

A New Dynamic Has Appeared in LGBTI Rights Across Europe, Rainbow Map Reveals

[Press Release, Rainbow Map and Index](#)

As democracy in Europe comes under growing pressure, the annual ILGA-Europe Rainbow Map identifies steps forward on LGBTI rights in several countries.

Published on Thursday, May 12, 2022 at the IDAHOT+ Forum in Cyprus, [ILGA-Europe's annual Rainbow Europe Map and Index](#), ranking the legal and policy situation of LGBTI people in 49 European countries, finds that over the past 12 months **a new dynamic has appeared to fill in the gaps that exist around LGBTI rights and push standards**, giving governments **ground to build upon** as democracy in Europe faces exceptional challenges.

But it's not all good news. By contrast, some countries that once were **leading lights on LGBTI rights are slipping down the ladder**, while others are in danger of following the precedent of countries where LGBTI rights are being instrumentalised for political gain.

Released every May since 2009, marking International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, Biphobia, and Intersexphobia (IDAHOBIT), the ILGA-Europe Rainbow Map ranks all 49 European countries on a scale between 0% (gross violations of human rights, discrimination) and 100% (respect of human rights, full equality). This year's findings are a welcomed contrast to those of the 2021 map, which identified a complete stagnation on LGBTI rights and equality across Europe.

This year we observe positive movement on the [Rainbow Map and Index](#), notably:

- **Denmark** has jumped seven places to achieve second spot in the 2022 ranking. The reason for Denmark's jump is that it is taking the lead in filling in anti-discrimination gaps in current legislation, including the equal treatment law, which covers health, education, employment, provision of goods and services, and the penal code to include sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC) as aggravating factors in hate crime.
- More countries are pushing forward for equality by giving due recognition and protection for people's lived realities. **Iceland** was awarded points because of its legislative recognition of trans parenthood, among other things, while **Germany** introduced a ban on intersex genital mutilation and **France** banned so-called 'conversion therapy' based on sexual orientation and gender identity.
- After years of being stalled there is positive legislative movement in **Greece, Latvia, Lithuania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Slovenia**, countering the narrative that there is an East/West divide on LGBTI rights in Europe, providing governments in these countries with strong opportunities to underpin democracy through adoption and implementation.

According to ILGA-Europe's Executive Director, Evelyne Paradis: "It is encouraging to see that several governments actively chose to take real action over the past 12 months to progress LGBTI equality, and as a result, that the Rainbow Map looks positively different compared to this time last year. In the face of anti-LGBTI forces which remain rife across Europe, we welcome the renewed mobilisation by a growing number of politicians and government officials to do what is needed to improve the lived realities of LGBTI people. More is definitely

needed to strengthen this upward dynamic in the coming year.”

This year, ILGA-Europe is introducing a new category on **intersex bodily integrity**. With this new headline, we want to send a clear message to governments that protecting the human rights of intersex people requires dedicated efforts and to guide policy-makers on where specific laws and policies are needed. It also allows for better assessment of the work in progress. **Germany** and **Iceland** have joined the small number of countries banning non-medically necessary interventions on intersex people without consent, but so far no country, including the leading country **Malta**, has put in place the necessary implementation and monitoring policies that would allow for fully protection of intersex people’s bodily integrity. Legislative work on banning interventions is ongoing in **Austria, Cyprus, Belgium** and **France**.

Unfortunately, it’s not all good news:

- The **United Kingdom** has suffered a significant drop in ranking, going from 10th to 14th place, losing points as evidence was brought forward this year that the equality body is not, as set out in its mandate, effectively protecting on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. This comes at a time of widespread political and media anti-trans sentiment, while the British government is not moving on long-promised reforms on gender recognition and banning so-called ‘conversion therapy’ for all.
- Amid a rise in official anti-LGBTI sentiment in **Bulgaria** and **Romania**, both countries are now not far off the lowest ranking in the EU, which currently belongs to **Poland**. Romania is losing points due to authorities’ obstruction of freedom of assembly by banning and punishing Pride events. Meanwhile, **Hungary** moved down three places, mainly because its parliament adopted a number of amendments which directly discriminate against LGBTI people, including a ban on the “portrayal and the promotion of gender identity different from sex at birth, the change of sex and homosexuality” for persons under 18.
- There remain significant gaps in terms of fundamental protection against discrimination and violence in nearly half of the countries. Currently, 20 countries out of 49 still have no protection against hate crime based on sexual orientation, while 28 countries have no protection against violence based on gender identity.

ILGA-Europe’s Advocacy Director, Katrin Hugendubel said: “Despite the new dynamic we’re clearly seeing, the situation remains fragile. A downward spiral of hostile political discourse, legislative stagnation and, in some countries, even withdrawal of LGBTI rights and freedoms is worrying. And while countries like Bulgaria and Romania, for example, have not been in the headlines, they are moving down in ranking, nearer and nearer to Poland, which is at the very bottom in the European Union.”

“The situation in the UK is a sad reminder that when governments don’t stand strong on their commitments to advance minority rights, a powerful opposition can use that space to spread hate and division,” Hugendubel added.

Ukraine

Because of the current situation with war in Ukraine, here is our overview of the situation for the human rights and legislation for LGBTI people in the country, based on our 2022 Rainbow Map and companion publication, our Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation for LGBTI People in Europe and Central Asia (published February 2022).

