

ANNUAL REVIEW

OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION
OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS
AND INTERSEX PEOPLE IN EUROPE
AND CENTRAL ASIA

2024

**FIND THIS REPORT ONLINE:
WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG**



Rue du Trône/Troonstraat
60 Brussels B-1050
Belgium
Tel.: +32 2 609 54 10
Fax: + 32 2 609 54 19

info@ilga-europe.org
www.ilga-europe.org

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the 13th edition of ILGA-Europe's Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People in Europe and Central Asia. The publication includes events that occurred between January and December 2023. It provides a snapshot of what happened during the year, at national, regional and international levels, and it documents progress and trends regarding the human rights situation of LGBTI people.

While the entire Annual Review is available online, information on each country and institution can be accessed separately via ILGA-Europe's website and our Rainbow Europe web module. In the Rainbow Europe module, you will also find information on each theme separately.

We must warn that some parts may be potentially triggering for some readers. We must also stress that this document is not an exercise in apportioning blame. ILGA-Europe's goal is not to point fingers at specific countries. Instead, this publication intends to serve as a tool for the exchange of best practices and policies, and as an open invitation for enhanced cooperation between governments and LGBTI civil society.

ILGA-Europe want this publication to meet our readers' expectations and needs, and welcome any suggestions for improvement. We hope that you will find this edition of the Annual Review informative and useful.

ILGA-EUROPE'S ANNUAL REVIEW TEAM
FEBRUARY 2024

A NOTE ON DATA COLLECTION AND PRESENTATION

This is our 13th Annual Review and we always strive to develop our rigorous data collection system. However, a number of limitations remain.

The use of terminology around LGBTI issues is often not harmonised across Europe and Central Asia. Nonetheless, all information within the Annual Review has been verified using original documents and the best available local knowledge. Where possible, information was checked against institutional and national reports, and reliable news sources.

For comparative reasons, the language within the Annual Review has been kept in line with ILGA-Europe's standards, and moves away from country-specific legal terms that may have a different meaning elsewhere. At the same time, we respected the variety of terms used by LGBTI communities to self-identify in different countries. For example, this is why the Annual Review does not exclusively refer to LGBTI, but also to 'LGBT', 'LGBTQ' and other formulations.

Of course, the Annual Review cannot cover every development in all 54 countries in intricate detail. When the development was not adequately reported, or the reports were confusing or contradictory, ILGA-Europe verified them with national experts' inputs. They are independent human rights defenders or legal experts in each country. We have also collaborated with regional LGBTI NGO's for their expertise on particular sub-regions or specific work areas, such as trans rights, intersex rights, lesbian rights or rainbow families.

DO YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS? REACH OUT TO US AT [INFO@ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](mailto:info@ilga-europe.org)

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HIGHLIGHTS AND TRENDS

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD & GOODS AND SERVICES

Reporting from the movement on socio-economic equity is increasing. There is a growing level of information showing that **mainstream services are not safe, inclusive or educated on the particular needs of LGBTI people**, who are disproportionately affected in times of crisis and are often socio-economically disadvantaged in specific ways. There are reports of trans and non-binary people struggling in Belarus, Bulgaria, Denmark, and Greece. There is a continuing **lack of awareness and lack of political will** to address socio-economic inequalities for LGBTI people. In Turkey, for instance, LGBTI people struggled to access humanitarian aid after the earthquake in February, and difficulties continued throughout the year. **CSOs and activists often step in to fill the absence** of public services to support LGBTI people with basic needs, reported for instance in Albania, Belarus and Denmark, but as we know from our work a reality in many more countries in our region, including Armenia, Moldova, Poland, Romania and Ukraine.

ASYLUM

More and more people are seeking safety, but **overall policies are doubling down, making the situation for asylum seekers increasingly untenable**. New legislation in Iceland, for instance, strips asylum seekers from essential services. In the Netherlands, over half of LGBTI asylum seekers reported feeling unsafe in the asylum system and three-quarters went back into the closet. In several countries, including Finland and Slovakia, trans asylum seekers experienced serious challenges in access to gender-affirming healthcare. In Belgium, the ‘reception crisis’ continues, in which single men are not being given shelter, which adversely affects GBT men. There is worrying regression in the UK with the adoption of the Illegal Migration Act which sets out measures to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, an unsafe country for LGBTI people. In the wake of a wave of harsh new anti-LGBTI laws in Russia, LGBTI people and activists are fleeing, but they face difficulties getting visas. Sweden rejected 96% of asylum cases, with LGBTI people rarely receiving any specific examination and applicants deported back to home countries that criminalise LGBTI people, including with the death penalty. There is **progress in Czechia**, where the new asylum law includes sexual orientation, gender identity (SOGI) grounds, and mixed developments in Germany with dedicated funding for queer asylum seekers legal advice, but the introduction of a bill to speed up deportation. **CSOs continued to support LGBTI migrants**, particularly from Ukraine and Russia, in Armenia, Bulgaria, and Moldova, amongst others

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

There has been a **clear accumulation of anti-LGBTI speech from officials across the region**, often instrumentalising children by falsely invoking concerns for their safety. There was bias-motivated speech from politicians reported in Austria, Belarus, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, Norway, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and the UK. **Transphobic speech continues to be on the rise** in Croatia, Ireland, Norway, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden and the UK, and intensified around parliamentary discussions in Denmark, Finland, Netherlands, and Portugal, around LGBTI events in Iceland and Luxembourg; and in the lead up to elections in Moldova, Slovakia and Georgia. Hate speech concerning trans minors’ access to healthcare was commonplace. At the same time there was a rise in **court judgements recognising bias-motivation**, including in Albania, Bulgaria, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Spain, Switzerland, Ukraine, and the UK.

LGBTIphobic and transphobic pieces in the media are further on the rise (Andorra, Azerbaijan, Belarus Bulgaria, France, Sweden Turkey, and the UK), while online hate was reported in Andorra, Albania, Armenia, Austria, Cyprus, Northern Cyprus, Estonia, Ireland, Malta and Turkey. In Portugal there was an 185% increase in anti-LGBTI hatred online between 2019 and 2022, and an 130% increase in Spain over the same period.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Of the 54 countries reporting in this review only six of them reported no hate crime in 2023. In the other 48 countries, **much of the reported verbal and physical violence targeted trans people. This is in clear correlation to an exceptional rise in anti-trans hate speech this year, particularly from official sources.**

Pride events are increasingly being targeted, with reported attacks before, during or after Pride parades and events in 16 countries, namely Austria (an attempted bomb attack), Bulgaria, France, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Sweden, Turkey, and Russia. Rainbow flags and LGBTI symbols were vandalised, burnt or destroyed in Georgia, Belgium, Croatia, Northern Cyprus, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK.

Increases in bias-motivated violence were recorded in Croatia, Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland (highest record to date) and the UK. Police failed to protect victims in Armenia, BiH, Slovenia, and Turkey, and perpetrated attacks in Azerbaijan, Belarus, and Russia. Hate-motivated murders took place in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Greece, Italy, Russia, Serbia, Spain, and Turkey.

Again, there has been **progress in court cases prosecuting anti-LGBTI hate crime**, including in Belgium, Bulgaria, Estonia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Spain, Switzerland, and for the first time, Ukraine. There were slight decreases in violence reported in Belgium and Spain, while hate crime legislation progressed in Bulgaria, Ireland and Scotland.

BODILY INTEGRITY

Last year we reported intersex bodily integrity as a rising trend, but this year we have seen that where there is **stagnation on IGM bans**, it is longstanding, with governments not following up on commitments they've made, particularly in Austria, Belgium, Finland and Ireland.

There is **strong forward movement in banning so-called 'conversion practices'**, with Belgium, Cyprus, Iceland, Portugal and Spain all adopting legislation. Parliamentary debates and plans for bans are taking place in Finland, Ireland, Netherlands and Switzerland, while Norway has approved legislation. Malta made improved amendments to its law and three people were prosecuted under the ban. Austria and the UK both stagnated with their plans to ban the practices.

CENTRAL ASIA

Reporting from countries in Central Asia is a stark reminder of the **pervasive lack of protection for LGBTI people in the region**. The criminalisation of LGBTI people remains in place in some countries, basic anti-discrimination legislation is lacking in most countries, LGBTI people are entrapped and blackmailed, often by the police, and there is a lack of safe spaces for LGBTI people to gather, with raids on bars and social spaces ongoing, and police brutality rife.

In Kyrgyzstan, several pieces of Russian-style legislation targeting LGBTI people and activists were instituted.

A prohibition was instituted regarding the display of paraphernalia associated with the rainbow symbol. In August, the president signed in a new law On Measures to Prevent Harm to Children's Health, Their Recovery, Intellectual, Mental, Spiritual, and Moral Development. The law is similar to those in Russia and Hungary and bans the spreading of information that denies family values, or promotes "non-traditional sexual relationships". The law also calls for a complete ban on discussing LGBT rights and experiences in schools. In October, a bill that introduces the concept of "foreign non-governmental organisation" passed. It aims at restricting the freedom of speech of civil society, as it threatens the closure of NGOs in the Kyrgyz Republic, including LGBT+ organisations, as well as the persecution of human rights defenders and activists, who may be subject to five to ten years in prison.

EDUCATION

Scare tactics around sex education are further on the rise, with the far right and other actors **instrumentalising children in anti-LGBTI arguments and sowing division** amongst young people and parents. There were draft amendments seeking to limit sex education in Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia, while education became a touchstone for anti-LGBTI mobilisation in countries including Belarus, Hungary, Lithuania, Sweden, Turkey and the UK.

With that, **there has been progress in inclusion** of sexual orientation and gender identity, (SOGI) in education in Cyprus, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Malta, Portugal, Romania and the UK.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

There has been steady **progress in institutional commitment to LGBTI equality and more comprehensive approaches to addressing gaps in legislation** through LGBTI action plans and policies in Denmark, France, Germany, Iceland, Malta, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Ukraine, and Scotland and Wales in the UK.

The situation for LGBTI people in Russia is steadily deteriorating since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022, and subsequent legislation targeting LGBTI people, with a large increase in homophobia and transphobia in the public space. The same is happening in Turkey, with planned legislation to ban marriage equality and LGBTI associations. In Netherlands anti-discrimination cases doubled, while in Serbia the situation of LGBT people has worsened since attacks on EuroPride in 2022.

FAMILY

After a number of years when **partnership recognition** had either stagnated or was on a downward trend, **the issue continued to rise this year**. Estonia became the first Baltic country to introduce marriage equality, while in Switzerland 749 same-sex marriages took place and over 2,200 couples converted their partnership to marriage since the introduction of marriage equality in 2022. There were positive developments for rainbow families in Germany, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Spain. A draft bill on registered partnerships was published in Ukraine.

While same-sex partners are achieving more rights, **the children of LGBTI families are less recognised**. In Bulgaria, the Supreme Court denied a birth certificate and citizenship to a child of two mothers, one of whom is Bulgarian, despite the CJEU ruling saying it must do so. There were major setbacks in Italy with a measure to only recognise biological parents on birth certificates, resulting in a large number of birth certificates being revoked. The Italian government also tabled a bill to extend the ban on surrogacy to those who access the practice abroad. Russia banned trans people from adopting or fostering children.

Where governments fail to ensure the protection of rainbow families, courts increasingly come into play. There were favourable rulings in Austria and Denmark, while the European Court of Human Rights ruled favourably on strategic cases against Romania, Poland, Russia and Ukraine.

FOREIGN POLICY

Moves by European Union member states to limit the rights of LGBTI people are being finally addressed by the EU Commission and other member states. 16 countries, Belgium, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Austria, Ireland, Denmark, Malta, Spain, Sweden, Finland, Slovenia, France, Germany and Greece, signed on to act together with the European Parliament as third parties in the infringement process last year by the Commission against Hungary's Child Protection Law, widely criticised as being anti-LGBT.

The Commission added an amendment in 2022 to its Partnership Agreement with Poland to ensure that municipalities that have anti-LGBT resolutions in place do not receive financial support. This action was successful with many municipalities dropping their resolutions.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In spite of reported attacks in 16 countries, Pride continues to be core to the LGBTI movement, identity and self-expression, with more and more Pride events being organised across Europe. There were first-ever Prides in towns in Denmark, Croatia, France, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Liechtenstein, Poland, Portugal, Romania, and Slovakia.

Turkish activists, community members and allies continued to show great resilience by holding and attending Pride events across the country, despite systematic bans, violent attacks, mass detentions, police obstruction, and targeting by political parties.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND EXPRESSION

Russian style anti-LGBTI laws are being copied by other countries seeking to put controls on civil society, which is heavily affecting freedom of association. In Belarus and Georgia possible ‘propaganda laws’ remained on the agenda, while Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a Russian style foreign agents law. The Lithuanian Parliament rejected a repeal of its ‘propaganda law’, Romania tabled a bill to ban LGBT themed audiovisual materials, and Moldova adopted an ‘LGBT propaganda’ ban. In Russia the Supreme Court ruled that the LGBT international movement is “extremist” and LGBT activism is “criminal”, while the 2022 propaganda law continued to have a detrimental effect, with LGBT people fired, expelled from schools, arrested and deported, websites blocked, and bloggers persecuted.

In Hungary, bookstores who stocked LGBTI titles were fined under the propaganda law. Literature was used by the far-right to attempt the repression of LGBTI expression and information in Ireland and Portugal. Turkey announced new measures to curb media content to “protect culture and children”.

HEALTH

Access to trans healthcare is a growing problem, particularly for trans minors, amid rising difficulties for trans people reported elsewhere in this review. Barriers are reported in 17 European countries: Albania, Belarus, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Northern Cyprus, Denmark, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Norway, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine and the UK.

Several suicides of trans people were reported this year.

Switzerland published recommendations for gender-affirming care based on ICD-11 and introduced a new HIV programme that includes trans people for the first time.

The trend of lifting restrictions on blood bans from men who have sex with men (MSM) continued, with lifts of restrictions and steps forward in Finland, Germany, Norway and Switzerland.

HOUSING

Rising costs of living and an overall housing crisis are often impacting LGBTI people disproportionately, due to discrimination and subsequently their often weaker socio-economic situation. Housing insecurity for LGBTI people, and particularly for trans people, is reported in Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Georgia. Young LGBTI people are disproportionately impacted by the housing crisis in Ireland, while in Italy there were 400 cases of LGBT young people kicked out of home, with only 10% finding emergency shelter.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Despite negative public opinion and a stark rise in anti-trans speech from official sources, **governments are following up on commitments, several introducing good self-determination standards in legal gender recognition (LGR)**. Andorra introduced a new gender marker and name change; Armenia simplified its name change process; Belgium made change of name or gender markers possible any number of times; Finland adopted LGR based on self-determination; Germany's cabinet presented LGR based on self-determination to parliament; a new bill tabled in Iceland would allow to change family name based on self-determination; and Spain adopted its LGBTI law with a self-determination model for LGR.

A reported six trans people committed suicide in the aftermath of Russia's LGR ban. Slovakia's de facto LGR ban passed on its first reading. It didn't pass the second reading, but an identical bill was newly submitted. The UK sought to block implementation of Scottish LGR based on the self-determination model.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Sport is becoming more visibly an area of engagement with actors both for and against trans and intersex inclusion. In Ireland, Ladies Football approved its first trans applicant and implemented new inclusive guidelines. In Spain, the new Sports law bans discrimination against LGBTI people in sports, but the Basketball Federation refused to have a trans player in its second league. In the UK, several sports associations introduced 'open' categories that in reality discriminate against trans athletes, and in a survey 63% of trans young people reported worsened mental health due to exclusion from sport.

