



# CROATIA

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The second-largest study with LGBTQI participants was conducted by Zagreb Pride this year, gathering answers from 767 respondents. The study found that six-in-ten LGBTQI persons have experienced violence in public spaces, school, at workplaces, or at home.

## BODILY INTEGRITY

Trans Aid sent letters to 32 hospitals in October 2017, requesting information on medical care for intersex children. 11 hospitals replied. One of them refused to give any information; six of them never had intersex infants or children; one had a 16 year-old patient who had a laparoscopic adnexectomy; one had an intersex infant who was referred to another hospital; one provided psychological support to an intersex person; and one said they performed operations on 14 intersex infants.

## EDUCATION

In October, Rainbow Families Croatia held a successful crowdfunding campaign and launched its second colouring book for pre-school children titled 'My Rainbow Family's Fun Day Out'. The first volume's release sparked widespread criticism last year, but there was no critical response this time.

## EMPLOYMENT

In March, a study conducted in eight European countries found that workplace diversity was the highest in Croatia and Finland, but that Croats were the least accepting towards LGBT co-workers. Fifteen per cent of Croatian employees claim to have worked with LGBT people, but only 18 per cent said they would be glad to do so.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The 13th annual Festival of Tolerance took place between 1-21 April in Zagreb, including events on LGBT rights.

## FAMILY

The new Foster Care Act, which excludes same-sex life partners from fostering, entered into force on 1 January. The Act is in violation of the Life Partnership Act. Several complaints were filed by NGOs, individuals and a group of left-liberal MPs to the Constitutional Court, which is expected to rule in February 2020.

On 19 December, the Zagreb Administrative Court ruled, in a landmark judgment, that a gay couple can foster children.

The first international conference on rainbow families was held in Zagreb between 10 and 12 May, featuring the theme, 'Our Kids are OK'. The event brought together 50 participants, mostly from the ex-Yugoslavia region.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The first Balkan Trans Intersex March was held on 30 March in Zagreb, with the theme 'My body – my temple! My identity – my business!'. The event was co-organised by Trans Network Balkan, Spektra from Montenegro, Trans Aid from Croatia, and individual activists from all over the region. 300 participants attended. A few days earlier, the European Parliament's LGBTI Intergroup addressed a letter to the Prime Minister, calling for safety for the marchers. No incidents were reported.

*"By organising the Balkan Trans Intersex March, the trans and intersex communities have decided to manifest our movement and send clear messages of pride and defiance, a revolt against those who try to claim dominion over our bodies, minds and lives, as well as against all forms of oppression." - Balkan Trans Intersex March to Deutsche Welle*

The 18th Zagreb Pride took place on 9 June with the slogan '18 Proud Years'. The event was attended by thousands of supporters and no incidents were reported. Contrary to previous years, the city of Zagreb made no attempt to block the march. The police did however request the organisers to hire more paid security staff, but Zagreb Pride refused to do this, instead increasing the number of volunteers in charge of security.

Split Pride was held on 15 June.

## HEALTH

The 3rd OII Europe Community Event & Conference was held in Zagreb between 25 and 29 September and hosted by local NGO Trans Aid. The conference brought together intersex people and activists, the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality, and three medical professionals from Zagreb hospitals.



In February, the only psychiatrist working with trans people in Croatia introduced a committee of psychiatrists and psychiatry students to provide a psychiatric opinion for the National Health Council. It is not formally or clearly explained how many people are members of this committee, but members of the community report 3-20 people in the room, asking them questions. Such practices are in violation of the 'Professional guidelines for drafting opinions of health workers and psychologists on the change of sex or living in a different gender identity' as issued by the Ministry of Health in November 2014.

The surgeon performing mastectomies in Croatia recommended several trans people this year to appeal to the Ministry of Health for cost coverage. Ten trans people received a positive response and their surgery costs were fully covered. One person was denied surgery by the hospital, despite the Ministry's positive answer, because the applicant did not change their gender marker in the healthcare system, even though it was changed on their ID.

## LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The establishment of the committee (see under Health), which issues a psychiatric opinion that is then sent to the National Health Council, which grants access to legal gender recognition (LGR), made LGR more difficult this year. Several trans people reported that the National Health Council started to ask for additional documentation, such as proof of citizenship, which makes the procedure more burdensome and longer. This additional requirement is against the regulations in place.

Following the guidelines of the Ministry of Education, published in 2018, five trans people were able to change their information on their diplomas in 2019. No difficulties were reported.

## POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In 2019, a trans woman from Serbia was arrested and placed in the men's section of a prison in Zagreb for a month and a half. She reported that she was abused and raped while detained. In response to this, the Ministry of Justice with the Prison System and Probation Directorate invited Trans Aid and the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality to conduct training for prison employees and directors. Three workshops were carried out this year. There is no information on the case being investigated.

## SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The third annual anti-abortion Walk for Life marches took place on the 19 May in Zagreb, Rijeka and Split. Several feminist counter-protesters were arrested in Zagreb and Rijeka during the rallies.

In 2017, the Constitutional Court gave the government two years to regulate abortion, which expires at the end of 2019. In November, a Working Group was formed, mostly uniting organisations known for their opposition to sexual and reproductive rights. Civil society is concerned that the drafting process will not be transparent and a more restrictive law will be adopted.