C-43/24). The case was brought by a Bulgarian trans woman living in Italy, whose repeated attempts to amend her gender marker and name on official Bulgarian documents were denied by national courts, creating issues in accessing healthcare, education, employment, housing, welfare, and even exercising her freedom of movement within the EU. This case comes against a backdrop of repeated

condemnations from the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), which ruled that Bulgaria was in breach of the European Convention on Human Rights for failing to ensure quick, transparent, and accessible gender recognition procedures. Nonetheless, Bulgaria's Supreme Court issued a binding interpretative decision in 2023, declaring that national law does not permit courts to authorize a change of sex, name, or personal identification number for trans people in the civil register.

In September, CJEU Advocate General Jean-Richard de la Tour presented an [opinion](#) on the case, stressing that Member States are obliged to legally recognise the gender identity of their citizens and to reflect this in civil status documents, regardless of whether the person has undergone surgical interventions. He argued that if a trans person cannot obtain an identity document reflecting their gender identity, this constitutes a restriction on the fundamental rights enshrined in EU doctrine - among which the right to free movement. Further, he also underscored that the condition of surgical operation as a prerequisite for recognition of gender reassignment violates the right to personal integrity and the right to private life.