PUBLIC OPINION

While Pride events are increasingly being targeted and LGBTI symbols vandalised, conversely **there is a slow but steady increase in acceptance across countries where LGBTI discrimination has been previously widespread**. A study in Bulgaria shows that public acceptance continues to increase; in Czechia support for marriage equality has grown by over 40% since 2019; in Hungary, support for LGBTQI rights has increased, with support for marriage equality has gone up 150% over the past ten years. In Poland there is increased public support for Pride marches and support for equal marriage has grown from 21 to 32% in the last decade. In Slovakia, 40% support registered partnerships, and in Slovenia, 45% support rainbow families.



EUROPEAN UNION

ASYLUM

In December, co-legislators, i.e. the European Parliament and the Council of the EC, [reached](#) an agreement on five files under the Pact on Asylum and Migration. This agreement will significantly hinder the progress of European asylum law for many years and result in harming the situation of those seeking asylum in the EU member states, including LGBTI people. For example, the asylum procedure regulation (APR), which establishes a common procedure that member states need to follow when people seek international protection, introduces a mandatory border procedure with the aim of quickly assessing at the EU's external borders whether applications for asylum are unfounded or inadmissible. The procedure is mandatory for member states if the applicant has a nationality with a recognition rate below 20%, among other criteria.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In June, the draft report on the proposal extending the list of EU crimes to hate speech and hate crime, inviting the Council to adopt a decision identifying hate speech and hate crime as another area of crime, meeting the criteria set out in Article 83(1) TFEU, was [published](#) by the Parliament. The final report will be [adopted](#) in January 2024. It calls on the Commission and the Member States to act against misuses of the internet and social media. It stresses in this respect that the business model of social media platforms, based on micro-targeted advertising, contributes to spreading and amplifying hate speech.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In January, the EP LGBTI Intergroup organised an event to discuss how to ensure that the proposed EU directive on violence against women and domestic violence is inclusive of the needs of LGBTI people. The responsible rapporteurs for the legislative file in the EP attended the event, as well as speakers from European LGBTI networks. In June, the European Parliament [adopted](#) a Report on the proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council on combating violence against women (VAW) and domestic violence (DV). This report includes criminalising intersex genital mutilation across the EU, among other advancement of rights of LGBTI victims of VAW and DV. By the end of 2023 negotiations between the EP and the European Council on the directive were ongoing and it is yet unclear if the provision on banning IGM will be in the final text.

On 12 July, the Commission [published](#) the revision of the Victims' Rights Directive. The proposed revision strengthens targeted and specialist support for victims of hate crimes, among others. On 11 September the proposal was referred to the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) and Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality (FEMM) for joint review. In the [draft report](#) and amendments, the Parliament proposed to further strengthen specialist support and data collection based on SOGIESC. Final agreement on the file is expected to be negotiated in 2024.

BODILY INTEGRITY

At the IDAHOT+ Forum In May 2023, at the IDAHOT+ forum in Iceland, the first findings of the EC intersex study were presented at a panel on 'Equal rights for intersex people'. The study was foreseen to be published in the summer of 2023, but was not made public by the end of the year.

DATA COLLECTION

In January, the European Commission opened a consultation on the Guidance note on the collection and use of data for LGBTIQ equality. The final [guidance](#) for member states was published in March.

The Swedish EU Presidency organised a high-level event 'Equality Data as a Tool for Combating Discrimination' on 12 May in Stockholm.



In July, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency launched its third LGBTIQ Survey, with the aim to present the findings before the European elections in June 2024.

EMPLOYMENT

On January 12, the CJEU delivered a judgement in Case C-356/21 J.K. v. TP S.A., clarifying that the prohibition of discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in Directive 2000/78 on Equal Treatment applies to self-employed persons when contracting with third parties, and during the performance of their activities.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

By the deadline in April for intervening in the European Commission's infringement against Hungary's Child Protection Law for its anti-LGBT amendments, which breach a number of EU laws, a total of 15 EU Member States as well as the European Parliament had committed to supporting the case in front of the CJEU.

In April, the EC for the second time awarded European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Awards, and this year's special award was for fostering LGBTIQ equality. Gdańsk, Poland won the award for fostering LGBTI equality, followed by Catalonia, Spain and Reggio Emilia, Italy.

In December 2023 a [provisional agreement](#) was reached between the European Parliament and the Council of the EU on two draft directives on minimum standards for equality bodies. The grounds of gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics were included in the definition of the victim. Due to intense opposition from a number of EU Member States, it remains to be seen whether these mentions are maintained in the final agreement.

FAMILY

In December 2023, the European Parliament [adopted its position](#) on the European Commission's draft regulation on cross-border recognition of parenthood, confirming the main aspects of the EC's draft. The EP, however, only has a consultative role in this file: Negotiations in the Council of the EU are ongoing.

FOREIGN POLICY

In November 2023, the European Commission published its [Enlargement Progress Report](#), which for the first time included an assessment of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

In December 2023, the EU decided to open accession negotiations with Ukraine, Moldova, and Bosnia and Herzegovina upon conditions of compliance with criteria. It also agreed to grant Georgia candidacy status. LGBTI civil society in the respective countries regard this as a positive development and see opportunities for further protecting the rights of LGBTI people through the continuation of the enlargement process.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In September, the EU Equality Commissioner, as well as a number of MEPs, attended Europride in Malta, speaking at the Human Rights Conference and marching together with activists.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In December 2023, as part of its Defense of Democracy Package, the European Commission published its proposal for a directive establishing harmonised requirements in the internal market on transparency of interest representation carried out on behalf of third countries, otherwise known as the "foreign interference law". Civil society organisations working at the EU level have raised concerns that the directive could have a number of negative consequences, whilst failing to effectively tackle covert influence.



HEALTH

In June, the European Parliament committees Environment, Public Health and Food Safety (ENVI) and Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) organised a joint hearing on depathologisation of trans identities, in which MEPs noted the importance of depathologisation for the fulfilment of the human rights of trans and non-binary people and discussed the need for action among member States.

Also in June, the EP Committee Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) organised a hearing on conversion practices.

In September, the Spanish EU Presidency held a High Level Meeting on Stigma and HIV (online).

HOUSING

The European Platform on Combatting Homelessness held its 5th Mutual Learning Session focused on data collection on October 23 and 24. The platform brings together Member State governments, EC and stakeholders working on homelessness and housing insecurity. The October meeting this year focused on mapping homelessness across the EU and provided an opportunity for the presentation of the 'Intersections' report on homelessness among the LGBTI community, analysing the 2019 FRA LGBTI survey data.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In November 2023, the European Parliament and Council of the EU reached an agreement on the EC's proposed anti-SLAPP Directive. The text recognises LGBTI rights as one of the areas of human rights defenders that are targeted by SLAPPs. The agreement is due to be signed in the first quarter of 2024.

In July 2023, the European Commission published its [2023 Rule of Law report](#), which included more LGBTI related content than previous editions, and for the first time acknowledged the links between disinformation, anti-LGBTI rhetoric of politicians, and hate crimes, when reporting about the anti-LGBT terrorist attack that happened in Slovakia.

The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders [issued](#) a position paper on EU visas as a protection tool for human rights defenders. The position paper includes recommendations on actions that can be taken by the EU and its members in the short and medium term to remedy the current disconnect between the EU's external human rights policy and its visa framework.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In April, the Swedish EU Presidency, together with the European Commission, organised a high-level conference on LGBTIQ equality. The one-day conference provided panels and workshops to assess the implementation of the EU LGBTIQ Equality Strategy together with member states, civil society and other stakeholders, and ended with a strong call to all EU institutions to step up implementation. The European Commission presented its two-year implementation report on the strategy at the conference.

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May, the European External Action Service (EEAS) organised an event focusing on the challenges that LGBTIQ+ persons face in the world, including the criminalisation of consensual same-sex relations. At the event, both the EEAS Secretary General and the EEAS Gender Ambassador spoke, and staff and delegations from across the world joined a debate with a MEP Malin Bjork (GUE/NGL) and the Council of Europe SOGI Unit, as well as a LGBTI activists, ILGA World and ILGA-Europe.

In June, the Swedish Presidency of the EU adopted Presidency [Conclusions](#) to combat hate, violence and discrimination against LGBTI people, condemning the persistence of violence, harassment and discrimination against LGBTI persons



across the EU. Last minute negotiations on Council conclusions failed because of vetos from Hungary and Poland. Supported by 25 EU delegations, the Conclusions are a clear support for the European Commission's strategy on LGBTIQ rights and a call to step up that work in the future.

In June, the EP LGBTI Intergroup organised an event at the European Parliament, bringing together activists from across the EU to discuss LGBTI equality. Key speakers included the EC Vice-President Jourova and Equality Commissioner, Helena Dalli. On the occasion, leaders and MEPS of the Greens/EFA, GUE/NGL, EPP, S&D and Renew group signed a Declaration on Advancing LGBTIQ rights ahead of the 2024 elections.

In July, the Spanish Presidency organised a high-level event, "Advancing LGBTIQ rights in Europe", focusing on discrimination and violence against LGBTI people. The event also gathered Ministers responsible for equality and inclusion, where 16 Member States formally endorsed the Ministerial [Declaration](#) on "Advancing rights of LGBTI people in Europe" initiated by the Spanish EU Presidency.

INTERSECTIONALITY

Whereas harmful passages in the draft legislation on violence against women and domestic violence, attempting to criminalise sex work, were rejected by the majority of the European Parliament, in September the EP, with a very small margin, adopted an own-initiative [report](#) by Maria Noichl (S&D), denying agency for sex workers and calling for the introduction of the model of criminalising clients across the EU. In January, Monika Vana (Greens/EFA) organised a round-table event on the future of sex work and how to ensure sex worker's rights in Europe.

PUBLIC OPINION

In December, the European Commission released its [Eurobarometer](#) on Discrimination in the European Union. The report has found that more than half of the general public say there is widespread discrimination in their country on the basis of gender identity (being transgender, 57%) or sexual orientation (54%). Discrimination against intersex people is in the high numbers too, at 47%. At the same time, a rising number of 69% of EU citizens say that lesbian, gay and bisexual people should have the same rights as heterosexual people, and 64% say that trans people should have the same rights as everyone else. 62% believe that trans people should be able to change their civil documents to match their gender identity. Further, 47% believe that official documents should offer a third option (X or O) for those who do not identify as female or male. 72% of respondents say that same sex marriage should be allowed throughout Europe, up three percentage points since 2019.



COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The Working Group on SOGIESC of the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) met three times throughout the year to [progress](#) on its deliverables, including a thematic review of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2010)5 on the rights of LGBT people, a comprehensive review of the same Recommendation, and the development of a Recommendation focused on the rights of intersex people, expected to be adopted in 2025.

In September, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) released their [General Policy Recommendation No. 17](#), which focuses on protecting the rights of LGBTI people.

In December, the Committee of Ministers [adopted a new budget](#), which changed the status of the Working Group on SOGIESC of the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI), creating a new Expert Committee on SOGIESC (ADI-SOGIESC), also housed in CDADI, with a significantly increased budget for its work starting from 2024, as well as new deliverables, including a Council of Europe Strategy on the rights of LGBTI people.

ASYLUM

On 22 May, the Parliamentary Platform on the rights of LGBTI people in Europe of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE LGBTI Platform) hosted a [conference in the Belgian Parliament on LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees](#).

On 4 December, the [HELP course on LGBTI persons in the Asylum Procedure](#) took place in a hybrid format.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In its monitoring of [Cyprus](#), ECRI noted that the country had not taken up its previous recommendation to include SOGI as grounds for enhanced sanctions for hate speech, and recommended that a comprehensive method for monitoring hate speech incidents be developed. [Georgia](#) received a similar recommendation.

In March, ECRI released its monitoring report of [Hungary](#), noting the recent increase of political speech that is “highly divisive and [with] antagonistic overtones” regarding LGBTI issues, including from high level and senior politicians. In this regard, ECRI recommended that political leaders take prompt action against LGBTI-phobic hate speech and that elected bodies and political parties take up the issue in their codes of conduct. Further ECRI recommended, as a priority, that authorities enhance the capacity of law enforcement to respond to LGBTI-phobic hate speech and hate crimes.

In June, in its monitoring of Azerbaijan, ECRI recommended that public figures be encouraged to take firm positions against anti-LGBTI hate speech, and that elected bodies adopt codes of conduct for their members, and that the government set up an inter-institutional working group to tackle hate speech and implement, as a matter of priority, monitoring mechanisms on the same.

In October, the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity, and Inclusion (CDADI) published a [study](#) on hate speech that occurred in Europe during crises in recent years, including against LGBTI people.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In March, the Commissioner for Human Rights [called on authorities](#) in Bosnia and Herzegovina to accept the rights of LGBTI people and bring the perpetrators of the attack in Banja Luka to justice.

On 26 April, a [side event](#) was held at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, hosted by Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo in collaboration with EL*C and the support of the Icelandic Presidency of the Council of Europe, on violence and discrimination faced by LBQ women, related to a forthcoming report on the issue. In December, a [hearing](#) was held by the Committee on Equality and Non-discrimination in development of this report.



On 31 May, the General Rapporteur on the rights of LGBTI people [released a statement](#) on police harassment of LGBTI people in Azerbaijan.

In June, ECRI recommended to [Azerbaijan](#) that it provide training for law enforcement on how to deal with anti-LGBTI acts of violence. [Georgia](#) received a recommendation to set up a specialised unit in law enforcement for these cases.

In October, the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity, and Inclusion (CDADI) released a [report](#) on their thematic assessment of the implementation of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation (2010)5, focused on hate crime legislation.

BODILY INTEGRITY

On 26 January, the Icelandic Presidency of the Council of Europe hosted a half-day conference on intersex issues, where the Prime Minister of Iceland, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Deputy Secretary General of the CoE, the President of PACE, and the PACE General Rapporteur on the rights of LGBTI people spoke alongside intersex civil society. The following day, the [first civil society consultation](#) to develop the forthcoming Committee of Ministers Recommendation on the rights of intersex people was held. The first meeting of the Drafting Group for the Recommendation - which includes Member States, civil society, and representatives from the Council of Europe - met in October.

On 16 February, Dunja Mijatovic, the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights, released a [human rights comment on conversion practices](#) (so-called “conversion therapies”), calling for: 1) collecting data on SOGIE conversion practices; 2) ensuring accountability through enforceable bans with consequences for perpetrators; 3) bans of advertising these practices, 4) support and rehabilitation services for victims; 5) efforts to raise awareness of the negative consequences of these practices for LGBTI people. The Commissioner [presented her human rights comment](#) in a meeting of the PACE Parliamentary Platform for the rights of LGBTI people in Europe on 12 October.

In June, ECRI released its [Annual Review](#), noting progress in a limited number of Member States in banning conversion practices and intersex genital mutilation. The report also notes frequent reports of anti-LGBTI hate speech and attacks, and difficulties in exercising the rights to freedom of expression and assembly.

ECRI released its monitoring reports of [Armenia](#), [Azerbaijan](#), [Georgia](#), [Hungary](#), [Luxembourg](#), [North Macedonia](#), and [Poland](#) recommending that steps be taken to protect intersex infants and children from “medically unnecessary sex ‘normalising’ surgery and other treatments” without their consent. ECRI also recommended that [Iceland](#) ensure data collection regarding interventions on intersex children as they implement their ban.

ECRI noted in its Interim Follow-up Conclusions on Norway that first steps had been taken in terms of protecting the bodily integrity of intersex persons by conducting a review of current practices in the country.

