



Sweden

ASYLUM

On 15 September, a parliamentary committee put forward recommendations to change Sweden's asylum legislation. The suggestions include making temporary residence permits the default and introducing new family reunification requirements, such as mandatory cohabitation in the country of origin unless permanent residency in Sweden has been granted. Civil society criticised the discriminatory recommendations. During the summer, local LGBTQI organisation RFSL launched a petition to call for human rights-based asylum legislation that effectively protects LGBTQI people. Yet, the government decided to move forward with the process of implementing the recommendations in October. In December, the government made an addition to the proposal, dropping the cohabitation requirement.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH AND VIOLENCE

The results of a nationwide survey by the organisation West Pride revealed that 73% of LGBTQI respondents reported often or sometimes hearing derogatory comments about LGBTQI people. 21% had at some point been the victim of a hate crime.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

A new ground for bias-motivated violence, increasing penalties for so-called "honour" related violence, was introduced this year.

BODILY INTEGRITY

Clinical guidelines on health care for intersex children were for the first time presented by the Social Board for Health and Welfare. The guidelines fail to ban early surgeries on intersex children, and only urge medical professionals to use these surgeries restrictively.

EMPLOYMENT

The FRA EU LGBTI Survey II found that 15% of Swedish LGBTQI people had experienced discrimination at work during the previous 12 months. Civil society urged the government to increase measures to prevent discrimination, increase workplace diversity, and help trans and intersex people pursue their education.

A Swedish study at Linköping University showed that employers systematically turn down trans applicants for jobs.

FAMILY

After years of legal battle, an Icelandic couple living in Sweden managed to get parenthood recognition for the non-gestational

parent. Had Krístrún Stefánsdóttir and Inga Pétursdóttir used an anonymous donor, they would have had to go through an additional adoption procedure. Sweden still differentiates between same-sex and different-sex couples when it comes to parenthood recognition to a child born and registered abroad, and is currently investigating options for different models that would change this.

Trans fathers faced serious challenges this year in terms of parenthood recognition. In 2019, Sweden adopted a new law on fatherhood, which discriminates against trans men. Married cis men are automatically registered as fathers when their child is born, while married trans men are not. Additionally, the Swedish Tax Agency did not change their system in time when the new law was implemented. This year, the government realised that eight trans fathers were registered as the father to their child 'by mistake'; they all got letters from the tax authority saying that their fatherhood was not valid, and that they instead had to contact authorities to adopt their child. A few ongoing cases are now handled by anti-discrimination bodies across Sweden.

In December, the Swedish Government announced a new investigation into the Family Act, with the purpose of making it gender neutral to address the situation of children who have more than two important adults in their life.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

At the initiative of the rightwing populist Sweden Democrats, the municipality of the southern town of Hörby put forward a new policy banning raising the rainbow flag on municipal flagpoles. The local church responded by displaying the rainbow flag on their flagpole. The policy was later withdrawn, but follows a similar and successful ban passed in 2019 in Sölvesborg.

HEALTH

The COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected access to healthcare in a number of ways. First, waiting times for trans-specific health care have seriously increased, with a one-and-a-half to two-year wait period for a first appointment at gender clinics. Second, access to HIV testing or PrEP prescriptions has gotten worse. Third, assisted reproduction services were put on hold in some regions.

Anti-trans discourse, especially targeted at trans youth and often by 'parents' groups', has continued to spread this year. A number of articles were published, filled with misinformation and misconceptions about trans youth and their access to healthcare and other services. Due to the volume of such hostilities, several

medical professionals at gender clinics for young people went on stress-related sick leave or quit. A number of surgeons have reportedly refused to perform surgeries on trans people, referencing the articles.

The hostile discourse has also resulted in school personnel reporting parents of trans youth to the social services, claiming that respecting the child's pronouns or helping them seek gender affirming care is child abuse. Local trans and LGBTI organisations have voiced serious concern about these events.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Legal gender recognition reform continued to be stalled this year. The amended law is now expected to be presented to the parliament in spring 2021 at the earliest. Civil society has been increasingly active advocating for a gender marker option beyond male and female. A panel was held on the topic during the online Pride week, and RFSL [published](#) an opinion piece in one of Sweden's largest daily papers.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

In October, RFSL published "Trans and sports - no one should be left out", based on 110 interviews with trans people who do sports. Many reported difficulties in participation. The report includes several recommendations to sports associations, including ensuring that children have the right to do sports activities in accordance with their wishes, regardless of their gender assigned at birth.

PUBLIC OPINION AND ATTITUDES

On 15 January, Crown Princess Victoria and her husband, Prince Daniel made an historic first royal visit to RFSL and RFSL Ungdom. The visit had been requested by the royals themselves as they wanted to know more about how attitudes towards LGBTQI people were changing in the country.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

On 19 February, parliament [called on](#) the government to review the current policy that makes it compulsory for anyone HIV positive to inform sex partners of their HIV status. The decision was an important partial victory regarding human rights for people living with HIV. Sweden is the only EU country with a disclosure requirement, which is regarded both counterproductive and stigmatising, as persons living with HIV on well-adjusted medical treatment and with an undetectable viral load cannot transmit HIV via sexual contact. The parliament supports ending the policy.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In May, the government [allocated](#) 100 million kronor (9.68 million euros) to combat increased vulnerability during the COVID-19 pandemic, supporting organisations who work on domestic violence or support abused women and children, LGBTQ communities, or victims of honour-related violence.



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