

BULGARIA

ASYLUM

Bilitis supported several LGBT asylum seekers this year, including some fleeing Ukraine, by providing humanitarian aid, support with housing, legal aid and medication. GLAS helped several gay couples flee Russia after the call for military mobilisation there. Deystvie is currently litigating 10 cases of Russian asylum seekers.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech by politicians continued to be a serious issue. In July, outgoing Prime Minister, Kiril Petkov used homophobic language in a social media post, which he later deleted due to criticism. The Prosecutor's Office presented a proposal for legislation that would sanction hate speech, including by MPs. The proposal does not include SOGIESC as protected grounds.

In March, Bilitis, GLAS, the Association of European Journalists - Bulgaria and the Organisation of Jews in Bulgaria 'Shalom' organised the 'Not Just Words' forum on combating hate speech. The opening speeches were held by the Minister of Justice, Nadezhda Yordanova and the mayor of Sofia, Yordanka Fandakova.

A hateful petition was circulated in the leadup to the second Bourgas Pride in July.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In June, the European Court of Human Rights issued its judgement in the Stoyanova v. Bulgaria case, ordering the state to pay compensation to the mother of a gay man who was murdered by a group in Sofia in 2008. Bulgarian law did not and still does not include anti-LGBT motives as an aggravating factor, which meant that the homophobic motif of the murder bore no legal consequence. Civil society has long advocated for the criminalisation of anti-LGBT hate crimes, which is yet to be put into law.

On 24 June, the Sofia City Court fined former presidential candidate and neo-fascist party leader, Boyan Rasate, 3,000 leva (about 1,533 euro) for last year's anti-LGBT attack. Rasate was acquitted with regard to causing bodily harm. Last October,

he stormed into the Rainbow Hub with ten others, punched staff member Gloriya Filipova in the face, and destroyed the furniture and electronics. Local civil society, politicians in Bulgaria and Bulgarian MEPs, and the EU LGBTI Intergroup firmly condemned the attack back then. The weak judgement drove activists to the streets to call for justice for the victim and the whole LGBTI community. A few days before the ruling, the EU Commissioner for Equality shared a video message condemning the attack and expressed support for the LGBTIQ+ community, civil society organisations, and Sofia Pride.

ECRI's country report, published in October, called on Bulgaria to include sexual orientation and gender identity in legislation that criminalises hate crimes and hate speech, and to monitor anti-LGBTI hate crimes.

DATA COLLECTION

The website stophate.bg was updated to host an online platform for reporting hate speech, hate crimes and discrimination. Bilitis collected data on GBV in sports. Wearetolerant.com continues to collect data on LGBT-phobic hate incidents.

EDUCATION

Bilitis trained 51 teachers, school psychologists and principals on creating an inclusive school environment for LGBTI students and addressing anti-LGBTI bullying.

EMPLOYMENT

Through its business network Work It OUT, Glas Foundation continued to partner with companies on inclusive workplace environments for LGBTI employees in Bulgaria. The foundation hosted 20 Diversity and Inclusion workshops during the year.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Four ministers, deputies, MPs, the mayor of Sofia and state officials attended this year's IDAHOT celebration in May, organised by GLAS, under the patronage of the US and UK Ambassadors.

ECRI's country report called on Bulgaria to set up an LGBTI working group, with the participation of LGBTI



NGOs, and to develop a national strategy to address discrimination against LGBTI persons.

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee's 2021 annual report highlighted that the deterioration of LGBTI rights continued to deteriorate over the past year.

FAMILY

On 16 May, a local court ordered the authorities to issue a birth certificate to baby Sara, the child of a Bulgarian-British married same-sex female couple. The ruling comes after the December 2021 judgement of the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), which requested Bulgaria to grant documents to the baby. The child's Spanish birth certificate featured two mothers, which Bulgaria refused to recognise, rendering the child stateless. Baby Sara's case has been litigated by Deystvie.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Sofia Pride was held in June and attended by a record number of 12,000 people. No hostile incidents were recorded.

ILGA-Europe's 2022 annual conference was held in Sofia in October.

The 17th edition of Sofia LGBTI Community Fest took place in December with 14 events.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In October, a group of MPs from the Vazrazhdane (Revival) party tabled the draft Foreign Agents Registration Act.

HEALTH

Bulgaria recorded over 200 new HIV infections in the first eight months of the year.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Following last year's violent attack, the Rainbow Hub relocated and reopened in May.

INTERSECTIONALITY

The latest ECRI report on Bulgaria points to the good cooperation between the Organisation of Jews in Bulgaria 'Shalom', GLAS, Bilitis and the Association of

European Journalists-Bulgaria and urges authorities to support similar partnerships.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

ECRI's country report called on Bulgaria to introduce legal gender recognition procedures, which are in line with international human rights standards.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Sofia Pride launched a pre-elections pledge which was signed by 27 MP candidates in the 2022 Parliamentary elections. Six of them were elected.

LOL with GLAS, the first ever political queer stand-up comedy show took place in Sofia to a sold-out venue of 500 people.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Deystvie trained 60 police officers on responding to anti-LGBT hate crimes.

A bisexual police officer faced exclusion and isolation after he gave an interview in May about the LGBT police union he registered in 2022.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Bilitis's community group QueerFemme created the first-ever Bulgarian brochure on the sexual health of lesbian and bisexual women, launched alongside an informational video.

BULGARIA WEB PAGE

MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.RAINBOW-EUROPE.ORG