On 26 October, the [Commissioner tweeted](#) and the [LGBTI General Rapporteur released a statement](#) to acknowledge Intersex Awareness Day.

DATA COLLECTION

ECRI noted in its monitoring reports of [Armenia](#) and [Poland](#) the need for the collection of LGBTI-inclusive equality data and engagement with civil society regarding the situation of LGBTI people and their families.

EDUCATION

In its monitoring of [Armenia](#), [Cyprus](#), and [Poland](#), ECRI recommended that the governments ensure that teachers are trained on SOGI issues, that SOGI content be added to sex education textbooks, and that there should be zero tolerance



for anti-LGBTI incidents in schools. [Azerbaijan](#) and [Luxembourg](#) received recommendations to set up a system to monitor and counter anti-LGBTI incidents in schools.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In its monitoring of [Cyprus](#), ECRI recommended implementing non-discrimination protections on the grounds of SOGISC in the constitution. ECRI recommended that [Poland](#) initiate legislative amendments to add SOGISC as a prohibited ground in the Criminal Code.

The [HELP course on anti-discrimination](#), including on the grounds of SOGI, was released on 22 March.

FAMILY

In September, ECRI recommended that [Luxembourg](#) ensure automatic parenthood recognition where assistive reproductive technologies are used.

On 13 November, the Commissioner [welcomed](#) the adoption of civil partnership legislation in Latvia.

In March, ECRI released its monitoring report of Hungary, recommending that it adopt advice from the European Court of Human Rights and the Venice Commission in regards to the so-called “anti-propaganda law”.

During the year the European Court delivered a number of judgments reiterating Council of Europe States’ positive obligation under the ECHR Article 8 (Right to Private and Family Life) to ensure legal recognition and protection for same-sex couples by putting in place a “specific legal framework”. Starting with the Grand Chamber judgement in *Fedotova and Others v Russia* in January, the Court applied same reasoning in similar cases brought against Romania (*Buhuceanu and Others v Romania* in May), Ukraine (*Maymulakhin and Markiv v Ukraine* in June), and Bulgaria (*Koilova and Babulkova v Bulgaria* in September). These judgements confirm the obligation on all CoE Member states to ensure same-sex families have adequate means for recognition and protection of their unions.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION, ASSEMBLY, AND ASSOCIATION

The Commissioner [called for protections of democratic freedoms](#), including for LGBTI people, around the Turkish elections and [tweeted](#) regarding threats to Tbilisi Pride in Georgia.

In October, the General Rapporteur on the rights of LGBTI people released a report on obstacles to freedom of expression and assembly for LGBTI people in the Council of Europe region. In preparation of this report, the General Rapporteur conducted country visits to Hungary and Poland, [met with Turkish activists](#), and held a [hearing](#) in June.

In September, ECRI recommended to Poland that it ensure freedom of assembly for LGBTI organisations and refrain from actions that target LGBTI civil society, and that it refrain from implementing age restrictions on access to LGBTI-related materials.

HEALTH

In June, ECRI recommended that [Armenia](#) provide training for healthcare providers on LGBTI issues, specifically regarding the depathologisation of homosexuality.

In October, November, and December, the SOGI Unit hosted a series of roundtables on access to health for LGBTI people, including focused on trans-specific healthcare, care for older LGBTI people, sexual and reproductive health, mental health, and a European [roundtable](#) focused on the health of LGBTI people more generally, on 15 November. Additionally, a national review roundtable took place on 12 December in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a special focus on trans-specific



healthcare. Reports on each of the thematic roundtables are expected in early 2024, and a larger thematic report in late 2024.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The Commissioner for Human Rights released a [Roundtable report](#) on human rights defenders in March, specifically pointing to the “alarming rise in the anti-gender agenda [and] LGBTI-phobia” around the region, and the increased hate speech that LGBTI HRDs are subject to.

In June, the General Rapporteur on the rights of LGBTI people released a [statement](#) calling on the authorities in Azerbaijan to stop harassing LGBTI human rights defenders.

On 20 November, on Trans Day of Remembrance, the Commissioner [tweeted](#) about the need to protect trans human rights defenders from digital violence.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In March, ECRI released its monitoring report of [Hungary](#), in which is called on the government, as a matter of priority, to review laws implemented during the “state of emergency” associated with the pandemic and their impacts on LGBTI people as well as their compliance with international human rights instruments.

On 26 April, the [Commissioner for Human Rights](#) and the [Council of Europe’s Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Programmes Division](#) [tweeted](#) about Lesbian Visibility Day. The Icelandic Presidency of the Council of Europe also supported a [reception and a side event](#) in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe focused on the rights of LBQ women.

On 11 May, the Government of Iceland hosted the [IDAHOT+ Forum](#) in Reykjavik, Iceland. During the Forum, Beatrice Fresko-Rolfo, the rapporteur for a forthcoming report on LBQ women, [spoke](#) on a panel about gender expression.

On 17 May, in recognition of IDAHOT+, 27 Member States of the Council of Europe signed a [Joint Ministerial Statement](#), recommitting to existing standards and calling for renewed support of the rights of LGBTI people across the region. The General Rapporteur on the rights of LGBTI people released a [statement](#) to mark the day and the Commissioner for Human Rights [issued a call](#) for States to work to end conversion practices.

On 30 June, the SOGI Unit participated in an [event](#) marking the one-year anniversary of EuroPride in Belgrade, Serbia. On the same day, the PACE LGBTI General Rapporteur [released a video](#) reflecting on current developments in the rights of LGBTI people.

The Commissioner for Human Rights delivered a [keynote speech](#) at the ILGA-Europe Conference in October, and representatives from the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Parliamentary Assembly, and the SOGI Unit attended and met with activists.

As part of the 16 Days of Action to End Violence Against Women, the PACE General rapporteur on the rights of LGBTI people [posted](#) about the need to protect LBQ women from violence and discrimination.

In December, the Commissioner released the [report](#) on her country visit to Italy, where she noted a number of legislative attacks on the LGBTI community in Italy, naming them as human rights violations, and called for the protection of everyone in the country from hate.

In its monitoring of [Azerbaijan](#), [Cyprus](#), [Hungary](#), [North Macedonia](#), and [Slovakia](#), ECRI recommended that the governments implement, as a matter of priority, national action plans on LGBTI issues, with associated budgets. This



recommendation will be monitored under interim follow-up measures. In its Interim Follow-up Conclusions on [Norway](#), ECRI noted that a national action plan had been adopted as recommended in 2021. GREVIO also recommended adoption of a national action plan in [North Macedonia](#).

INTERSECTIONALITY

In its [baseline report on Liechtenstein](#), GREVIO noted that LGBTI women face particular barriers in accessing services in the context of gender-based violence, that there are no studies on their experiences, and that law enforcement does not receive targeted training.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

During the January session of PACE, 21 members signed a [written declaration](#) calling on the UK to reverse its decision to block the self-determination-based legal gender recognition (LGR) reform passed in late 2022 in Scotland.

In February, the Commissioner for Human Rights congratulated [Spain](#) and [Finland](#) on their adoptions of LGR models based on self-determination.

In March, ECRI released its monitoring report of [Hungary](#), recommending that Hungary take legislative steps to ensure that there is a mechanism to access LGR. In June, ECRI also encouraged [Armenia](#) and [Georgia](#) to clarify the procedure for LGR and [Azerbaijan](#) to amend the procedure to be in line with Council of Europe standards. In September, [Poland](#) received a recommendation to remove abusive requirements from LGR procedures.

On 19 April, the Commissioner wrote to the Parliament of the Slovak Republic calling for a bill which would result in a de facto ban on LGR passing through Parliament to be rejected; 23 PACE members also signed a [written declaration](#) on the same.

In July, the Commissioner [wrote](#) to the government of North Macedonia to adopt a legal gender recognition framework and execute the judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of X v. “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”. In September, ECRI echoed these sentiments in their [monitoring report](#).



UNITED NATIONS

On 11 April, following a country visit to the United Kingdom, the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (IE SOGI) [issued a press statement](#) calling for the country to fulfil its promise to ban conversion practices, noting the serious human rights violations faced by LGBT asylum seekers, noting a significant increase in bias-motivated speech, calling for LGBT people to have equal access to the rights to health, education, and housing, and noting the specific marginalisation faced by LGBT older persons. On 1 November, Graeme Reid [took over the mandate](#) of the IE SOGI.

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recommended [Finland](#), [Sweden](#) and the [UK](#) to strengthen mental health services in schools, and communities, including LGBTI. It also recommended ensuring an adequate number of qualified professionals, tailored to the specific needs of various groups, including LGBTI children and addressing the prevalence of mental health issues among children.

CRC recommended [France](#) and [Ireland](#) to provide adequate social, medical and psychological services to intersex children and families. It also recommended educating professionals on diversity and consequences of such interventions.

[Ireland](#) and [Finland](#) also received recommendations from CRC to ensure access to accommodation, health care, education, and a decent standard of living for vulnerable groups including LGBTI children and implementing monitoring and impact assessments. It also recommended tailoring mental health services for girls, asylum-seeking and refugee children, low-income households, children with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ children, and providing protection and support to children facing gender identity-related bullying, discrimination, or harassment.

During its last UPR, [Switzerland](#) received a recommendation to provide families with intersex children with adequate counselling.

ASYLUM

On 11 April, following a country visit to the United Kingdom, the IE SOGI [issued a press statement](#) noting serious issues facing LGBTI asylum seekers in the country.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

On 22 May, the Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls, its causes and consequences, released a statement, alleging that women with anti-trans beliefs are being silenced or “cancelled” and calling for their right to freedom of expression.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The Committee against Torture (CAT) recommended [Kazakhstan](#) to ensure that all allegations of violence against detainees, including violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, are thoroughly investigated, and to prosecute suspected offenders, with specific attention to violence against female detainees. Additionally, it recommended adopting specific legislative and other measures to criminalise and prevent domestic violence, as well as violence based on SOGI; taking effective measures to prevent violence on the basis of actual or perceived SOGI; ensuring prompt, effective, and impartial investigation and prosecution of all acts of violence; and bringing perpetrators to justice and providing victims with redress.

During their recent Universal Periodic Review (UPR), [Czechia](#) and [Montenegro](#) received recommendations to ensure that victims of hate crimes, particularly those motivated by hate towards LGBTIQ+ persons, receive the same protection as victims of other hate-motivated crimes. [Romania](#) was recommended to investigate and punish human



rights violations and hate crimes committed against persons in vulnerable situations, paying special attention to LGBTI people. [Serbia](#) received recommendations to investigate and prosecute crimes involving gender-based violence and trafficking in persons, and crimes targeting LGBTI individuals.

BODILY INTEGRITY

CAT recommended [Luxembourg](#) to continue efforts to end irreversible medical acts on intersex children, especially surgical operations without full, free, and informed consent, and to strengthen access to effective remedies for victims. It also recommended improving the collection of statistics on this issue.

CRC recommended [Finland](#), [France](#), [Sweden](#) and the [UK](#) to prohibit unnecessary medical or surgical treatments on intersex children and ensure informed consent. It also recommended educating and training medical professionals on the topic, as well as providing reparations and support for those who received unnecessary treatments, and access to justice without hindrance from any statute of limitations.

[France](#), [Luxembourg](#) and [Switzerland](#), during their last UPR received recommendations to prohibit non-emergency, invasive, and irreversible surgery or treatments with harmful effects on infants and children with variations in sex characteristics, and to ensure that these surgeries or treatments are postponed until the children can meaningfully participate in decision-making and give their informed consent.

On 17 July, a group of UN Special procedures mandate holders [welcomed the decision](#) of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Semenya v. Switzerland*, involving an international-level intersex athlete who was required to take hormone treatment to decrease her natural testosterone level, in order to be able to take part in international competitions in the female category.

DATA COLLECTION

Under its recent UPR, [Liechtenstein](#) received recommendation to commission a study on discrimination and other issues faced by LGBTI persons, developing meaningful measures to improve their situation.

EDUCATION

CRC recommended [Sweden](#) and the [UK](#) to ensure all children receive age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education, including education on gender equality, sexual diversity, sexual and reproductive health rights, and violence prevention. CRC also recommended the [UK](#) to ensure children facing discrimination, bullying, or harassment related to sexual orientation or gender identity receive protection and support; implement targeted anti-bullying measures; and increase efforts to eliminate discrimination and bullying, including cyberbullying, in the school context, focusing on race, sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics, disability, migration, or other status.

Under their recent UPR, [Luxembourg](#) and [Switzerland](#) received recommendations to ensure that LGBTI individuals are protected from bullying and discrimination in the educational system and online.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

During the 54th session of the UN Human Rights Council, Finland, Chile, South Africa, and Australia led a group of more than 56 States from all regions of the world, [calling](#) to “increase efforts to combat violence, harmful practices and discrimination on the basis of sex characteristics”.

The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR) recommended [Lithuania](#) to take legislative measures to ensure the statutory recognition of gender identity as prohibited grounds for discrimination.

CRC recommended [France](#), [Ireland](#), [Sweden](#) and the [UK](#) to strengthen measures to eliminate discrimination against various groups, including LGBTI children.



During the recent UPR, [Czechia](#), [Romania](#) and [Serbia](#) received recommendations to undertake legal, policy and administrative reforms to guarantee non-discrimination of LGBTI persons. [Switzerland](#) received recommendations to introduce specific legislation prohibiting discrimination based on gender identity or sex characteristics. A similar recommendation was also received by [Montenegro](#). [Romania](#) was also specifically recommended to amend ordinance No. 137/2000 on preventing and sanctioning all forms of discrimination to include gender identity as one of the grounds of discrimination.

FAMILY

CESCR recommended [Lithuania](#) to develop a legal institution, such as registered partnership or civil union, that provides protection equivalent to marriage to those in same-sex relationships.

Under their recent UPR, [Czechia](#) and [Liechtenstein](#) received recommendations to reform the Civil Code to allow equal marriage of same-sex couples and enact legislation ensuring equal rights for same-sex couples, including access to social security protection and joint adoption. [Switzerland](#) received recommendations to continue efforts to achieve full equality for all couples, including the recognition and protection of the rights of children with same-sex parents, and align legislation on equal marriage at both federal and cantonal levels, to eliminate potential discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. [Romania](#) was recommended to consider introducing legislation to officially recognise same-sex relationships. [Serbia](#) received recommendations to recognise same-sex partnerships.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

CRC recommended the [UK](#) to prohibit the promotion, facilitation and delivery of so-called ‘conversion practices’ aimed at changing the sexual orientation and gender identity of children, in line with its commitment made in 2018, with particular attention paid to the vulnerabilities of children who may be subject to such harm.

Under UPR, [Liechtenstein](#) and [Luxembourg](#) received recommendations to ban so-called ‘conversion practices’.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Under its recent UPR, [Serbia](#) received recommendations to ensure the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and of expression for LGBTI persons and for civil society organisations and secure the protection of both the public events and gatherings that they organise.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

On 21 June, the IE SOGI presented a [report](#) to the Human Rights Council, finding that protection of the rights of LGBT persons is not incompatible with protection of the right to freedom of religion and belief.

HEALTH

CRC recommended [Finland](#) and [Sweden](#) to strengthen efforts to prevent suicide among children, including, transgender children and set up inter-agency child death review teams. Both countries were also recommended to strengthen mental health services and programs for children, ensuring availability, qualified professionals, and tailored services for specific needs, including LGBTI children.

