



SLOVAKIA

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In February, as part of his candidacy hearing to serve as a judge on the Constitutional Court, Chairman of the ruling party, Smer, Robert Fico stated that adoption by same-sex couples is “perversion” (see more under **Family**). Fico was not appointed as a judge.

During the presidential elections in March (see under **Equality and non-discrimination**), several parties used homophobic hate speech in their campaigns. Civil society called on politicians to abstain from hate speech against the community.

As part of the UPR, Slovakia accepted recommendations to combat anti-LGBTI hate speech.

EDUCATION

The 2018 amendment to the Higher Education Act, obliging universities and colleges to issue new certificates, such as university degrees, for trans people who have changed their legal gender, was successfully implemented this year.

EMPLOYMENT

In July, the website platy.sk released the results of their survey, finding that one in every 10 Slovakian employees have an LGBTI colleague. The rate was highest among those working in the capital, and the lowest in the region of Trenčín. The research revealed a significant correlation between having LGBTI colleagues and positive perception. 91 per cent of those who have an LGBTI colleague were positive towards the community, compared to 33 per cent of those who do not.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The March presidential elections were won by Zuzana Čaputová of the Progressive Slovakia party. LGBT rights were one of the key issues in Čaputová’s campaign, who expressed support for civil partnership and adoption by same-sex parents.

FAMILY

In August, Robert Fico (Smer) announced on social media that he would seek to amend the Constitution to ensure that only married couples have the right to adoption (see more under **Bias-motivated speech**).

The Coman judgment was implemented in Slovakia this year, granting residence to EU citizens and their spouse or civil partner, if that union was registered in the EU. Legal issues remain for couples who registered their partnership outside the EU, who have no legal proof of their relationship, or who consist of a Slovakian citizen and a non-EU national (regardless of the legal status of their partnership). In September, the opposition party Freedom and Solidarity (SaS) proposed an amendment to the law on the residence of foreigners to remedy this, whereby same-sex couples consisting of a Slovakian citizen and a non-EU national, could apply for residence anyway. The proposal was rejected by Parliament.

Evangelist pastor and theologian, Ondrej Prostredník expressed his support for the LGBT community in an interview, including civil partnership. The interview is important, given that most religious leaders in Slovakia are hostile towards LGBT rights.

As part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), Slovakia noted a recommendation to introduce marriage equality, and accepted the recommendation to protect same-sex couples from discrimination and provide them with some legal recognition.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Despite the Ministry of Culture’s refusal for financial support (see under **Freedom of association**), Rainbow Pride in Bratislava went ahead on 20 July without any incidents. An estimated 10,000 people celebrated, while the event was attended by the mayor Matúš Vallo, Ombudswoman Mária Patakyová and theologian Ondrej Prostredník (see under **Family**).

On 29 June, a Pride march was held in Banská Bystrica for the first time. Banská Bystrica is now the third city to host an annual Pride event in Slovakia, following Bratislava and Košice.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In April, the Ministry of Culture denied funding to all civil society proposals that were submitted by LGBTI groups. For a decade, LGBTI groups had received funds from the Ministry’s subsidy program in support of cultural activities of disadvantaged groups, including for the LGBT Film Festival and Rainbow Pride Bratislava. Minister Ľubica Laššáková (Smer) did not sign off on the grants, despite the fact that the expert commission evaluating the



applications recommended that they should be approved. In May, the Ministry published a new set of criteria for future funding, which drastically limited the scope of activities NGOs could apply for and will make it impossible for LGBTI groups to apply for funding. There was no consultation preceding this move. In response, LGBTI NGOs called on the Ministry to withdraw the new guidelines and immediately start consultations with civil society. A coalition of 125 organisations and institutions, and a petition gathering over 9,000 signatures, called on Laššáková to step down.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Inakost organised the first Slovak LGBT Awards ceremony in December, giving out awards in the categories of media, business, art, visibility and initiative of the year. The initiative of the year award was given to the Festival of Transgender Culture, which was organised by Waldemar Švábenský in honor of his trans son, who committed suicide in 2018.

PUBLIC OPINION

In June, a survey conducted by the Focus polling agency among 402 teenagers found that 28 per cent would not welcome LGBTI people in their neighbourhood, compared to 75 per cent not wanting to live close to a political extremist. 61 per cent thought that LGBTI people were in a worse position than the average Slovak.

In September, the poll conducted by the AKO polling agency for the Rainbow PRIDE Bratislava organisation found that 57 per cent support registered partnerships, which is a seven per cent increase compared to 2015.