

# LATVIA

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Civil society reports that over 300 anti-LGBT posts were removed from social media platforms in 2021. Eight of these were reported to the police and seven criminal proceedings have begun.

## BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Mozaika documented nine anti-LGBT hate crimes this year. None of the victims reported the cases to the police.

## EMPLOYMENT

The first Diversity and Inclusion Forum took place in November in Riga, bringing together a wide range of stakeholders, with a focus on employment.

## EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

On the occasion of Coming Out Day in October, Mozaika launched a program to support LGBTQ youth and their families.

In cooperation with KPMG Latvia, Mozaika launched the report, 'The True Cost of Intolerance in Latvia', with findings that anti-LGBTQ attitudes in 2020 impacted between 0.85% and 2% of the national GDP.

## FAMILY

In February, 26 same-gender couples turned to administrative courts across Latvia requesting to be recognised as a families and many more couples have filed their claims since. The action followed the 2021 Supreme Court decision that same-sex partners should be given civil status, and also are entitled to be recognised as a family. The first positive ruling was issued in May, whereby the court recognised the couple as a family under Article 110 of the Constitution. By end of 2022, 31 families had been recognised before the Court.

In early March, the Ministry of Justice submitted the draft Civil Union Law to the parliament. The draft recognised the registration of cohabiting couples, same-sex couples, and others living in the same household for economic reasons. Civil society held demonstrations outside the parliament in May, June, and December, calling for the law to be adopted. The vote were held on 2 and 16 June, but both votes

failed, due to the lack of quorum, as the number of MPs present did not reach the mandatory threshold of 50. Civil society reminded that the parliament two previous readings were successful. After the elections, in December, the parliament decided not to review the Civil Unions Bill. The failed vote violates and fails to respect the 2020 and 2021 Constitutional Court, ruling as the parliament did not manage to meet the Court's deadline. Civil society resumed to advocacy for new draft legislation to protect all families and vowed to take the issue to international fora.

Another attempt to adopt legislation concerning the recognition of same-sex couples' relationships was made by 23,000 individuals who submitted a draft collective legislative proposal to the newly elected parliament. On 8 December, the parliament rejected the proposal, with 32 in favour, 50 against, and one abstention.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

This year's Riga Pride was held jointly with Kyiv Pride under the motto 'Until We Are All Free'. The festival ran between 13 and 19 June and the Parade took place on 18 June, gathering over 5,000 participants. No incidents were recorded.

On 29 October, LGBT House Riga hosted the first Queer Day, featuring community event, and information about LGBT and trans activism in Latvia.

## HEALTH

In March, the Saeima adopted amendments to the Law on the Rights of Patients, setting out that in cases where the patient is unable to make a decision on their treatment due to their health condition or age, priority decision-making rights on the patient's treatment are given to a person authorised by the patient. The amendments came into force on 13 April.

## HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In June, Riga Pride gave human rights awards to the former President of the Constitutional Court, Sanita Osipova, representative of Dzīvesbiedri movement and lawyer Jūlija Jerņeva, the youth organisation Active Rainbow, and MPs Anda Čakša and Juris Pūce for their contributions to LGBTQ people's equal rights in Latvia.



## **PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE**

Ahead of the autumn elections, Mozaika analysed party politics on LGBTQ rights and encouraged LGBTQ people to vote.

Matīš Kaža's film, 'Neona pavasaris', which is the first Latvian film to feature a kiss between two women, premiered in the autumn.

## **POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT**

In January, the Saeima adopted amendments to the Law on Social Services and Social Assistance, establishing that military personnel who have returned from missions abroad and require rehabilitation can receive it with their spouse or cohabiting partner. The amendments came into force on 4 February.

## **PUBLIC OPINION**

In November, the social opinion polling agency SKDS and Mozaika's poll found that 49% had a neutral stance towards 'homosexual' people, 25% were accepting, and 23% condemned 'homosexuality'. A third of the respondents said they did not know an LGBT person.

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