CRC also recommended the [UK](#) to urgently address the long waiting times faced by transgender and gender-questioning children in accessing specialised health-care services, improve the quality of such services, and ensure that the views of such children are taken into account in all decisions affecting their treatment.

During its last UPR, [Romania](#) was recommended to depathologise gender identity and ensure that essential



trans-specific health-care services are part of national health insurance schemes. [Serbia](#) received recommendations to secure trans and intersex affirming health care, in line with international human rights standards and best practices.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In December, in response to the [Russian Federation](#) classifying the “international LGBT movement” as “extremist” and prohibiting its activities with Russia, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the IE SOGI, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, and members of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, wrote to express concern and call for the repeal of the classification. On 30 November, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights also [condemned](#) the classification.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

On 17 May, for IDAHOT+, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights issued a [statement](#) pledging support to LGBTIQ+ activists and calling for solidarity. Additionally, 38 Special Rapporteurs and Independent Experts, members of five Working Groups, and members of one Expert Mechanism, issued a [Joint Statement](#) calling on States to tackle racism and anti-LGBT stigma collectively, noting that a holistic approach is vital for ending systemic marginalisation.

INTERSECTIONALITY

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) to [Russia](#) and [Portugal](#) to develop and adopt legislation explicitly prohibiting racial profiling and racially motivated violence, especially against specific vulnerable groups, including LGBTI people.

CRC recommended [Finland](#) to adopt measures, including awareness campaigns, to promote equality In the media, promote messages that contribute to changing conduct and behaviour, aiming to transform social norms that lead to discrimination, particularly based on ethnicity, immigration status, discrimination, religion, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) recommended [Georgia](#) to institute legislative and policy measures at the national and municipal levels to address the situation of persons with disabilities in rural areas; to Include time-bound targets and indicators of progress; and to implement measures to combat discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex persons with disabilities.

During its UPR, [Montenegro](#) received recommendation to address multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination against transgender persons.

On 14 June, a group of Special Procedures mandate holders released a [statement](#) calling for more robust data collection on the experiences of older persons, including with disaggregation on the grounds of SOGIESC.

On 25 July, the IE SOGI [presented a report](#) to the General Assembly, discussing the impact of colonialism and decolonial efforts on the rights and protections of LGBT people, and issued a [press release](#) on the same topic on 27 October, calling for colonial anti-LGBT laws to be repealed.

On 27 October, in commemoration of the International Day on Older Persons, a [Joint Statement](#) was released by the United Nations Independent Expert on the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Older Persons, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and the United Nations IE SOGI.

On 26 October, the United Nations IE SOGI, and the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with



Disabilities issued a [joint statement](#) giving guidance in relation to LGBT persons living with disabilities.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

CAT recommended [Kazakhstan](#) to revoke the mandatory reassignment surgery requirement (Family and Marriage Code, Article 257(13)) and the psychiatric diagnosis requirement; establish non-discrimination and voluntary legal gender recognition (LGR) procedures; and ensure impartial counselling services and psychosocial support.

CRC recommended [Ireland](#) to amend the Gender Recognition Act of 2015 to allow LGR for children aged 16 and 17 through a simplified procedure, and conduct research on gender recognition for under-16s in consultation with transgender children.

CRC also recommended the [UK](#) to recognise the right to identity of LGBTI children and implement measures for adolescents' freedom of expression, respecting their physical and psychological integrity, gender identity, and emerging autonomy. Regarding gender recognition for children, it recommended consulting closely with transgender children, ensuring alignment with children's rights, including the right to be heard and to identity, with free and informed consent and appropriate safeguards.

Under their recent UPR, [Czechia](#), [Liechtenstein](#), [Montenegro](#), [Romania](#) and [Serbia](#) received recommendations to reform the legal framework in the light of international standards for gender recognition based on a process of self-determination. Czechia was recommended abolishing the requirement for sterilisation in the process of LGR.

In August, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation, the IE SOGI, and members of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls wrote to the [Russian Federation](#), encouraging reversal of the bill banning LGR and trans-specific healthcare.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

On 31 October, the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, IE SOGI, members of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls, Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, and members of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises issued a [statement](#) calling for LGBT and intersex inclusion in sport.

On 5 December, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights [spoke](#) at the Sporting Chance Forum, calling out the exclusion that trans and intersex athletes face.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

During its UPR, [Romania](#) received recommendations to provide systematic training for law enforcement to identify, investigate and prosecute hate crimes, and enhance cooperation between police and people in marginalised situations, especially Roma and LGBTI communities; and create and employ a common methodology for law enforcement officials in order to effectively investigate and prosecute hate crimes, especially against LGBTI persons and Roma people. [Serbia](#) received recommendations to enhance training programmes for law-enforcement and judicial authorities to protect the rights of LGBTI persons in exercise of their fundamental freedoms, including the right to peaceful protest

PUBLIC OPINION

CESCR recommended [Lithuania](#) to redouble its efforts to take specific, deliberate and targeted measures, including additional awareness-raising campaigns, to combat stigmatisation and discrimination affecting LGBTI persons.



CRC recommended [Sweden](#) to ensure that measures include awareness-raising and media campaigns to change social norms and behaviours that contribute to discrimination, in particular on the basis of ethnicity, migration status, disability, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity.

During its UPR, [Romania](#) was recommended to demonstrate ongoing political commitment to create an environment where minority groups, especially Roma and LGBT persons, can be confident and open in their identity.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

CRC recommended [Finland](#) to adopt a comprehensive and effective gender-sensitive sexual and reproductive health policy for adolescents and raise awareness amongst the health community about the health of LGBTI children and adolescents, particularly trans adolescents.

The committee also recommended [Sweden](#) to ensure that all children receive age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education that includes education on gender equality, sexual diversity, sexual and reproductive health rights and violence prevention.

During its UPR, [France](#) received recommendation to allow medically assisted reproduction for transgender men by including them in the law on bioethics.

On 25 September, in recognition of World Contraception Day and International Safe Abortion Day, the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, IE SOGI, and members of the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls issued a [statement](#) calling for SRHR to be protected in times of crisis, noting the particular marginalisation of young LGBTIQ+ persons, among others.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

CESCR recommended [Lithuania](#) to provide effective protection against all forms of discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation and gender identity, which hinders the enjoyment by victims of their economic, social and cultural rights.

OSCE

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

This year, civil society organisations and other non governmental groups reported 1,016 anti-LGBT hate crimes in 35 states in 2022. These include 602 violent attacks against people, same as in previous year, and 332 threats and 82 attacks against property. According to the report, LGBTI people continue to experience stigmatisation and lack of legal protection. Trans people are particularly at risk of physical violence. Physical assaults also tend to take place around Pride parades.



ALBANIA

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

Because LGBTI people have limited access to state services, due to discrimination, civil society organisations continued to provide necessary support.

Aleanca provided food packages to at least 249 community members this year, including transgender sex workers and people living with HIV.

Rainbowphilia (Ylberofilia) and a partner church teamed up to distribute food packages for trans and sex worker communities, helping up to 20 individuals.

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Aleanca offered reimbursement in 14 cases for administrative proceedings for documentation such as ID's, passports, notary services and document issuance.

Aleanca reimbursed internet, electricity and water bills in 46 cases.

Aleanca provided legal counselling, legal representation and administrative support in filing institutional complaints in 52 sessions.

ASYLUM

Aleanca supported community members with specialised legal counselling on asylum-seeking procedures in at least seven cases, giving advice on how the process works for those who wish to leave Albania and seek asylum. PINK Embassy received at least 20 requests from community members wanting to migrate for safety reasons.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Despite some signs of a positive trend in the media towards the LGBTI community, during a morning TV live show in March, journalist Flavio Qarri misgendered and deadnamed trans activist Luana Myrto, who was a guest on the programme. Myrto made a formal complaint to the Commissioner Against Discrimination, who took no measures against the journalist.

In May, the National Platform for Internet Safety (iSIGURT.al) and PINK Embassy published their annual report on online hate speech against LGBTI people. Media biases and sensational news were found to contribute to this issue, with approximately 200 reported incidents, including hate speech, sexual violence, and bullying.

In May, Aleanca and Pro LGBT filed discrimination and hate speech complaints against two representatives of the Pro Life and Family Coalition and Cinema Millenium. The complaints were related to the public contestation of the "Strange World" movie for its portrayal of LGBTI+ characters. The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination ruled in favour of discrimination in one case, while the other was left for mediation between the parties.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Rainbowphilia reported ten cases of hate violence against trans people and sex workers to the Uwazi platform.

EDUCATION

Aleanca's annual survey found that 30% of LGBTI respondents were unable to complete compulsory education because of discrimination and economic challenges. 63% believe teachers and principals are not well informed on LGBTI issues despite training carried out in the frame of the National Action Plan. 262 people participated in the survey, which has not been publicly published. CSOs continued to advocate for more inclusive school curricula, particularly in relation to sex education. Aleanca reimbursed university fees and vocational courses for 15 cases.

PINK Embassy and CRCA/ECPAT Albania followed up on over ten cases of bullying of LGBTI minors, revealing that public schools lacked protocols for handling SOGI-based violence or discrimination.

The Albanian National Child Helpline (ALO 116-1110) reported a 30% increase in calls from LGBTI children reporting peer bullying and violence. One adolescent attempted suicide due to continuous bullying without adequate protection.

EMPLOYMENT

According to Aleanca's annual survey, 40.8% of LGBTI respondents do not have and have never had formal employment. During 2023 Aleanca supported employment of 19 community members through mediation.

In December, the UNDP Albania and PINK Embassy together with the Ministry of Health and Social Protection and the Ministry of Finances, held a workshop on anti-discrimination in the private sector, to promote better cooperation among the private sector and LGBTI organisations.



EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In July, the European Parliament [adopted](#) the Commission's 2022 [report](#) on Albania, expressing serious concern about discrimination against LGBTIQ+ persons in key areas.

The implementation of the National LGBTI Action Plan (2021-2027), which was formally [launched](#) in 2022, continued to remain flawed, with no implementation of legislation such as changes in the family code and a draft law on gender identity, or introduction of new legislation as requested by NGOs.

Streha held meetings with 110 legal professionals and young LGBTI people living in rural areas in the districts of Kajava, Kukesi and Lushnja, to raise awareness on key legal aspects impacting LGBTIQ+ communities.

Aleanca trained the staff of The Commissioner against Discrimination and Peoples Advocate to provide better services to the LGBTI community.

FAMILY

CSOs continued pushing for the recognition of same-sex unions, including [strategic litigation](#) work.

The case of a lesbian couple, where the [birth registry office](#) and the [Administrative Court of Appeal](#) refused to recognise the non-biological mother, was filed at the High Court. According to experts, a judgement in the case could be expected within two years. The couple, leaders of the organisation Pro LGBT, stated they would go to the European Court of Human Rights if necessary.

Support for equal marriage has grown in recent years with one in four Albanians supporting the recognition of marriage for LGBTI people, according to ERA's [regional study](#).

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The 14th Festival of Diversity [opened](#) on 17 May and events were [held](#) throughout the month, including a national forum on hate speech and hate crimes, and a [flashmob](#). Tirana Pride was [held](#) on 20th of May under the motto, 'Open Your Heart'. Government and Ombudsperson office representatives spoke at the opening.

HEALTH

Access to trans healthcare remained seriously limited, with many trying to access services abroad or purchase hormones online.

PrEP and PEP continue to be unavailable to LGBTI people. Civil society organisations continued to call for the proper implementation of the National Strategy for People Living with HIV 2020-2025, adopted in 2019.

Up to November 2023, Aleanca provided rapid HIV and other STIs testing to 1,538 people, reimbursed medical-related costs for about 179 cases, and provided psycho-social counselling in 420 cases.

Streha provided over 580 psychological and psycho-social sessions and reimbursed 89 medical prescriptions. A total of 67 LGBTIQ+ people were supported by Streha, 20 through shelter and 47 through other services.

Rainbowphilia facilitated trainings in [August](#) and [October](#) 2023 for medical practitioners and the trans community.

According to Aleanca's annual survey, 20% of respondents were unable to access medical services or required accompaniment. Of the remaining 80%, 16% experienced discrimination from medical staff, and 30% felt anxious about potential discrimination in healthcare institutions.

Aleanca and Rainbowphilia continued to advocate with the Ministry of Health for a protocol that enables trans people to access hormone therapy. A working committee of medical practitioners and CSOs began drafting it in July.

HOUSING

Aleanca LGBTI supported community members through rent reimbursement in 137 cases.

Between October 2022 and October 2023, Streha provided shelter to 20 LGBTI people, half of them trans. The number of trans people seeking housing doubled compared to the previous period.

Rainbowphilia supported five people from trans and sex workers communities through rent reimbursement.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

CSOs organised different training sessions with [independent bodies](#) and [community services](#).

The UN's CEDAW, in its fifth review, [accepted](#) recommendations from the LGBTI Alliance regarding the rights of LGBTI women in Albania. It was the first time the CEDAW Committee's observations included temporary measures for



LBTI women. The CEDAW also called for legal recognition of same-sex marriages and partnerships in Albania.

Streha received support from the Social Fund of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The European Commission's 2022 report on Albania called for legislation on legal gender recognition (LGR). In 2022, the government backtracked on its commitment to do this. CSOs continued advocating with the Parliament for LGR and participated in a hearing in November to raise the issue.

Rainbowphilia together with the Helsinki Committee brought a case to court that could pave the way for trans people to change name and gender marker in official documents, in which a trans woman is suing the civil registry because they refused to change her gender marker. The Commissioner Against Discrimination received an invitation to join the lawsuit.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

In May, the 'I Am Your Child' exhibition opened in Tirana as part of Pride week. Poetry, cinema, theatre and drag shows were also part of Pride week.

The Queer Film Marathon Tirana festival took place in October.

In July, the Agimi cinema in the city of Tirana screened two queer films, 'Hippocampus' and 'Letter to myself', produced by Rainbowphilia.

Trans activist, Luana Myrto was elected member of Tirana's youth council.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

NGOs Aleanca, OMSA, PINK, PRO LGBT and Streha held 12 training sessions for all the Directorates of Police across the country. Albania has 12 directorates of police corresponding with 12 regions of the country.



[ALBANIA WEB PAGE](#)
[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG)



ANDORRA

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

On September 27, El Periòdic d'Andorra published a transphobic opinion piece which linked trans identities with mental illness. At DiversAnd's request, the article was removed from the website and its author issued a public apology. However, the printed version ran within the day's edition. El Periòdic's management team deflected responsibility and admitted lacking policies to identify and prevent hate speech in their publication. DiversAnd reported the case to the Ministry of Social Affairs' equality office.

Hate speech on social media remained a concerning issue.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

DiversAnd received accounts of microaggressions this year, but none of these were reported to the authorities. Both civil society and the government suspect that low reporting is due to fear.

Andorra's anti-discrimination body, the [Equality Observatory](#), created in 2020, will set up a dedicated LGBTIQ+ issues committee in 2024.

After significant delays, in February the Equality Observatory's survey, which explored world perceptions of homosexuality, based on 2018 data, was published. DiversAnd were invited to participate as an advisor in shaping the methodology for the next edition of the survey, strongly encouraging for the development of more studies that specifically focus on the experiences of LGBTIQ+ people in Andorra.

On IDAHOBIT on 17 May, the Ministry of Social Affairs [launched](#) an awareness campaign against LGBTI-phobia, which featured posters and signs on buses and traffic lights.

Civil society continued to lobby for a specific LGBTIQ+ law.

