



Lithuania

ASYLUM

In February, the Supreme Administrative Court of Lithuania (LVAT) clarified that belonging to the LGBTI community does not automatically justify granting refugee status and a real risk of persecution in the country of origin must be demonstrated. The court noted that while same-sex relations may be criminalised in some countries, this alone does not constitute persecution which, according to authorities, must be real, systematic, or severe enough to meet international and EU standards.

Throughout the year, the Lithuanian Gay League (LGL) continued to receive reports from LGBTI asylum seekers regarding poor living conditions in Foreigners' Registration Centers. Several Central Asian asylum seekers reported experiencing persecution from fellow nationals already residing in Lithuania.

A class action lawsuit supported by Amnesty International was initiated in Lithuania in June 2024 and remained ongoing in 2025, challenging the unlawful detention of asylum seekers, including a number of LGBTI applicants.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

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.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In September, the Vilnius Regional Court rejected an appeal in a hate crime case on procedural grounds. The case involved a two-year pattern of homophobic and xenophobic harassment targeting a same-sex couple (one Lithuanian, one Finnish citizen), including death threats, xenophobic statements, physical assault with pepper spray, and over 30 documented police interventions. Two official forensic linguistic expert reports confirmed elements of both hate speech and death threats, explicitly identifying homophobic content and threatening language. Nonetheless, the Court dismissed the appeal based on a six-day delay in filing, calculated from electronic notification, rejecting the complainant's documented evidence of a work-related trip abroad during that period.

FAMILY

In April, the Constitutional Court of Lithuania ruled that the Civil Code's provisions limiting civil partnerships to opposite-sex couples are unconstitutional. Specifically, Article 3.229 was found to violate the constitutional principles of human dignity, protection of private life, equality, and family protection. This decision stemmed from a request from the former conservative-liberal government - comprising the Homeland Union (TS-LKD), the Liberal Movement, and the Freedom Party - which requested the Court to assess two provisions of the Civil Code and its enacting law. The Court later clarified that, although Parliament has not yet established a legal framework for registering partnerships, same-sex couples

can now seek recognition through the courts. Following the ruling, two same-sex couples applied to register civil partnerships while the Parliament faced mounting pressure to regulate the matter through law. Notably, President Gitanas Nausėda emphasised in his sixth annual State of the Nation Address that the previous parliament failed to act despite ambitious promises and urged the Parliament to finally take a decision that reflects societal expectations regarding partnership recognition for same-sex couples.

In July, representatives of the LGL met with Ministry of Justice officials, academics, and NGOs to present their priorities for the forthcoming Partnership Institute legislation. The Ministry of Justice committed to preparing legislative amendments by October. Due to the change in the Ministry of Justice leadership, a set of amendments to the Civil Code that would establish a legal framework for gender-neutral registered partnerships on November 4th, 2025, were registered by 11 members of the Lithuanian parliament (Seimas) instead.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Baltic Pride 2025 attracted a record number of participants, with approximately 20,000 attendees, marking the first occasion on which law enforcement authorities and civil society organisations reported matching attendance figures. However, an emerging trend was observed whereby anti-gender actors recruited minors to disrupt Pride events through the harassment of participants, including verbal intimidation and the throwing of objects.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In July, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe closed its supervision of the *Macate v. Lithuania* case, which concerned restrictions on the distribution of a children's book depicting same-sex relationships. The case arose from a 2014-2015 suspension of the book's distribution under the Minors Protection Act, followed by its re-release with warning labels stating that the content could be harmful to children under 14. The European Court of Human Rights had ruled that these measures violated Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, finding that the restrictions aimed

to limit children's access to depictions of same-sex relationships without legitimate justification. The Committee noted that, in December 2024, Lithuania's Constitutional Court had declared the contested legal provision unconstitutional, affirming that the Constitution's concept of family is gender-neutral. The Court held that restrictions on information about diverse family models impede children's development as mature and well-rounded personalities and contradict the state's duty to ensure their harmonious growth in a spirit of equality, pluralism, and tolerance.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In November, a Russian LGBTI activist residing in Lithuania experienced online harassment that escalated to physical threats at her residence. Following coordinated cyberattacks on several human rights organisations' social media channels, the activist received direct death threats from members of a closed online community that promotes "traditional values" and supports Russia's war in Ukraine. Unknown individuals visited her home in Vilnius, leaving threatening messages, yet local police declined to open an investigation, citing insufficient evidence of criminal intent despite documented threats and video evidence.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In January, an international conference on demographic challenges and family policy was held at the Seimas, organised by the Temporary Family Policy Group of the Lithuanian Parliament. Among the principal speakers was Jerzy Kwaśniewski, president of the Polish organisation Ordo Iuris, known for its advocacy against gender equality and LGBTI rights. During his visit, Kwaśniewski also met with the Minister of Justice. Civil society organisations raised concerns about the participation of actors associated with transnational anti-gender initiatives in parliamentary discussions on family policy.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In September, Lithuania's Constitutional Court refused to examine a challenge of the absence of legal gender recognition procedures in Lithuanian law. The Court declined jurisdiction over the case

brought by the Vilnius Regional District Court, which questioned whether the failure to establish procedures for changing gender markers in civil status records and the unchangeable nature of personal codes violated constitutional principles. While acknowledging that Lithuania has still not implemented its obligations stemming from the European Court of Human Rights' 2007 judgment in *L. v. Lithuania*, the Court ruled that addressing legislative inaction falls outside its mandate. The Court suggested that lower courts could fill these legal gaps on a case-by-case basis using constitutional principles, but emphasised that comprehensive legislation remains the responsibility of parliament.

In October, the Seimas Commission on Suicide and Violence Prevention and the Human Rights Committee organised a joint session on "ensuring the rights of LGBTQ+ persons in the healthcare sector." The session emphasised that accessibility of legal gender recognition-related healthcare depends on legislative changes, as the current provision in the Civil Code does not include protections for minors.

FOREIGN POLICY

In May, Lithuania joined 15 other EU member states in a declaration urging Hungary to revise legislative and constitutional amendments adopted in March and April 2025, which could impose fines on participants and organisers of LGBTI events, authorise the use of facial recognition software at such gatherings, and potentially allow bans on them. The declaration was initiated by the Netherlands and co-signed by Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Slovenia, and Sweden.