



## Annual Review

of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex People in Malta covering the period of January to December 2018

# Malta

## Bias-motivated violence

In January, the police amended their reporting system by adding the category of hate crime in the drop-down menu list of possible crimes. The police are currently working on adding more options that would allow people to choose the relevant ground as well, as is already the case when it comes to hate speech.

## Equality and non-discrimination

In September 2018, the government launched Malta's second "LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan", for the period of 2018-2022. The Action Plan was formulated by the Human Rights and Integration Directorate (HRID) in close partnership with the LGBTIQ Consultative Council, which includes LGBTIQ NGOs, trade unions and equality working groups of political parties.

It aims to mainstream legislative and policy changes introduced by Malta in recent years into service provision and daily life. In June 2018, the government set up the SOGIGESC Unit within the HRID, which will be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of this Strategy and Action Plan.

## Health

On 12 November, Malta's first Gender Wellbeing Clinic was opened, providing state funded trans healthcare services delivered by a multi-disciplinary team. The services provided include counselling, endocrinological assessment, speech therapy and the free provision of hormonal treatment. The Clinic will also issue referrals for surgeries that are available in Malta. With regards to other surgeries, options currently being considered include periodically bringing over a surgeon to Malta or establishing protocols with foreign clinics and people undergoing surgeries abroad. The provision of the Gender Wellbeing clinic had long been advocated by the community and was widely welcomed.

## Sexual and reproductive rights

The Embryo Protection Act was updated in June following several months of public debate. The changes that proposed widening access to IVF treatment (among other amendments) were supported by LGBTI activists and rainbow families, but had been strongly opposed by prominent members of the Catholic Church. At a press conference on 11 April, Health Minister Chris Fearné commented that the "government feels that denial of

access on the grounds of sexual orientation is discriminatory". On 19 June, 34 MPs voted in favour of the Embryo Protection (Amendment) Act (27 opposed). Under the updated legislation, same-sex couples and single women in Malta will be able to access IVF treatment domestically for the first time. The Act was then signed by the President on 21 June, and the law came into effect on the 1 October.

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