FAMILY

On 30 January, the Parliament [voted](#) in favour of amending the wording of the 2022 [Law of the Person and Family](#) in order to replace the distinction between between church marriage and civil marriage with one only one term 'matrimoni'.

This amendment implements the October 2022 [ruling](#) of the Constitutional Court, which set out that differentiating between church marriage and civil marriage, the former only being available to heterosexual couples, was discriminatory on the basis of sexual orientation. The new law [entered](#) into force on 17 February.

HEALTH

In August, DiversAnd met with the Ministry of Health to discuss the specific protocols for gender-affirming procedures that follow the regulatory [changes](#) of 2022. The organisation argued for the inclusion of puberty blockers, hormone therapy for 16-year-olds (and in some cases as young as 14), and gender-affirmation surgery for adults within the social security system's coverage. Another demand was to eliminate any delays in accessing gender-affirming care. The implementation of the [protocols](#) is planned for early 2024.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The Ministry of Social Affairs, Youth, and Equality launched a campaign against anti-LGBTI hate on IDAHOBIT (see under Equality and Non-discrimination).

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The [Law of the Person and Family](#), adopted in 2022, entered into force in February this year. The law [introduced](#) a gender marker and name change procedure for the first time, albeit not based on self-determination. The law sets out a court procedure for both name and gender marker change, [mandating](#) that the person had lived according to their gender identity over the past two years, shown by evidence and testimonials. Children over the age of 12 can only access name change with parental consent and through a court procedure. The first name change of a minor [took place](#) in March. At least [one adult](#) had their name and gender marker changed in the same month. Civil society [reported](#) that in both cases the process was quite long and difficult, and the applicants were questioned about their identities at court.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Andorra's Prime Minister, Xavier Espot publicly announced his sexual orientation on a [radio programme](#). "I'm gay. I've never hidden it," he stated. CSOs hope this will have a positive impact on younger generations and in the international arena.

In October, DiversAnd and Escaldes-Engordany city council [painted two benches](#) with the rainbow and the trans flag to mark Trans Pathologisation Month.



[ANDORRA WEB PAGE](#)
[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](#)

ARMENIA

ASYLUM

Civil society organisations continued to [support](#) LGBTIQ migrants who left Nagorno Karabak, Russia and Ukraine (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The Government of the Republic of Armenia [published](#) the draft 2023-2025 Action Plan emerging from the National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights, which states that an anti-discrimination law must be adopted in 2024. The plan was adopted on September 28.

Several instances of online hate speech and calls for violence against trans and LGBTIQ people were documented this year on social media sites (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). One video, which received tens of thousands of views, invited people to join a group in Yerevan that allegedly would “free the city from gays”.

After the murder of a trans woman on 20 August (see Bias-motivated Violence) a wave of hate speech started. People publicly justified the crime and called for further violence against the LGBTQ community, especially after the [murder](#) of trans woman Adriana.

In order to discredit Tigran Avinyan, the mayoral candidate in the mayoral elections of Yerevan, the media [targeted](#) him, suggesting he is gay.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

(See under Police and Law Enforcement)

Hate crimes continued to be a serious issue this year, with several attacks documented and criminal proceedings [pending](#). Several incidents targeted trans people (see [here](#) and [here](#)). In March, for instance, over the span of a few days, a group of masked men physically [assaulted](#) two trans women and threatened to attack two others in Yerevan.

In July, a man live [streamed](#) beating up a trans woman in the street. On 20 August, a trans woman was [murdered](#) in the capital and her apartment was set on fire. The suspect was arrested shortly after and a criminal investigation is ongoing. On 21 August, a candlelight vigil was held in the victim’s memory but was attacked by a group. The participants repeatedly asked for police protection, but the police allegedly just stood by.

On 23 April, police [raided](#) the techno club Poligraf and beat up several young people.

Civil society [demanded](#) investigation and accountability. The club is known to be a hub for self-expression and diversity. Pink documented 51 cases of physical, psychological and sexual violence, as well as threats of violence towards LGBT people during 2022, 23 of which were committed by family members, including one by the partner. In most cases, the parents learned about the LGBT identity of the victims and then beat, harassed, threatened, or locked them up. Legal barriers hinder organisations from addressing domestic violence cases involving LGBT minors as the parents, who are often the perpetrators, must authorise representation by another person.

RightSide NGO documented 22 cases of domestic violence cases against LGBTQ+ people.

New Generation Humanitarian NGO (NGNGO) registered 35 cases of violence against LGBTI people throughout 2023, including 16 cases of domestic violence.

NTC documented and addressed 42 cases of human rights violations, discrimination and violence against trans*, non-binary and gender-diverse people by unknown perpetrators (15), police (11), partner (10) and family members (6).

BODILY INTEGRITY

(See under Health)

DATA COLLECTION

Despite the recommendations from the Council of Europe and the OSCE, law-enforcement bodies have not implemented proper hate crimes data collection tools. Hate crimes are not recorded as such, as biased motivation is not considered an aggravating circumstance.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The government [took](#) no steps this past year to enact legislation that would [protect](#) people from discrimination, harassment, or violence on the basis of SOGIESC. ECRI’s report on Armenia, published in March, [noted](#) with concern that the current draft of the Equality Law, [stalled](#) since [2018](#), does not include any of these grounds. Pink Armenia’s report, The Human Rights Situation of LGBT People in Armenia During 2022, published in May, [highlighted](#) that the police are often perpetrators of abuses against LGBT people.

Pink documented 51 cases of discrimination based on SOGI this year, of which 16 were reported to law enforcement bodies. Some of these were rejected, and others have not been processed in a meaningful way.



RightSide released several interviews with LGBTQI+ people (see [here](#) and [here](#)), who shared their life stories and experiences of discrimination and violence.

RightSide held an empowerment [training](#) for LGBTQI+ youth and a rehabilitation [retreat](#) for sex workers in April, and a Gender-inclusive Empowerment [Camp](#) in August. Pink [held](#) its third Pride Camp in June. NTC [organised](#) the second edition of Armenian Gender Academy.

FAMILY

(See under Bias-motivated Violence)

FOREIGN POLICY

In May, the courts [reviewed](#) the decision of the Migration Service which could lead to the possible extradition of Salman Mukayev to Russia. Mukayev was previously detained by the authorities in Chechnya on charges of homosexuality and allegedly tortured.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

ECOM's 'Invisible Voices' report on violations of the right to health of LGBT people in the region of Eastern Europe and Central Asia in 2022 [documented](#) cases in which military medical commissions harassed, ridiculed, mistreated, blackmailed, outed, and humiliated people due to their SOGI, including examining and commenting on their genitals.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The 8th Rainbow Forum [was held](#) in Yerevan between 30 November and December 2.

HEALTH

(See also under Freedom from Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment)

Several testimonies of LGBT people who suffered harassment, mistreatment, denial of care, and so-called 'conversion practices at the hands of medical professionals were [released](#) in an article in June.

ECOM's report documented a 2022 case of a trans woman who was [denied](#) medical care by a plastic surgeon and was subjected to transphobic slurs.

HOUSING

The government provides temporary shelter for abused women and their children, but there are no existing support programs for LGBT people. Grassroots NGOs organise temporary [accommodation](#) to LGBT people subjected to violence on a case-to-case basis.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

ECRI's report on Armenia [highlighted](#) that legal gender recognition is virtually impossible to access, but that the name change process became simplified.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The online news site Epress [launched](#) a series of articles featuring the stories of LGBT students. HetQ, another online news site, launched the podcast '[Flesh and Blood](#)', a series about the LGBTQA+ community in Armenia.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

(See also under Equality and Non-discrimination)

The U.S. Department of State's annual report, released in March, [raised](#) concerns about the situation of LGBT+ people in Armenian prisons and detention centres. A civil society report [published](#) similar findings, sharing that LGBT prisoners are often placed in a separate cell and are subject to other discriminatory forms of treatment.

The Prison's monitoring group, attached to the Ministry of Justice and with the participation of CSOs, warned once again about the mistreatment of LGBT people in penitentiary institutions.



[ARMENIA WEB PAGE](#)
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AUSTRIA

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Online hate speech against LGBTQIA+ people continued to be a serious issue this year. The implementation of the 2021 [legislative package](#) against online hate speech remained flawed.

In March, the head of FPÖ in Vienna, Dominik Nepp [called](#) for a ban on drag story time events and an end to “this transgender madness”. Nepp [called](#) the events “sexualisation propaganda”. All of the related motions were [rejected](#) in an FPÖ special state parliament vote on the issue (see more under Bias-motivated violence, Equality and non-discrimination, and Freedom of expression).

Also in March, Nepp denied the existence of intersex people at a [Vienna City Government Meeting](#), used pathologising language and mocked transgender people: “Today I am female, tomorrow I am intersex, and the day after...”

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Hate crimes [continued](#) to be a serious issue this year, with at least one homophobic incident being [reported](#) every single day. The figures are similar for gender-based crimes, which can include transphobic crimes as well. The Ministry of Interior’s [annual hate crime report](#) shows 373 attacks based on the victim’s sexual orientation and 350 attacks based on sex/gender identity. Since 2022 the gender marker inter/divers have been added to the report, even though it’s still not being added to the law.

In light of these numbers, the Ministry of Social Affairs [put](#) in place over 250,000 Euro funding this year to support the [queerfacts.at](#) educational platform. Nevertheless, there is still no national plan in place to [tackle](#) anti-LGBTI hate crimes. SPÖ [called](#) for a national plan and stronger measures. In June, the Ministry of Justice [hosted](#) a roundtable discussion on anti-LGBTI hate crimes, which had first been announced a year earlier.

BODILY INTEGRITY

The process of banning so-called ‘conversion practices’ [continued](#) to be [stalled](#) this year due to the ÖVP’s [lack of support](#), despite the National Council calling for legal reform twice over the past four years.

During Pride month, the ÖVP proposed that there should be a ban on ‘conversion practice’ for minors but wanted to specifically exclude trans and intersex people. The Green Party, SPÖ, NEOS and civil society organisations objected.

The proposed [ban](#) on non-consensual and medically unnecessary treatments performed on intersex children also [continued](#) to be [stalled](#) this year. Over 70 civil society organisations [signed](#) an [open letter](#) to the parliament and a related [petition](#) collected over 7,000 signatures to demand a ban. At the [Vienna Pride Conference](#), a ÖVP member of the national council publicly said that politicians cannot decide on this matter; only doctors can.

EDUCATION

VIMÖ, together with the Austrian midwife organisation began a [workshop series](#) in Vienna and Linz to train midwives on intersex issues.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In July, the Equal Treatment Ombudsman [called](#) for comprehensive legislation that would protect LGBTI people in all areas of life. Civil society organisations [launched](#) the #schutzfüralle [Eng: Protection for All] campaign, published a [position paper](#), and issued a [petition](#) calling to close the gaps in protection against discrimination.

Following a 2022 [announcement](#), a cross-party LGBTIQ Intergroup was [formed](#) in the Parliament in [January](#) this year, with representatives from all parties, except for the far-right FPÖ (Freedom Party). The Intergroup [hosted](#) its first event in parliament in April, where a drag queen also spoke (see more under Bias-motivated Speech).

The Social and Health Ministry [presented](#) the first Austrian LGBTIQ+ health report in June, finding that 89% of respondents had experienced discrimination in the past two years and highlighted that this has a negative impact on their health status.

A grey rainbow statue to commemorate LGBT victims of Nazi persecution was [installed](#) in Vienna in June. All judgements during the Second Republic which unjustly condemned LGBTIQ people because of consensual sexual behaviour will be annulled and they will receive [economic reparations](#). An apology by the parliament to the victims remains outstanding.

Several actors in the Catholic Church in Austria [affirmed](#) that LGBTIQ+ people are treated with respect, with several events and services catering to the community.

FAMILY

In December, a court recognised automatic co-parenthood of same-sex parents who are married or in a registered partnership. In other cases, future parents have to notify the registry. The ruling includes children of rainbow families conceived via home insemination. The ruling will apply as of 1 January 2024.

FOREIGN POLICY

After weeks of debate, Austria joined the European Commission's proceedings against Hungary in late March and expressed a firm stance against its anti-LGBT propaganda law. The Austrian Embassy in Tehran, Iran outed an Iranian citizen living in Austria. The Ombudsperson requested a formal apology from the Embassy.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The 27th Vienna Pride was held on 18 June and was attended by roughly 300,000 people. Three young men, two of whom are minors, were arrested ahead of the Pride march for allegedly planning a bomb attack. The police had apparently known about the planned attack since spring.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Drag Queen Candy Licious shared that her reading events for children now only happen with police protection in place. A reading in March had 15 police officers present.

FPÖ's attempts to ban drag story time and threats by right-wing groups to attack readings for children led to a demonstration against drag story time and a counter-demonstration for LGBTIQ-visibility outside Vienna's Türkis Rosa Lila Villa during a reading event. Several politicians went to the scene and spoke out against anti-LGBTI hate.

In October, FPÖ pushed the Vienna city council to cancel yearly funding to Türkis Rosa Lila Villa after the Palestine flag was hung by an occupant of the building. On a local level, FPÖ pushed for tearing down the centre and building social housing on the site. Both attempts failed.

HEALTH

In January, the right-wing FPÖ called for an opinion of the Ministry of Health on puberty blockers to trans minors. In April, the Health Minister stated that the medication was provided as set out by the Ministry's healthcare regulations. FPÖ's motion was rejected in a vote.

The Social and Health Ministry's LGBTIQ+ health report found that LGBTIQ+ people are more likely to report poor health status and mental health issues than the general population. Following up on the results, the Ministry published two brochures to support LGBTIQ+ persons, particularly trans and intersex people, and healthcare workers.

In June, TransX provided training on gender-affirming care to resident doctors in Graz. It is the fourth time this training has taken place.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The Ministry of Social Affairs allocated over 250,000 EURO to Queerfacts, an educational project conducting workshops at schools.

For the first time, the Parliament was lit up in rainbow colours during Pride week in June.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Vienna's Regional Administrative Court ruled in four cases that alternative gender markers should be available to persons who are not intersex. Additionally, in one case, it ruled that the person's self-declaration was sufficient to change the gender marker. The ruling was welcomed by civil society. The Ministry of Interior appealed against all four decisions to the Supreme Administrative Court.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Abortion became a topic of debate with the closure of the last clinic providing it in Vorarlberg. In October, the regional government of Vorarlberg authorised one hospital to provide abortions, so the service is once again available in the area. However, many Austrian regions are still underserved and require patients to fund the treatment.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

A new community centre for LGBTQIA people was opened in Graz.

Q:WIR, a centre for LGBTIQ youth (ages 13-27), was opened in Vienna's 16th district. Furthermore, Austria's first queer education centre opened in the 6th district.



[AUSTRIA WEB PAGE](#)
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AZERBAIJAN

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In May 14, LGBTQ+ activist Ali Malikov reported on his social media that he was subjected to homophobic treatment in the “Friends” cafe located in Baku, having been told to remove a rainbow flag from his table. He filed a complaint with the police.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

QueeRadar’s 2022 hate speech monitoring report found that of the 428 media pieces analysed, 77% were hateful or biased against LGBTQ+ people (2021: two-thirds).

In May, several politicians called for investigation and the removal of a rainbow flag, which the British Embassy raised on IDAHOBIT (see here and here). Media reporting was also biased and hostile.

Voice of America released a brief video about LGBTQ+ rights in Azerbaijan, which was followed by hostile articles, including video reportage by pro-government network REAL TV.

Brothers Tural and Turan, who represented Azerbaijan at the 2023 Eurovision Song Contest, were targeted by homophobic comments online.

