Voters in Romania boycott restrictive referendum on definition of family

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A referendum in Romania asking voters to restrict the constitutional definition of family has failed to reach the required 30% turnout target.

Groups campaigning against the constitutional amendment had urged voters in Romania to boycott the referendum and to stay at home – a call that clearly resonated with families all over the country.

“This proposed definition was always anti-family to its very core. How can excluding generations of children, their parents, siblings or other family members from recognition in the eyes of the state possibly be ‘pro-family’?” asked Evelyne Paradis, ILGA-Europe’s Executive Director.

People were voting on whether they wanted to amend the current neutral wording of Article 48.1 to a narrower definition that excludes many families in Romania – including single parents, multi-generational families, unmarried couples and rainbow families.

The proposed definition would have only recognised married different-sex couples as a family deserving of constitutional protection. In order for the result to be binding, at least 30% of registered voters had to cast a ballot in the referendum.

“Together, through the #boycott campaign, we showed that we, as citizens, want a Romania based upon democratic values, a country where respect, equality and common sense guides society. Today we have shown that we can not be fooled by a political agenda that urges us to hate and polarise society, we have shown that most of us believe that human rights are not to be voted at a referendum,” commented Accept Association, one of ILGA-Europe’s member organisations in Romania, in a statement issued tonight.

“The campaign of hate against the LGBTI community in Romania failed. But the referendum once again showed how vulnerable the LGBTI community is, in the absence of proper legal recognition of same-sex partnerships and families. It is time that Romania finally ensured that same-sex couples are legally recognised,” ILGA-Europe’s Advocacy Director, Katrin Hugendubel concluded.

- This year, Romania came in at 35th place in the latest Rainbow Europe ranking on LGBTI equality law and policy, published in May 2018
- Rainbow families currently have no legal protection in Romania.
- Read Accept Association’s reaction (7 October, 2018) here