

# Rainbow Digest February 2026

Europe hits new low on LGBTI rights, but backsliding is not inevitable

[Newsletter](#)

**Annual Review 2026 reports a sharp escalation over the past year: tactics once used selectively against LGBTI people have consolidated into broader authoritarian governance. Yet there are signs of resistance and some countries reversing trends.**

Over the past decade, ILGA-Europe's Annual Review has tracked governments adopting the playbook of restrictive measures first tested against LGBTI communities. [This year's report](#) finds those tactics have hardened into formal policy: criminalising individuals, cutting off civil society funding, imposing de facto bans on organisations, and misusing courts and administrative powers.

Across Europe, there is a marked shift away from rights-based governance toward measures that restrict trans and gender-diverse people's ability to participate fully in public life. An increasing number of policies are grounded in the premise that only two "biological sexes" exist, defined strictly by sex assigned at birth.

Yet backsliding is not inevitable, as shown by developments in Poland and Spain, demonstrating that democratic institutions can uphold rights when there is political will.

[Download your own copy of the report.](#)

**"The human rights safeguards established after the Second World War are now in serious jeopardy. This is not about so-called 'wokeism' or ideology. It is about real people being targeted and persecuted. Our leaders must respond with urgency. Without decisive action, we face a rapid and dangerous democratic collapse."**

Katrin Hugendubel, Deputy Director/Advocacy Director of ILGA-Europe

[Read our press release.](#)

## ILGA-Europe news

### New call for proposals to support racialised LGBTI communities in Europe

The ILGA-Europe Fund for Racial Justice will support organisations led by racialised LGBTI people with grants and collective learning spaces for projects that strengthen organising, protect civic and political space, shift narratives and challenge oppressive systems.

[Apply here by 13 April.](#)

## **Our new report on health reveals major disparities**

The second of our Intersections 2.0 reports, takes an in-depth look at the health-related questions from the FRA LGBTIQ III Survey and reveals stark disparities, particularly for people living at the intersections of multiple forms of marginalisation.

[Download your copy.](#)

## **Make sure your voice is heard in major research on LGBTI funding**

We invite LGBTI organisations and groups in Europe and Central Asia to take part in a global survey on LGBTI movement funding needs, part of LGBTI Pathways co-led by GPP and ILGA World. [ILGA-Europe will support](#) organisations in using the findings once the results are published.

[Take the survey by 21 April.](#)

## **LGBTI organising is a backbone of democracy**

As attacks on democracy and freedom grow, LGBTI movements are inherently at the forefront of resistance. ILGA-Europe's co-chairs reflect on what meaningful progress looks like at this critical time, and how LGBTI activism is defending democracy.

[Read our interview.](#)

“We have resilience built through decades and centuries of oppression. This is not the time to stand down. It is the time to fight oppressive laws and regimes.”

Simona Muršec

“Governments are finding new ways to silence human rights defenders. We have to connect and work together across borders.”

Mamikon Hovsepyan

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We are deeply saddened by the passing of Costas Gavrielides, a tireless advocate for human rights and equality in Cyprus, and a former Board Member and Treasurer of ILGA-Europe. Throughout his too short life, Costas remained a steadfast supporter of the LGBTI movement in Cyprus and across the region. Costas, you will be deeply missed. Rest in power.

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## **Latest news**

### **HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS**

#### **Trans activist Defne is facing charges over “public morality”**

Defne Güzel, a founding member of the May 17 Association in Turkey, is accused of violating the law on associations. The lawsuit followed an audit carried out alongside inspections of other LGBTI+ organisations and

based on a book about intersex people and an exhibition catalog featuring trans people.

[Show your solidarity with Defne.](#)

### **Feminist and LGBTI activist Zhanar faces prosecution in Kazakhstan**

Authorities in Kazakhstan are moving forward with criminal proceedings against human rights defender Zhanar Sekerbayeva. She is unlawfully accused following incidents involving an anti-LGBTI provocateur.

[Share Zhanar's story widely.](#)

### **Charges brought against Pécs Pride organiser Géza**

Prosecutors are seeking a fine via court order, without a hearing. The amount remains unknown and the legal framework allows for a very broad range, adding uncertainty to an already chilling case for freedom of assembly.

[Sign the petition to call on the prosecutor's office to drop the charges.](#)

### **LGBTI+ activist Enes is acquitted of all charges**

Enes Hocaogullar, an LGBTI+ rights defender and youth delegate to the Council of Europe, had been accused with "publicly disseminating misleading information" after he spoke peacefully and truthfully at the Council of Europe Congress in March 2025 about police violence and democratic backsliding in Turkey.

[Read more.](#)

## **LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION**

### **Kyrgyzstan plans to ban legal gender recognition**

A new draft bill introduced in the Kyrgyz parliament proposes to effectively prohibit LGR and gender-affirming healthcare. It seeks to define sex exclusively by sex assigned at birth, declare this marker unchangeable for life, ban medical interventions related to transition and restrict families and educators from supporting or discussing diverse gender identities with children.

[Find the draft bill.](#)

### **Austrian Constitutional Court rules on non-binary recognition**

The Court granted a non-binary applicant the right to have their gender marker removed from the civil registry and called on the Ministry of the Interior to issue a new directive to the registrars.

[Read more.](#)

## **MENTAL HEALTH**

### **Trans youth suicides skyrocketed in UK after care drawdown**

A freedom of information request to the UK National Child Mortality Database reveals that 22 trans children under 18 died by suicide in England in 2021-22 alone, which is a significant increase from the year before, correlating with negative developments in access to trans-specific healthcare for minors in the country. Between 2019 and 2025, 46 trans children under the age of 18 died by suicide in England.

[Read more.](#)

## FAMILY

### **Kazakhstan to introduce constitutional ban on same-sex marriage**

A parliamentarian proposed introducing a definition of marriage into the country's forthcoming constitutional revisions, restricting family and marriage as a union between a man and a woman.

[Read more.](#)

## HOUSING

### **New international shelter opens in France**

A new shelter in Nogent-sur-Marne will house LGBTQIA+ people in critical situations, particularly activists and human rights defenders forced into exile because of their identity or activism.

[Read more.](#)

## Notice board

- Bi+ Equal was officially registered as the pan-European organisation for bi+ equality. Individual and/or organisational community members can become a member and join the General Meeting on 21 March. [Apply here by 16 March.](#)
- International Trans Fund is hiring an Economic Empowerment Officer, Learning & Impact Officer, and Bookkeeper as part-time positions. [Apply by 2 March.](#)
- The EU has new calls for funding on supporting work-life balance, respect of equal pay for equal work, equal participation and representation of women and men in economic and political decision-making, and tackling gender stereotypes in media and advertising. [Apply by 28 April.](#)
- IGLYO — The International LGBTQI Youth & Student Organisation opened applications for grants for their member organisations based in the EU. [Apply by 10 March.](#)
- European Network on Debt and Development (EURODAD) is accepting project proposals linking economic, gender and climate justice to tackle global challenges. [Send your application by 26 March.](#)
- The European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) is looking for a Head of Unit – Outreach and Engagement. [Apply before 16 March.](#)