In May, politician Tofiq Yaqublu said queer people were “sick” and “disabled”.

In August, actor and president of the Azerbaijan Cinematographers Union, Rasim Balayev said equal marriage goes “against our religion and our reason” during an interview on a popular YouTube channel.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

(See also under Education)

Hate crimes against the LGBTQ+ community continued to be a serious issue. A trans woman was tortured and murdered in July in Baku. Several other trans people were also physically assaulted this year (see here), including by the police (see here). Several gay men were attacked (see for instance here).

Two trans women were detained for ‘hooliganism’ by the police on 22 May, for making noise. To show solidarity and demand their release, seven LGBTI activists gathered outside the Baku police station on 23 May. All seven were arrested, charged with ‘minor hooliganism’ and other offences, and fined. Some of them shared that they were beaten, harassed, insulted, locked up in a very small cell and kept without food or water while in

custody. The authorities and civil society did not condemn the mistreatment.

On 31 May, Christophe Lacroix, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) rapporteur on the rights of LGBT people, issued a statement condemning the police’s actions. On 7 June, MEPs of the European Parliament denounced the arrests and called for investigation, asking the European Commission to do the same. The EU High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell Fontelles expressed concern about the events in July.

In July, the police raided a private birthday party attended by several queer people and subjected them to forced medical examinations, physically and sexually harassed them, and threatened to out them publicly.

BODILY INTEGRITY

ECRI recommended that Azerbaijan ban non-consensual medical interventions performed on intersex children. Civil society documented at least one case this year.

On July, video information about forced genital surgery of a 13-year-old intersex child was shared on social networks.

EDUCATION

ECRI recommended that Azerbaijan tackle anti-LGBTI bullying in schools.

A 17-year-old student was repeatedly harassed and verbally insulted and threatened by a peer and a teacher in Baku. In the lack of any law that would protect people from discrimination, bullying and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics (SOGIESC), the police did not take action. The teenager faced verbal harassment at the police station as well. Thanks to the Ombudsperson’s intervention, the peer apologised and the teacher was reprimanded. The student may file for a civil case.

In September, after taking time off from their studies due to the persistent harassment, the same student was beaten by another pupil on their second day back to school.

The new Gender Equality university textbook, co-released by the State Committee for Family, Women and Children’s Problems includes no mention of SOGIESC.



EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In March, the European Parliament adopted its report on EU-Azerbaijan relations, recommending that the government adopt firm legislation to protect LGBTI people from discrimination and violence, wrongful arrest, and police abuse.

On IDAHOBIT on 17 May, the UK Embassy raised the rainbow flag in the capital, receiving harsh public criticism.

ECRI published its sixth periodic report on Azerbaijan in June, concluding that the government had not taken any steps to protect LGBTI people from discrimination and violence and ensure their equality.

FOREIGN POLICY

Government-affiliated media published a number of articles undermining international agencies and their support of LGBTI people's rights. State-controlled national television channel AzTV accused the USA of "bringing the LGBT system into politics" in one of their programmes.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

(See also under Bias-motivated Violence)

On 8 March, feminist and queer activists held the '8 March - We Want to Live!' rally, again demanding that the government ensure equal rights for all without discrimination on grounds of SOGI, investigate femicides, bring perpetrators to justice, take effective measures to prevent violence and femicides, and ratify the Istanbul Convention. The police pushed and shoved several participants. The Baku Municipality said the march had no purpose.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In June, the Minister of Education was criticised after sharing a picture on social media on Children's Day, which featured a rainbow-coloured kite.

Following the adoption of Russia's latest anti-LGBT propaganda law, several politicians, including from the government, said Azerbaijan should adopt a similar law.

In February, a year after the homophobic murder of LGBTQ+ activist Avaz Hafizli a documentary about his life was screened in Baku.

In March, the Turkish singer Kalben hung a trans flag during her concert in Baku.

HEALTH

ECRI highlighted that trans people have very poor access to hormonal therapy and often have to resort to buying and using them in an unsafe manner, without medical supervision.

HOUSING

Civil society reported that trans people faced evictions again this year.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

(See under Bias-motivated Violence)

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

ECRI recommended that Azerbaijan provide for a legal gender recognition procedure on the basis of self-determination.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Several people who wanted to participate in Eurogames 2023 in Switzerland were denied a visa by the Swiss Embassy in Baku. In November, the UN Human Rights Council reviewed Azerbaijan's human rights records during its Universal Periodic Review (UPR), to which Queerdian, Gender Resource Center and Q Collective jointly submitted a report assessing the impact of existing legal frameworks. Nafas together with ECON presented a report too, focused on bias-motivated speech and crime, among other areas of concern.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

(See also under Bias-motivated Violence; and Freedom of Assembly)

In February, a trans woman was arrested. Methamphetamine was discovered in her possessions. She claimed that police officers had inflated the quantity of drugs. On November 15, a court convicted her, sentencing her to eight months in a men's prison. Her lawyer declared she will appeal the case.



AZERBAIJAN WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG

BELARUS

ILGA-Europe introductory note: It should be noted that access to information about developments in the country has been increasingly difficult, as a result of the increasing repression against civil society. There is no official public information available on LGBTI rights and communities. While activists and organisations working for equality continue to collect evidence, they are facing significant risks in their safety and freedom, and there are few currently in the country, which contributes to making access to information more difficult.

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

Trans people are facing prolonged homelessness and unemployment (see under Employment; and Housing). Since 2019, activists have provided food kits, consistently receiving more applications than expected.

ASYLUM

Thousands, including LGBTI people, continued leaving the country this year to seek asylum.

LGBTQ people are concerned about the possible introduction of a law banning LGBTQ propaganda and gender reassignment in Belarus and continue to flee the country. However, LGBTQ Belarusians are not granted asylum based on SOGI grounds as the country is wrongly considered safe for LGBTQ people. For example, Moldovan authorities denied asylum to a queer Belarusian claiming that “there is no evidence that Belarus violates human rights”.

Supported by anonymous initiatives, a trans individual who had suffered persecution could flee the country and is now safe in the EU.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Belarusian state media continued to propagate hatred towards LGBTQ+ people in newspapers, websites and on TV channels. Government agencies regularly employ hate speech against LGBTI activists, including calls for their imprisonment.

Societal and political discourse continued to be anti-LGBT and chauvinistic. In his annual speech to the nation in March, President Aleksandr Lukashenko said that the ideologies supporting childless families should be banned and that non-traditional and childless families threaten the state. Lukashenko also said there was no excuse for men to be in a same-sex relationship, which he called a “despicable perversion”. The Minister of Labor and Social Protection later called for a nationwide movement for large traditional families.

In February, Journalists for Tolerance (J4T) published its

periodic report monitoring hate speech in 2022 in Belarus. J4T found that every second piece of media coverage on LGBTQ+ people amounted to hate speech. The following report, covering January to October 2023, found that 46% of LGBTQ+ stories contained hate speech, 2% more than in 2022.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Several gay clubs were raided by the police in October. The police searched people’s bags, looked through their photos and messaging apps, and detained several people.

In August, a queer person in Vitebsk reported an assault to the police but was detained and held for 24 hours. The person was later released pending trial.

Violence, corrective rapes and police mistreatment against trans people remain serious issues this year. In June, a trans woman in Minsk was physically assaulted for displaying a Ukrainian and a rainbow flag on her backpack. After seeking help from the police, she was imprisoned for 14 days.

A trans person faced correctional rape, intimidation and death threats. Medical assistance was denied, and the person was sent to a psychiatric clinic. A month later, the police rejected their complaint.

Anonymous initiatives reported several cases of corrective rape against trans individuals who, fearing reprisals didn’t report to the police and sought crisis psychological support.

EDUCATION

Following this year’s developments (see under Freedom of Expression), the Ministry of Education is planning to introduce Fundamentals of Family Life classes, to “protect” children from the influence of so-called Western values, i.e. non-traditional sexual relationships, gender reassignment, paedophilia and childlessness, as well as courses to promote traditional families and increase the birth rate.

In October, the Ministry of Education banned a popular blogger from participating in school events after being accused of ‘LGBTQ propaganda’.

FAMILY

Several trans minors were kicked out of their homes by their parents.

Rainbow families, particularly trans parents, continue to face multiple difficulties due to the lack of legal protections and fear



the consequences of future 'LGBTQ+ propaganda' legislation on their right to adoption. Currently, LGBT people are not explicitly prohibited from adopting. (see more under Freedom of Assembly and Sexual and Reproductive Rights)

An ex-partner threatened to expose a queer woman's LGBT identity to the court, to put her custody rights at risk. She sought legal advice from LGBTI organisations.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

A joint report by the International Committee to Investigate Torture in Belarus and the Human Rights Centre "Viasna", published in May, [documents](#) that LGBTQ+ detainees continue to be [subjected](#) to severe beatings, rape, threats of rape against them and their family members, humiliation, harassment and verbal insults. Clothing, hair colour and length, and painted nails have been [grounds](#) for torture and violence. A former trans detainee for instance, recalled guards saying "let's take him out into the yard and shoot him".

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY, ASSOCIATION, AND EXPRESSION

(See also under Freedom from Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment)

Since the historic protests against the government in 2020, the government has continued its brutal crackdown on protesters, journalists, and civil society, through unlawful arrest, detention, violence, and ill-treatment. Freedom of expression, assembly and association continued to be extremely restricted.

A possible LGBT 'propaganda' law remained on the agenda this year. In April, a possible amendment of the Media Law was [discussed](#) in Parliament. The Ministry of Information however [stated](#) that the government's restrictions in place are already as [effective](#) as the propaganda law in Russia. The Minister reported that they had already sent hundreds of letters to publishers and bookstores to clarify that in case of books with LGBT content, the Ministry will [take](#) administrative measures.

In May, MP Igor Zavalei [said](#) that stopping LGBT-themed films from circulating is difficult, but said that such films are very low quality and have poor ratings.

In June, the General Prosecutor's Office [proposed](#) to introduce administrative measures against the [promotion](#) of 'non-traditional sexual relations', gender reassignment, 'paedophilia' and childlessness, and to [introduce](#) chemical castration for 'paedophiles'. The bill was [adopted](#) in October. Several human

rights organisations [condemned](#) the law, which counters international human rights law.

In September, following a warning from the state security service, a company [took down](#) an online ad, which featured a man dressed up as a woman.

On a positive note, the Gender Gap program was [launched](#) on Euroradio, where Iryna Sidorskaya examines the arguments of state propaganda against LGBT rights and gender.

Civil society organisations [continued](#) to be dissolved or forced to dissolve themselves, including several that work on LGBT issues. Several websites were blocked this year, including CSOs.

LGBTIQ+ Belarusians organised contingents in Prides in [Warsaw](#), [Berlin](#) and [Vilnius](#).

HEALTH

Alexandra Kuchinskaya, a sexologist at the Republican Scientific and Practical Centre for Mental Health (RSPC), has been requesting that trans people who are seeking gender reassignment [provide a sample of their saliva for genetic analysis](#), which is not provided for by the law.

Accessing trans-affirming care in Belarus remains highly challenging with regular hormone shortages and a minimum two-year wait for prescriptions. Medical practitioners often lack training on trans issues, leading to discriminatory treatment. Activists continue to offer free psychological consultations, support groups, and meetings for trans and LGBTQ+ people.

According to a survey by anonymous initiatives, 62% of trans and non-binary respondents need hormone treatment and the health state of 64% of respondents is below average.

HOUSING

(See also under Access to Adequate Food; and under Employment)

Anonymous initiatives helped with temporary housing for trans people struggling with unemployment, discrimination and/or evicted by their relatives.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

(See also under Freedom of Assembly, Association, and Expression)

Belarus continued making headlines due to the brutal



government crackdown waged against civil society and the opposition. Several journalists, political activists, and others were detained, stood trial and received harsh prison sentences this year (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Thousands continue to be detained and subjected to torture and ill-treatment.

Civil society organisations working on LGBT issues continued being harassed by the authorities. Some initiatives had to close down and several activists fled the country. LGBTI activists and human rights defenders state that refusals on organisations' registering continue to occur outside the existing legal framework.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Accessing legal gender recognition (LGR) in Belarus remains extremely challenging. To request a change of gender markers on passports, trans people endure an 8 to 21-day stay at a psychiatric clinic, must see a sexologist and a psychologist for a minimum of one year, and undergo unnecessary and degrading medical tests. The wait for the first medical appointment alone can extend up to six months.

Even if the requirements are met, the commission granting LGR routinely denies requests, imposing an additional six-month wait. Some individuals have faced discriminatory treatment in the process and repeated denials for over three years.

Complaints to higher authorities pay no results. In September 2023, out of 22 cases, 16 were denied, marking a 70% increase in refusals compared to the last five years. Activists fear that LGR will be further restricted in the years to come.

In September, a police officer present at an LGR commission threatened the trans applicant.

On October 16, a trans man was forced to renounce change of name and gender markers acquired a year ago. Sexologist Alexandra Kuchinskaya had invited several authorities, including the Deputy Minister of Health and RSPC director, to a regular appointment required as part of the LGR procedure for the trans man. During this meeting, he was threatened with the potential loss of access to his children unless he abandoned the changes to his passport and other documents. Eventually, he wrote a letter renouncing his rights and, later, sought legal advice and support from LGBTI organisations.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

[Lesbian activists](#) Volha Harbunova and Nasta Bazar, criminally persecuted in the past for their activism, became part of opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's office.

Belarusian basketball player Ekaterina Snytnina, who lives in London, [came out](#) this year.

[Three books](#) on queer experiences of Belarusians were published in 2023.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

(See also under Freedom from Torture, Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment; under Bias-motivated Violence) The testimonies of two soldiers were [shared](#) in an article, affirming that during enlisting the army [continues](#) to send 'homosexuals' to psychiatric institutions. One man spoke of verbal harassment from hospital staff.

Early in 2023, police authorities forced an LGBTQ person to film a video publicly outing themselves, expressing regret for their sexual orientation and using offensive language. The police then shared the video online, which was taken down after a few days.

In August, two gay men were arrested during protests. Police [subjected](#) them to humiliating treatment and threats, and recorded them partially unclothed in a video disseminated on government-affiliated social media channels.

PUBLIC OPINION

New [research](#) on the stereotypes held by Belarusian society about LGBTQ+ people showed that 79% of respondents personally know one or more LGBTQ+ person, and 59.5% believe that LGBTQ+ people live under social pressure in Belarus.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

(See also under Freedom of Assembly)

The upcoming law on 'LGBTQ+ propaganda and child-free behaviour' will further [restrict](#) the dissemination of information on contraception and "non-traditional relations" including fines up to 2,500 EURO.

**Some of the information about Belarus was shared with ILGA-Europe by activists who for safety reasons need to stay anonymous. These accounts were not publicly shared online or otherwise.*



[BELARUS WEB PAGE](#)
[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](#)

BELGIUM

ASYLUM

The so-called “reception crisis” continues, whereby for two years the Belgian government has been seriously failing to accommodate people with dignity during their asylum procedure. This leads to asylum seekers having to survive and sleep on the streets (see [here](#)). The people most impacted by this crisis are single men, including members of the LGBTQI+ community. When people requesting asylum are being granted shelter, the basic safety needs of LGBTQI+ people are usually not met in the main reception centers.

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Mons [became](#) the second city where businesses will receive a label for being welcoming of LGBTQIA+ people, after a training provided by Maison Arc-en-ciel (MAC).

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

(See also under Education)

The Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities (Unia) [called for urgent legal changes](#) to ensure that perpetrators of hate crimes are prosecuted in criminal proceedings.

