



Croatia

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

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.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In September, Zagreb Pride warned of an escalation in organised homophobic violence in Zagreb and its surroundings from July 2024 to the end of August 2025, with at least ten cases of attacks on LGBTI men lured through a dating app reported. Several organised criminal groups created fake profiles to entrap LGBTI men. All the cases documented by Zagreb Pride, as well as those reported by the Zagreb Police Department, follow a similar pattern: upon arriving at the arranged meeting place, the victim is ambushed by a group of young men, subjected to homophobic slurs, and then brutally beaten and robbed.

In May, a 22-year-old man was beaten and hospitalised after an attempted robbery arranged via Grindr; this case was formally reported with legal assistance, and a criminal investigation is ongoing.

In July, eight minors were investigated for four

violent crimes, including robbery and grievous bodily harm, after luring multiple men through a gay dating application in the Zagreb and Vrbovec areas. The police have arrested eight minors suspected of involvement in two of the attacks, while the other cases remain unsolved.

In September, Zagreb Pride called on authorities to classify the attacks as hate crimes. In October, the Municipal Criminal Court in Zagreb issued a non-final ruling sentencing three perpetrators for a homophobic hate crime committed against a same-sex couple in May 2016. The defendants were convicted of causing bodily harm, threats, and violent conduct, with the crimes legally qualified as motivated by bias against sexual orientation. Each received prison sentences ranging from eight months to one year, suspended for a probationary period of five years. The judgment followed a seven-year process, with law enforcement initially classifying the incident as a misdemeanor disturbance of public order rather than a bias-motivated crime.

After the European Court of Human Rights' 2021 judgement in *Sabalić v. Croatia*, which ruled that Croatia had failed to adequately investigate a 2010 violent homophobic attack on Pavla Sabalić the Constitutional Court of Croatia ordered the reopening of proceedings. It found violations of the constitutional rights to physical and mental integrity and non-discrimination, explicitly acknowledging the procedural dimension of state responsibility. The Municipal Criminal Court ultimately resolved the case through an expedited criminal order procedure.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In February, an HIV-positive gay man from Bjelovar, won his case before the Constitutional Court of Croatia, arguing that the Municipality of Bjelovar and the school had illegally processed his health data without his prior knowledge or consent. Zagreb Pride proved that information about his HIV status had been used to reassign him to a job position where he would not come into contact with pupils – supposedly as a "preventive health protection measure". Lower courts had upheld this precedent until December 2024, when the Constitutional Court ruled that his personal data had been processed and

used unlawfully, thereby violating his right to privacy, resulting finally in discrimination.

FOREIGN POLICY

Croatia was not among the 20 EU member states that signed in May the [Statement on the Infringement of the Fundamental Rights of LGBTIQ+ Persons in Hungary](#). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs [explained](#) the government "took into account the overall relationship between Croatia and Hungary as neighbouring countries linked by a number of important areas of cooperation, from economic ties to the protection of national minorities in both countries."

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In 2025, the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers of the European Commission published its [Country Report on Non-Discrimination in Croatia](#). While the report identifies persistent gaps and uneven national-level responses to discrimination, it highlights notable progress at the local level, particularly in Zagreb. The report underscores that civil society actors and local authorities in Zagreb have taken a proactive role in advancing LGBTI equality through structured policy initiatives. In this context, the City of Zagreb adopted the Programme for the Equality of LGBTI Persons, which will remain in force until the end of 2026.

In June, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) of the Council of Europe published its [monitoring report](#) on Croatia, noting measurable progress in addressing hate speech and improving the inclusion of Roma communities, while stressing that significant structural shortcomings persist. ECRI identified ongoing prejudice and discrimination against LGBTI persons and ethnic and national minorities as a matter of concern. In relation to LGBTI rights, the Commission highlighted that the legal gender recognition procedure remains excessively burdensome and highly medicalised, creating barriers to the effective enjoyment of rights. The Commission issued a set of targeted recommendations, including reforming legal gender recognition procedures, strengthening political leadership against racist and anti-LGBTI rhetoric,

addressing residential segregation affecting Roma families, and developing a national strategy on migrant integration that builds on existing good practices.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL, AND POLITICAL LIFE

In March, [backlash](#) erupted in Croatia following the victory of 21-year-old singer Marko Bošnjak, in the Dora national final to pick an entry for the *Eurovision Song Contest* one of the few openly queer public figures in the region. After his win, right-wing Catholic media outlets accused the jury of privileging "non-binary" and "transgender" performers against the "will of the people." The conservative group Vigilare went further, denouncing Bošnjak's 2022 Dora entry "Pray for Us" as evidence that he had "sold his soul to the devil," while branding *Eurovision* a "fair of Satanism and perversion."