

## The Frontline: Bulgaria and the Spread of European Anti-LGBTI Populism

This episode of The Frontline, which delves into the situation for LGBTI people in Bulgaria, a country we don't often hear about as Poland and Hungary's governmental persecution grabs the headlines.

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“Attitudes towards LGBTI people are changing and changing fast,” says activist, Lilly Dragoeva from the Sofia-based Billitis Foundation, in this episode of The Frontline, which delves into the current situation in Bulgaria, a country we don't often hear about as Poland and Hungary's governmental persecution of LGBTI people grabs the headlines. There may not be LGBT-free zones in Bulgaria, but it's a country with almost no protections for LGBTI

people, a growing, so-called ‘anti-gender’ movement, a successful spreading of demonising fake news stories, and an alarming advance in societal rejection of LGBTI people.

Along with Lilly, we speak with activist Simeon Vasilev from GLAS Foundation about a growth in official anti-LGBTI hate speech and the role the EU can play, and with Dimithar Dimitrov from the Bulgarian city of Plovdiv, where in September there were organised attacks on young people who are perceived as LGBTI.

Some hope for Bulgarian LGBTI people comes in the form of strategic litigation for the recognition of a rainbow family, and we speak to attorney Denitsa Lyubenova, from the LGBTI youth organisation, Deystvie, about the current state of play with the case.

Rounding the episode up, ILGA-Europe’s Programmes Director, Bjorn Van Roozendaal talks to us about the wider picture in Europe, the reasons behind the growth we’re seeing in anti-LGBTI politics and movements, and the way the LGBTI movement can strategise to counteract this.

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