CSOs [filed](#) a complaint with the Prosecutor against a far-right organiser and founder of the extreme right-wing youth movement ‘Schild en Vrienden’, who [demanded](#) a store take down its rainbow flag because it spreads “paedophilia”. The video of the action [went viral](#) and spread hate.

An LGBTQIA+ iftar (the fast-breaking evening meal of Muslims in Ramadan) in Antwerp had to be [cancelled](#) after [countless](#) hate messages and threats. Several politicians, including the Flanders Minister for Equal Opportunities, condemned the hate wave.

Drag story time events were [targeted](#) by hate speech and harassment this year, with at least one event [disrupted](#) by a handful of far-right [protesters](#). Drag shows were also [targeted](#) by hate.

Flemish right-wing politicians continued to use hateful speech towards LGBTI+ people. During a parliamentary session in October, MP Stefaan Sintobin (Vlaams Belang) [upheld](#) that schoolteachers should not address how gay and lesbian couples can have children.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

(See also under Education)

After her disappearance in December 2022, the murder of a Georgian young trans woman in Belgium was [reported](#) in January.

Unia [shared](#) that it closed 137 files relating to discrimination based on sexual orientation in 2022, a worrying figure but a slight decrease [compared](#) to 2021. It [received](#) 7,310 complaints in 2022. Unia called for a new interfederal action plan against discrimination and violence against LGBTI+ people, as the previous one expired in 2019.

UZ Gent/Transgender Infopoint’s study, [commissioned](#) by the government, [found](#) that one in three LGBTQ+ people in Flanders have experienced physical violence in the past two years and 93% have reported verbal or psychological abuse.

Three LGBTQI+ bars were [vandalised](#) in Brussels. A man in his 70s was [lured](#) on a fake date on a dating app and robbed by five young men. A man was the victim of a homophobic and autistophobic attack in Brussels. Several rainbow crossings (see under Equality and Non-discrimination) were vandalised (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

The Brussels metro [received](#) several terrorist threats, which also included anti-LGBT language.

The perpetrator in a 2022 homophobic hate crime was [sentenced](#) to 18 months of prison, including nine months of probation. One of the three perpetrators of a 2018 homophobic murder was [sentenced](#) to 28 years in prison - the others stood trial in 2021.

In July, Belgium [adopted](#) the first law against femicides in Europe. It includes protections for gender minorities who do not identify as women.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In July, the parliament [adopted](#) a ban on so-called ‘conversion practices’, covering sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, in the case of both minors and adults. The sanctions will include prison sentences and/or fines.

The parliament is yet to ban non-consensual surgeries performed on intersex children, in line with the 2021 parliamentary [resolution](#) on intersex people’s rights. Civil society continued to [lobby](#) for a ban, and also for sanctions,



better access to healthcare for intersex people throughout their lives, and access to their own medical history.

In an important [judicial victory](#), the Brussels Court of Appeal held a hospital [accountable](#) for non-consensual medical interventions performed on an intersex minor. Civil society widely welcomed the ruling.

EDUCATION

(See also under Bias-motivated Speech)

The Ook Genks Wel Anders (OGWA) association's IDAHOBIT event at a school in Genk was [attacked](#) by approximately 100 far-right students, who also [assaulted](#) a volunteer and city representatives. In response, the city and OGWA [launched](#) a campaign against anti-LGBT hate in schools.

The Hasselt Sports School [suspended](#) eight teachers for racist and homophobic speech on a messaging app. An official investigation was [launched](#) and later dismissed because of a lack of evidence, but a disciplinary investigation [continues](#).

Sint-Rita college [installed](#) a rainbow crossing upon a students' initiative (see more under Equality and Non-discrimination). Students in the Herzele municipality [received](#) rainbow bracelets for IDAHOBIT.

In June, the Constitutional Court [struck down](#) the so-called 'attainment targets' for second and third-grade secondary education. The new targets don't explicitly include LGBTI+ rights and experiences. Civil society [found](#) the ruling alarming and a step back.

A survey conducted by çavaria [revealed](#) that the situation for LGBTI+ students in secondary schools in Flanders has not improved in the past five years.

Sex education (EVRAS) became mandatory in French-speaking schools. The law was voted almost unanimously but the decision was used by far-right and religious groups to stage violent protests, including a wave of disinformation on social media and the [vandalisation](#) of some schools. Some of these groups [looked at](#) bringing the new law before the Constitutional Court.

EMPLOYMENT

Civil servants in Ghent are now [eligible](#) for 20 days of transition leave.

A new study by the University of Ghent [found](#) that lesbians and gay men face little discrimination in employment, contrary to trans people. Ghent [allocated](#) funding this year to test transphobic discrimination in employment and take legal action.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The parliament and the Prime Minister [celebrated](#) IDAHOBIT again this year. Municipalities also continued to raise the rainbow flag on IDAHOBIT and organise events (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

The Ministry of Mobility [announced](#) on the occasion of IDAHOBIT that municipalities can request a rainbow pedestrian crossing from the Flemish Roads and Traffic Agency - in May over a third have already done so. The municipality of Hemiksem [wanted](#) to also install a rainbow traffic light, but the traffic institute [deemed](#) it unsafe and confusing. The rail company NMBS/SNCB [ran](#) a rainbow-coloured train from Antwerp on IDAHOBIT and a #trainbow in [Liège](#).

Civil society [petitioned](#) the parliament to ban facial recognition technology in Brussels, which disproportionately [impacts](#) LGBTIQ+ people, migrants, homeless people, and racial and ethnic minorities.

Three laws on discrimination were [amended](#) to replace "sex change" as a protected group with "medical or social transition" and to recognise multiple discrimination. The definition of sexual orientation was updated to reflect that sexual orientation can be fluid.

FAMILY

This year [marked](#) the 20th anniversary of marriage equality in Belgium.

FOREIGN POLICY

Belgium joined the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Belgium Pride was held in May (see [here](#) and [here](#)), with the motto 'Protect the Protest'.

In Flanders, Antwerp Pride [celebrated](#) its 16th edition in August.

The first Pride march in Wallonia backed by official institutions will [take](#) place in Liège in 2024. TransPédéGouines Pride,



organised by grassroots groups, took place for the second time in May.

The “anti-rioters” draft law, which would have severely restricted freedom of assembly, was eventually dismissed in November when the PS and Ecolo parties refused to vote in its favour.

HEALTH

UZ Gent/Transgender Infopoint’s study found that almost 70% of LGBTQ+ people have considered suicide. Transgender Infopoint celebrated its 10th anniversary.

An LGBTQIA+ health centre opened in Brussels and is run by three civil society organisations. In Wallonia, five such centres exist and two more will open soon. Funds were allocated to establish five more centres dedicated to trans health.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

It is now possible to change one’s name or gender marker (M/F only) any number of times. Names no longer have to align with the person’s gender identity.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The Belgian Football Association launched a campaign against racist and homophobic hate in the sport, as the number of incidents more than doubled between 2021-2022. Eight football teams joined the Jarfi tournament against homophobia and discrimination, remembering Ishane Jarfi who died in a homophobic murder in 2012.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In March, the FPS Justice, formerly the Ministry of Justice, launched an internal recommendations guide at the Gender & Justice Colloquium for the treatment of incarcerated trans people.

Transgender Infopoint published a trilingual self-help guide for trans people in Belgian prisons and an info sheet for correctional staff on how to support them during their detention.

Several members of the army joined Brussels Pride for the first time this year.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

A new shelter for LGBTQI+ youth (18-25) will open in Charleroi, funded by the City of Charleroi and a number of institutional partners. The demand for emergency housing for those kicked out from home remains high.

Ghent became the first city to fulfil all criteria on the Rainbow Ambassadors manifesto, which lists a five clear ways to support LGBTQ+ seniors, including provision of a confidential counsellor in all residential care centres and local service centres in the city, and appropriate training for care workers to deal with all forms of sexuality and orientation with respect.



BELGIUM WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG

BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Sarajevo Open Center (SOC) documented eight cases of hate speech based on SOGIESC. Three of them were reported to the authorities.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Following Tuzla (2021), Sarajevo (2018), Trebinje, Herzegovina-Neretva, Una-Sana Cantons (2023), remaining cantons in Republika Srpska and in Brcko District also appointed a staff person in the Prosecutor's Office in charge of overseeing anti-LGBTI hate crimes. This now covers the majority of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

LGBTI activists consider that President Dodik was partially responsible for the violent attacks against LGBTI activists and journalists in Banja Luka in March (see under Freedom of Assembly). They urged authorities to start a criminal investigation and classify the incidents as a hate crime. The day before the planned Pride events in Banja Luka, extremists roamed the streets chanting "kill the fags" and vandalised the venue where some events were to take place. A day after the march and during a local football match, extremists displayed a banner stating "Stop disease" while shouting "kill faggots". The Council of Europe High Commissioner for Human Rights condemned the events and called local authorities to prosecute perpetrators.

In July, the European Parliament adopted the Commission's 2022 report on Bosnia and Herzegovina and called on the government to add SOGI as grounds to hate crime laws. SOC documented 12 anti-LGBTI hate crimes this year - seven were reported to the authorities.

DATA COLLECTION

The Prosecutor's office in the canton of Sarajevo started to collect data on hate crimes and hate speech against LGBTI people.

EDUCATION

(See under Freedom of Expression)

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In late June, Republika Srpska adopted the Law on a Non-Enforcement of Decisions of the Constitutional Court, which prohibits the implementation of the Court's decisions in the entity. On 5 July, representatives of the European Parliament issued a statement condemning the law.

Ahead of the fourth Pride March in Sarajevo, the city mayor declined to approve illuminating the City Hall with the rainbow flag. LGBTI activists plan to file a lawsuit based on discrimination on SOGI grounds.

FAMILY

The Federal Government instructed the Ministry of Justice to nominate experts who will draft the same-sex partnership law, with SOC members as observers.

In February, a same-sex couple filed the first-ever appeal to the Constitutional Court after their same-sex partnership, issued in Croatia, was not recognised by local authorities. In March, a lesbian woman filed an appeal to the same court, claiming her right to inherit from her partner.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

On 8 March, several participants of the Women's Day March in Banja Luka were attacked by four men, including two minors, because one participant was carrying a rainbow flag. The extremists took away the flag and verbally and physically harassed several people. Previously, the event was excluded from the city's official programs.

On 17 March, Pride organisers were to host a march, a film screening, a discussion, and a party in the town of Banja Luka. A few hours before the event, the police banned the screening allegedly due to increasing threats from violent groups. When activists met up to discuss the cancellation, the police told them to leave the premises and also leave the city as they were not safe. The police left the activists and two journalists unprotected on the street the street, who were physically and verbally attacked by 30-40 extremists shortly thereafter. The activists reported that the police were present, but did not intervene. Three activists were injured. Some fled the region soon after. The screening's venue was also vandalised. A few days before the screening, President Dodik said the authorities should consider banning the event, which was echoed by the mayor. Both politicians condemned the violence, but took no responsibility. Dodik said he felt "no remorse". On 21 March, the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights issued a statement condemning the ban and affirming that threats cannot be a reason to restrict freedom of assembly.

Several other international entities expressed concern about the attacks.

The fourth Sarajevo Pride was held in June, under the slogan 'Proudly Together'. The march was joined by hundreds of people



and went ahead safely, despite a counter-demonstration again this year.

Adopted in July, a European Parliament report which [called](#) on the government to ensure LGBTIQ+ people can exercise their freedom of assembly and that they are protected from violence. The report condemns the attacks in Banja Luka.

In March 2023, SOC filed an anti-discriminatory lawsuit against BBI Center and Sarajevo Center Municipality, also related to the right to freedom of assembly.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

In March, President Dodik (Republika Srpska) [called](#) for the adoption of a foreign agents law, similar to that in Russia. Dodik's statements were widely [criticised](#) in the country and by the EU, and later by the Venice Commission and the OSCE in a [joint opinion](#). The law was adopted a few weeks later.

Dodik also [shared](#) plans that content on LGBT people would be [banned](#) in schools and LGBT activists would not be allowed to enter schools, citing the Hungarian 'propaganda law' as a positive example.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In July, the Republika Srpska Parliament [adopted](#) amendments to the Criminal Code, which will impose thousands of Euros of fines for defamation, which many believe would contribute to censorship. The EU [called](#) for the withdrawal of the law.

HEALTH

Trans activists and SOC continued to advocate for access to gender-affirming healthcare and for insurance coverage. SOC [launched](#) a policy brief on trans-specific healthcare, [published](#) a trans healthcare guide for medical professionals, and [trained](#) healthcare providers.

In January, a law that makes gender-affirming healthcare less affordable and more difficult to access came into force. The new legislation classifies certain procedures as ineligible for funding through mandatory health insurance and implies that it is an aesthetic rather than a vital medical procedure.

The antiretroviral medication available this year belonged to an older generation of products.

In December, Bosnia and Herzegovina submitted its trans-

specific healthcare system for a voluntary national review under the Council of Europe's Thematic Review process.

HOUSING

SOC reported being contacted by several LGBT persons this year whose families threw them out due to their SOGI - the lack of shelters for LGBT people remains an issue.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

(See under Family).

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The European Parliament's resolution (see above) [called](#) on BiH to introduce a legal gender recognition procedure (LGR) based on self-determination. SOC [launched](#) a policy brief on LGR. The current procedure in BiH lacks clarity and is difficult to access - SOC and trans activists continue to lobby for LGR that is based on self-determination.

The Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees endorsed SOC's draft proposal on legal gender recognition and CSOs continued to call on the Federal Ministry of Health to adopt a federal regulation on the matter.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The second edition of the summer festival Kvirhana was [held](#) in June in Sarajevo, and in July in [Tuzla](#)

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

SOC provided a two-month training on combatting hate against LGBTI people to about 400 future police officers. This training is now part of the regular program of the Federal Police Academy.

PUBLIC OPINION

SOC research [showed](#) that 43% of respondents find it unacceptable for their child to be LGBTI and 34% find it unacceptable to have a relative to be LGBTI.



BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG

BULGARIA

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

In April, a Bilitis's [report found](#) that, in the past three years, almost a third of non-binary people did not have enough money to buy food for themselves or their families.

ASYLUM

Bilitis's humanitarian fund continued to [support](#) LGBT asylum seekers, including from Ukraine. In 2023, 30 asylum seekers received direct financial support, which represents over half of those who made a request.

Deystvie is currently litigating ten cases of LGBTI Russian asylum seekers.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee's media monitoring report [highlighted](#) the issue of anti-LGBTI content, documenting the use of terms such as "brutal gender fraud", "locusts of Sodom", "Brussels obsession with gender ideology", "revision of biology and normal", "gender worshipers, defenders of pedophilia", and others in the media.

Hate speech continued to be common among politicians. In June, civil society [called for](#) sanctions on hateful speech in the parliament. During the debate about the new domestic violence law (see under Equality and Non-discrimination), MP Kornelia Ninova (Bulgarian Socialist Party) for instance [stated](#) that it was "dangerous" for children to be "poisoned" with information about LGBTI minorities and said "we will never sign and agree to have a third gender in Bulgaria."

Civil society organisations [called](#) for a ban on an annual far-right fascist march, which was held in late February. The Prosecutor [launched](#) an investigation against the far-right extremist party Vazrazhdane, who are [known](#) for anti-LGBT, antisemitic, anti-migrant, and anti-Roma rhetoric.

In July, the Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) condemned the newspaper, "Trud" for featuring an article promoting hatred towards gay people in 2019, [affirming](#) that freedom of speech does not protect hate speech.

