

With elections looming, Rainbow Map shows Europe is not equipped against attacks from the far-right

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

As Europe heads towards multiple elections, including the EU elections next month, LGBTI rights have become a marker for the protection of freedom and democracy amid the rise of far right forces, new Rainbow Map finds.

Published on May 15 by Europe's leading LGBTI organisation, ILGA-Europe, the 16th annual [Rainbow Map](#), which ranks 49 European countries on legislative developments in the arena of LGBTI human rights, shows that while authoritarian leaders across Europe continue to use the scapegoating of LGBTI people to divide and mobilise their electorates, others are conversely showing robust political will to honour commitments to advancing and protecting the human rights of LGBTI people.

At a time when some Italian regions are withdrawing parenthood rights from same-sex couples, when efforts are being made to rewrite guidelines to limit access to trans-specific healthcare in Slovakia, Croatia, France and the UK, and when we are witnessing Russia's unprecedented move of criminalising the 'international LGBTI movement' as an 'extremist organisation', the findings of this year's Rainbow Map make it more clear than ever that only legal protections can ensure that fundamental rights are guaranteed.

many countries stalling

The Rainbow Map is published just one day after the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights [LGBTIQ Survey III report](#), which finds that over two thirds of respondents encountered hate statements, and a significant increase in violence since the last survey in 2019.

According to ILGA-Europe's Advocacy Director, Katrin Hugendubel: "Across Europe, LGBTI people are being targeted by hate speech and violence and their human rights are being actively undermined, yet we still see too many countries across the region stalling in moving legal protection forward and not renewing their commitments through national strategies and action plans. This non-action is dangerous, as without proper legislation in place to protect minorities, including LGBTI people, it will be much too easy for newly elected governments to quickly undermine human rights and democracy."

Strong Political Will in several countries

The Rainbow Map shows some governments stepping up to the mark in the understanding of this. In a year of 30-plus elections across the region, including the EU Elections next month, the Map illustrates a strong political will to advance the protection of LGBTI human rights in several countries.

Greece, Germany, Iceland, Estonia, and Liechtenstein all made some of the biggest jumps in the Rainbow Map ranking. Both Estonia and Greece amended their laws to allow same-sex couples to marry and adopt children, Greece also filled the gaps in its anti-discrimination legislation to fully protect LGBTI people, and Liechtenstein extended adoption rights to same-sex couples. With these changes, Greece has jumped to No'6 in the ranking.

Countries are also working hard to put crime measures in place that recognise anti-LGBTI hatred as an aggravating factor. Germany, which entered the top 10 this year, prohibited hate crimes based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics. Other countries legislating against hate crime include Bulgaria, Iceland (which has jumped to No'2 in the ranking) and Slovenia. Bans on conversion practices, which also perpetrate violence against LGBTI people, were introduced in Belgium, Cyprus, Iceland, Norway and Portugal.

But others, such as Italy, which has dropped two places in the rankings due to stalling legislative protection for many years, show what can happen when legislation is not in place and far-right governments take power.

Backlash in Georgia and other EU Accession Countries

Most EU accession countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Serbia, Ukraine) are falling behind in their commitments, stalling the introduction of legislation and thus putting their citizens more and more at risk of real backlash and the undermining of fundamental rights. Turkey and Georgia, also accession candidates, are actively eroding human rights and fundamental freedoms, including efforts to pass new legislation particularly targeting LGBTI people. Georgia, one of the most recent accession countries, has been cracking down on pro-EU protests against its proposed 'foreign agents' law, which comes directly from the Russian anti-LGBTI playbook.

According to the Executive Director of ILGA-Europe, Chaber: "The EU needs to pay close attention not only to the rise of political hate speech against LGBTI people, but also to new tools of oppression, like Russia's criminalisation of a whole segment of the country's population. The efforts at division and distraction from consolidated authoritarian regimes are further leaking into other European countries at a time where elections could push Europe into the hands of leaders who wish to shape a radical right, anti-democratic European Union. Europe needs stronger laws and policies to protect LGBTI people. Without these, we cannot talk about safety or about rule of law and democracy."

About the Rainbow Map

The Rainbow Map – 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 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 [75 criteria](#), 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.

The Rainbow Map and Index presents a picture of the current policy landscape, while 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.

This year, the [Rainbow Map website](#) has been relaunched with a new look and includes features that allow for an improved visualisation of the data, as well as a more agile and user-friendly access to the information.

Rainbow Map Executive Summary 2024

For the ninth year in a row, [Malta](#) continues to occupy the number one spot on the Rainbow Map, with a score of 88%.

With 83 points, [Iceland](#) jumped to second place with a rise of three places as a result of the new legislation banning conversion practices and ensuring the trans-specific healthcare is based on depathologisation.

[Belgium](#) also banned conversion practices and now comes third place on the ranking with a score of 78.

The three countries at the other end of the Rainbow Map scale are [Russia](#) (2%), [Azerbaijan](#) (2%), and [Turkey](#) (5%). Russia lost 7 points and dropped 3 places because of the federal legislation banning legal gender recognition and trans-specific healthcare.

[Poland](#) still sits at the end of the EU ranking with 18% points, followed by [Romania](#) (19%) and [Bulgaria](#) (23%).

[Germany](#), [Iceland](#), [Estonia](#), [Liechtenstein](#), and [Greece](#) are the countries with the biggest jumps in scores. Germany prohibited hate crimes based on sexual orientation, gender identity, and sex characteristics. While both Estonia and Greece amended their laws to allow same-sex couples to marry and adopt children, Greece also filled the gaps in their anti-discrimination legislation to fully protect LGBTI people. Liechtenstein extended adoption rights to same-sex couples.

[Montenegro](#) lost the most points (-13%), dropping 9 places because it failed to adopt a new equality action plan or introduce updated policies on asylum and hate crime.

Alongside Montenegro, governments in [Spain](#), [Slovenia](#), [Finland](#), [Sweden](#), and many other countries failed to renew their action plans. [France](#), [Malta](#), [Scotland and Wales](#) adopted effective and comprehensive equality action plans.

In many countries, legislative proposals that have been on the table for years are not moving forward. This includes the hate crime legislation and proposal for recognition of same-sex partnership in [Ukraine](#), which despite endorsement by several ministries and support throughout society is still being stalled. It also includes a draft law on legal gender recognition in [Czechia](#) that would finally get rid of the sterilisation requirement. After five years of delay, the [UK](#) government still hasn't followed its promises on banning conversion practices. And despite many court cases and recommendations from international institutions, [Lithuania](#) didn't progress on recognition of same-sex couples.

[Belarus](#) began categorising LGBTI content as "pornography", restricting freedom of expression of LGBTI people. [Bulgaria](#) and [Greece](#) failed to protect LGBTI public events, thus lost points in relation to civil society space.

Both in [Denmark](#) and [Poland](#), administrative procedures were improved for minors' access to legal gender recognition (LGR). Although [Germany](#) and [Sweden](#) adopted new regulations for LGR, the laws have not come into effect yet, so they are not reflected on the map.

In many countries, legislative processes for new [LGR](#) procedures have been stalled this year. Similarly, no country prohibited unnecessary medical interventions on [intersex](#) children.

Most European countries still don't include sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics as qualification criteria for [asylum](#). In an overall climate of governments increasingly undermining the international right to asylum, this ongoing omission is very worrying. This year's only progress in this area was Czechia adding SOGI in their asylum law and Ireland providing a consistent training framework for their asylum caseworkers.

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