- Ukraine went up one place in the Rainbow Map ranking because of a removal of restrictions on blood donations for men who have sex with men, which came into effect in June 2021, just over six months before the Russian attack on the country began. ILGA-Europe’s companion to the Rainbow Map, the Annual Review found that prior to the current war, there was cautious optimism from LGBTI activists about the way forward, with a willingness to discuss legislative rights from several politicians. Post-war this should provide Ukraine with a bedrock on which to build a legislative framework that protects all its citizens, and a society

that values LGBTI people as part of its democratic composition.

Said Paradis: “LGBTI human rights and equality are a marker of a democratic society where the human rights and freedoms of all citizens are wholly respected and upheld. Recent history has taught us that one of the first steps towards erosion of democracy is the official scapegoating of LGBTI people and undermining of their human rights. This essentially is an act of targeting a vulnerable minority to undermine broader freedom.

“As ILGA-Europe have been warning for years, recent events in Europe prove that we cannot be complacent when the political targeting of minorities is being used by anti-democratic forces. The antidote to complacency is action. It is imperative at this time that we proactively advance equality by creating ever-more robust policies and practices to make sure our societies are truly fair, inclusive and respectful of everyone,” Paradis concluded.

Summary of Rainbow Europe Map 2022

For the seventh year in a row, [Malta](#) continues to occupy the number one spot on the Rainbow Europe Map, with a score of 92%.

With 74 points, [Denmark](#) now occupies second place – this is a rise of seven places, mainly fuelled by the amendments to its hate crime and equal treatment legislations.

[Belgium](#) comes third place with a score of 72%.

The three countries at the other end of the Rainbow Europe scale are [Azerbaijan](#) (2%), [Turkey](#) (4%), and [Armenia](#) (8%), exactly the same as the last two years.

The [United Kingdom](#) is the country with the most dramatic drop in its score, losing 11% points in relation to the equality body mandate’s ineffective and non-systematic work on sexual orientation and gender identity and equality action plan not being renewed or implemented.

[Portugal](#) has also dropped by 5% points due to the expiration of the government’s action plan.

[Denmark](#), [Iceland](#), [France](#), [Greece](#), and [Latvia](#) are the countries with the biggest jump in scores. [Iceland](#) amended its children’s law to allow gender-neutral registration for parents, a step that recognises trans parenthood. Iceland also received points in relation to ILGA-Europe’s new category “intersex bodily integrity.”

[France](#) passed a ban on conversion therapies, lifted bans on blood donation, and adopted a law on medically assisted insemination. [Greece](#) also lifted bans on blood donations and adopted a new equality action plan. [Latvia](#) amended its criminal code in a way that the courts applies it to protect sexual orientation as an aggravating factor.

Background

Rainbow Europe – ILGA-Europe’s annual benchmarking tool – comprises the Rainbow Map and Index and national recommendations. ILGA-Europe have produced the Rainbow Map and Index since 2009, using it to illustrate the legal and policy situation of LGBTI people in Europe.

The Rainbow Map and Index ranks 49 European countries on their respective legal and policy practices for LGBTI people, from 0-100%.

In order to create our country ranking, ILGA-Europe examine the laws and policies in 49 countries using a set of criteria. From May 2022, the number of individual criteria used has risen to 74, divided between seven thematic

categories: equality and non-discrimination; family; hate crime and hate speech; legal gender recognition; intersex bodily integrity; civil society space; and asylum. More information on the list of criteria and their weight on the total score can be found at www.rainbow-europe.org/about

The 2022 Rainbow Europe also tells the story of an evolving movement. The 14th edition of the Index introduces a brand-new category: “Intersex bodily integrity” and changes in the weight given to different issues it captures. The message is clear: for our movement in Europe, equality and non-discrimination laws, legal gender recognition, bodily integrity, protection from hatred and violence, family rights, and protection of asylum seekers are all interconnected and equally essential for the full enjoyment of human rights for LGBTI people.

CATEGORY	NEW ALLOCATION OF WEIGHT
Equality and non-discrimination	23%
Family	17.5%
Hate crime and hate speech	19%
Legal gender recognition	17.5%
Intersex bodily integrity	5%
Civil society space	9%
Asylum	9%

Alterations to our criteria make year-on-year comparisons difficult, but certain lessons are clear – countries that are expanding their legislative horizons are moving up in the ranking.

Policymakers, researchers and journalists are able to go ‘behind’ the points and see the original information sources that we base our Map and Index ranking on. This additional layer of information is available through our updated Rainbow Europe web module, www.rainbow-europe.org.

The Rainbow Map and Index presents a picture of what the policy landscape is like currently, while our country-specific recommendations attempt to answer the question “what’s next?” These recommendations are intended to encourage policymakers to address the most pressing legal and policy priorities within the framework of our Rainbow Map and Index. The recommendations were gathered following an online consultation with a wide range of LGBTI organisations in the various countries. As a result, the recommendations are tailored to the needs of activists working on the ground.

Further information:

- The annual IDAHOT+ Forum aims to strengthen cooperation and understanding on LGBTI+ politics between European Governments, International Governmental Organisations, International Civil Society Organisations, Businesses, Academics, and key stakeholders. Find out more about it [here](#).
- Read more on [Rainbow Europe Map & Index webpage](#)
- Navigate the Rainbow Europe module [here](#).
- Find the Country Ranking [here](#).

For further comment, contact: Ana Muñoz Padrós, ILGA-Europe: ana@ilga-europe.org

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