Deystvie was fined 1,500 EURO as the SAC did not find discrimination in incitement to hate by a far-right rock singer. Deystvie won a lawsuit against the far-right political party VMRO.

The new Criminal Code sanctions hate speech as well (see more

under Bias-motivated Violence). Incitement to hatred based on sexual orientation through the media and online is now a crime punishable by one to four years in prison and a fine of 5,000 to 10,000 Leva (2,500 to 5,000 EURO).

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In May, a group of young men [assaulted](#) several people to "clean the park of gays", including minors.

On 10 June, a group of far-right extremists held up hateful banners outside the screening of *Close* during the Sofia Pride Film Fest and allegedly [assaulted](#) a woman. The group then went inside to [disrupt](#) the event, took photos of the attendees, called them "paedophiles", and chanted "LGBT virus". The event was cancelled. The police were present, but allegedly shook hands and saluted the protesters. Civil society [called](#) on Sofia's mayor to prohibit hateful actions and ensure that future screenings can go ahead with police protection.

On 23 June, a screening of *Close* was also [disrupted](#) by extremists in [Varna](#). The film was screened several times in Bulgaria prior to Pride events.

In the lead-up to Sofia Pride in June, several Pride posters and billboards were [vandalised](#) in the capital (see under Freedom of Expression). Fake hand-written banners were also [put up](#) across the city, falsely calling for violence on behalf of Pride organisers.

On 10 July, the Sofia Court of Appeals [convicted](#) former presidential candidate and neo-fascist party leader Boyan Rasate of hooliganism after [storming](#) into the Rainbow Hub in 2021 and punching staff member Gloriya Filipova in the face. The Court of Appeals gave him six months probation.

In a long-awaited move, the parliament [amended](#) the Criminal Code on 28 July to sanction hate crimes motivated by the victim's sexual orientation. Civil society had [advocated](#) for this step for [many years](#) and [welcomed](#) the developments.

EDUCATION

Civil society organisations provided training in educational settings to promote the inclusivity of LGBTI students. Bilitis trained 40 teachers. Single Step trained [20](#), conducted an international training for 45 people, and hosted a [Human LGBTI+ Library](#).

EMPLOYMENT

Bilitis's [study](#) found that in the last three years 39% of LGBT respondents [had](#) difficulty finding a job.



On May 17, [Sofia Pride Business Forum](#) took place for the first time, attracting over 60 representatives of different companies.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The new Law on Protection from Domestic Violence (LPDV), which was in the drafting process for over two years, [fails](#) to protect those in a same-sex relationship and anyone who does not live together with their partner.

FAMILY

In March, the Supreme Court [denied](#) Baby Sara the right to a birth certificate and citizenship, despite the CJEU ruling.

On 8 August, the Supreme Court [ruled](#) that there was no right to officially register de facto cohabitation in Bulgaria and as no such right exists, couples (both different- and same-gender) should not be allowed to request recognition in court or appeal. The ruling goes against a previous judgement, where a lower court did not recognise the couple's cohabitation either, but [suggested](#) this could possibly be done if they can prove their address is the same, that the contract is on both their names, and a witness supports their plea.

The ECHR [ruled](#) in favour of Liliya Babulkova and Darina Koilova and established that Bulgaria must create a legal framework to recognise same-sex relationships.

1,428 same-sex couples were living together in 2021, according to the national census held that year and published in 2023. It was the first time that this information was collected.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

(see more under Bias-motivated violence)

The 16th Sofia Pride, [focusing](#) on the theme of family, was [held](#) in June and attended by thousands. A day before Pride, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Kalin Stoyanov, [met](#) with the organisers and assured them of police protection. A parallel counter-demonstration for "Christian family values" was also organised. In the weeks leading up to Pride, several anti-LGBTI incidents took place (see more under Bias-motivated violence).

Sofia Pride also [hosted](#) a Human Rights Forum, which gathered over 100 participants, including embassies, representatives of the European Parliament Intergroup on LGBTI Rights, Sofia's mayor, representatives of the executive, the judiciary and the prosecutor's office.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Sofia Pride billboard campaign, featuring both rainbow and traditional families, was formally investigated for "promoting same-sex families as superior". Two women photographed in the campaign with their children were later summoned to the Ministry of Interior directorate in Sofia. This investigation is ongoing (see under Bias-motivated Violence).

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Two years after the Rainbow Hub was attacked, it [secured](#) a long-term home in Sofia this year.

Human rights defender Denitsa Lyubenova was investigated in three different SLAAP cases.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Due to previously conflicting judgments from the Supreme Court on legal gender recognition (LGR) requirements, the General Assembly of the Civil College (SC) of the Supreme Court of Cassation (SCC) [issued](#) an interpretative decision in late February. The decision [stated](#) that as gender is an unchangeable biological factor, legal gender recognition should not be possible in Bulgaria. Civil society expressed deep concern about the ruling which violates international human rights law.

Over the next months, several court judgments seemed to ignore the Assembly's guidance. The Plovdiv district court [granted](#) LGR to a trans person, arguing that the person's right to private life must be protected. Early March, the Supreme Court of Cassation also [ruled](#) that the European Convention on Human Rights is the legal basis for LGR in Bulgaria. In May, the Sofia City Court also [decided](#) to process a trans person's LGR case. Civil society has so far concluded that the interpretative decision does not block LGR.

The first book on LGR by Bulgarian authors, a study of the legal practice for the last decade, was published in December.

In November, Gabriela Bankova [went](#) on a hunger strike in front of a Sofia's court. Precedently, she had been refused to have her gender identity recognised in her official documents. The 12-day protest ignited a spark within the trans community to advocate for their rights.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

An openly gay architect is running in the local elections for Sofia municipality.



POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Deystvie trained 100 police officers on responding to anti-LGBT hate crimes.

GLAS and Bilitis trained over 80 prosecutors on hate crimes, legal cases and LGBTI people's needs.

PUBLIC OPINION

A representative study affirmed that public acceptance towards LGBTI people continues to increase, albeit slowly.



BULGARIA WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG



CROATIA

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech continued to be on the rise this year, including among politicians. Zagreb Pride's report documented a steady increase over the past five years. Anti-trans hate speech has particularly increased - civil society made important efforts through articles, panel discussions, interviews, and infographics to bust anti-trans myths (see here, here, and here).

In February a Catholic priest published an article claiming that same-sex unions can never compare to heterosexual marriage and that Catholics should stay away from "LGBT ideology".

In April, the TV presenter Zoran Šprajc made jokes about trans people on his show. Throughout the year, the "Be Manly" ultra-conservative group held public prayer sessions in the streets once a month. A website linked to football fans posted videos on social media in May, showing rainbow flags burning, as a response to adoption rights for same-sex couples. Former MP Ivan Pernar from The Key of Croatia party shared online that he reported a Croatian man's trans identity to the Zambian authorities, where the person was in custody at the time. NGOs and the Gender Equality Ombudsman filed criminal complaints.

In March, the Council for Electronic Media (VEM) allocated 11,000 EURO to the association In the name of the family, which has been a vocal anti-trans actor in the country. A part of the funds will go to the group's 'research' on the so-called and alleged "epidemic of transsexualism in Croatia". A number of politicians demanded the VEM withdraw the funding.

In October 2022, the Supreme Court overturned the ruling of the Zagreb County Court, which dismissed kolektIRV's claim against the right-wing NGO, GROZD concerning discrimination and harassment. In December 2023, Zagreb County Court ruled that it wasn't discrimination. kolektIRV will file another complaint to the Supreme Court.

In March, the Zagreb County Court ruled that the Vigilare association's petition "Protect children from homo adoption" constituted discrimination, harassment, and incitement. This is not the first time that the association received such a verdict. The Rainbow Family Association decided to launch a criminal complaint against them.

In May, the court ruled in favour of two gay men and fined two men who harassed and insulted them.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The Rainbow Family Association's study found that one in

four LGBTQ people in Croatia have been physically assaulted. Zagreb Pride's report found that the number of hate speech instances and hate crimes have been on the rise between 2018-2022 and that there were serious gaps in the implementation of existing laws. In 2022, the Ministry of Interior documented eight SOGI-based hate crimes.

In January, two men who were kissing, were attacked and chased away from a club in Split. In May, three young men tried to tear down a rainbow flag on a square in front of the National Theatre, but were prevented by a high school teacher, who received both praise and online hate afterwards. In June, three men were arrested after throwing burning torches on stage at a Pride month event in Pula.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In May, the Možemo! party called for a ban on so-called 'conversion practices'.

EDUCATION

Local NGO LORI published a study finding that 77% of LGBTIQ high school students have been regularly exposed to homophobic and transphobic comments from their peers, and 20% from teachers of staff. LORI also analysed textbooks and curricula, finding that LGBTIQ issues are mostly invisible or underrepresented. Over 50% of students learned about LGBTIQ topics in school in a negative context.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Ombudsman for Gender Equality shared that she received 34 complaints relating to LGBTIQ rights in 2022.

The Rainbow Family Association's study found that three out of four LGBTQ people in Croatia have experienced discrimination and that the fear of future discrimination or violence is very common. LORI's study about young LGBTIQ people in Dubrovnik-Neretva found that two-thirds are planning to leave the area, most are not open about their identities, three-quarters have experienced verbal harassment and almost a third sexual violence.

The Možemo! party presented a package of 13 legislative changes to improve LGBTIQ equality, including on family recognition, medically assisted reproduction, trans healthcare, so-called 'conversion practices' and hate crimes, establishing the party as LGBTIQ+ friendly. Možemo! are in opposition, and all their suggestions have been ignored by the government.

The biggest opposition party, SDP, founded an LGBTIQ+ Forum (similar to working groups) and promised to include NGOs.

Several trans people and a mother of a trans person shared their stories in the media this year (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), to tackle stigma and discrimination.

FAMILY

In a statement in January, the Croatian Protestant Conference distanced itself from the practice of marrying and supporting the marriage of same-gender couples.

In 2022, the High Administrative Court issued its landmark ruling establishing that same-sex couples have the right to adopt children. Civil society has claimed that uncertainty and discrimination against same-sex couples in this process remain.

Children of same-sex couples born abroad continued to be unable to get Croatian citizenship, as the state refuses to recognise two mothers or fathers on their papers.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

(See also under Bias-motivated Violence)

The 21st Queer Zagreb festival was held in May. The fourth Pride Ride was held in Zagreb in June. Split hosted its 12th Pride march and Karlovac its first one - no incidents took place. The 22nd Zagreb Pride Festival kicked off on 22 May and the Pride march was held successfully in June, under the motto "Together for trans rights!". The mayor joined the march for the third time this year, and other politicians were also present. Mayor Tomašević said Zagreb "is side by side with European cities". No incidents were recorded.

HEALTH

The Rainbow Family Association's study found that over 70% of LGBTIQ+ people have considered suicide and 15% have made a suicide attempt. 65% feared discrimination in healthcare.

Civil society launched the first psycho-social counselling and support platform for LGBTIQ people.

In February, the Parliamentary Committee for Health and Social Policy and the Committee for Family, Youth and Sports held a joint session to discuss the situation of trans minors. Several experts, who joined the event, left after Željka Markić from the In the Name of the Family group (see under Bias-motivated

Speech) was also invited. The event's invitation page alleged a stark increase in the number of trans diagnoses among children, which the Ministry of Health proved to be false at the session.

Trans healthcare access remained difficult this year; civil society continued to lobby for better access, including after the appointment of the National Health Council members. Genital surgeries remain unavailable and those available abroad should be covered by mandatory health insurance, however, this is not happening. Trained and trans-friendly medical professionals are still few.

In 2022, mastectomies started to be covered again under mandatory health insurance. However, in 2023, the only hospital performing them postponed many interventions due to work in their building.

Hormone therapy is covered only for some people, mostly those who have changed their gender markers. KolekTIRV is preparing a class action lawsuit demanding the general coverage of hormone therapy.

The Ministry of Health held meetings with KolekTIRV over trans issues. The Ministry invited a psychiatrist who is one of the leaders of the anti-gender movement in Croatia to participate in these meetings. In June, the Ministry of Health ceased all communication with kolekTIRV, without any official announcement. It has not yet established a working group, as recommended by the Ombudsperson for gender equality.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The National Health Council, which grants final approval in LGR cases, continued placing additional administrative requirements on LGR applicants, failing to meet the 30-day deadline it should abide by. KolekTIRV has urged the newly appointed members of the Council to remedy this issue.

PUBLIC OPINION

The Ombudsperson's study on discrimination found that negative public opinions about LGBTQ people are decreasing, especially among young people.



[CROATIA WEB PAGE](#)
[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG)



CYPRUS

ASYLUM

An asylum seeker was deported to Nigeria although he was at clear risk after Nigerian media had outed him while he was in Cyprus, and even though the appeal against his asylum rejection in Cyprus was still ongoing.

The Cyprus Refugee Council is currently running a project for the integration of LGBTI asylum seekers and refugees in the local LGBTI community.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Accept-LGBTI Cyprus expressed concern over the increase in anti-LGBTI hate speech in 2023, shared examples of hate messages, and called for the state to tackle the issue. Anti-LGBTI groups spread several fake news posts on social media, all inciting hatred towards LGBTI people, Pride marches, and sex education (see under Education).

In January, a non-commissioned military officer (NCO) posted homophobic content on his social media and was later put under investigation. The Minister of Defence and the Ombudsperson both condemned the videos. The case will go to court in 2024 and it will be a test case on the application of the hate speech law.

Hate speech from politicians also remained an issue. MP Andreas Themistocleous, for instance, continued making anti-LGBT, sexist, and racist remarks throughout the year, but without any consequences. Themistocleous was reported to the House Committee on Ethics after making hateful comments about another MP welcoming the ban on so-called 'conversion practices' (see under Bodily Integrity). The Committee later dismissed the case as the comments were made outside of the parliament's premises. While homophobic and transphobic hate speech were criminalised in 2015, there have been no prosecutions to date; the matter of enforcement and unwillingness to prosecute senior politicians or religious circles remains a serious problem.

In its report published in March, ECRI expressed concern about anti-LGBT hate speech and hate crimes and the lack of implementation of relevant laws.

In June, high school students put up homophobic stickers all across a park in Nicosia, in part to target a peer perceived as gay.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In February, a group of hooded men disrupted a Rainbow

Meeting at Cyprus University of Technology (TEPAK) in Limassol, used fire extinguishers, chanted homophobic slurs and slogans, physically assaulted one student, and damaged property when they were leaving. Five suspects were arrested, three of whom are students at TEPAK. President-elect Nikos Christodoulides condemned the violence.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In a historic move, Cyprus banned so-called 'conversion practices' on 23 May, covering SOGIE grounds, both adults and minors, and including sanctions advertising. In a last-minute amendment, it was clarified that priests can still provide counselling to LGBTI people, but they are not exempt from the ban, as sought by the far-right. This means that priests cannot conduct "conversion practices". The ban, endorsed by Cyprus' psychologists association, is the result of extensive advocacy by civil society.

EDUCATION

(See also under Bias-motivated Violence)

As of 1 September 2023, holistic sex education is mandatory by law at all levels in both public and private schools. SOGIE concepts are properly introduced in secondary school. The change was met with hostility from some politicians, religious groups, and parents, the latter alleging that the classes would promote "gender fluidity", undermine traditional family values and the Christian faith.

Accept-LGBTI Cyprus met with the new Minister of Education to demand the nationwide implementation of the 'Code of Conduct Against Prejudice in Schools' and the 'Guide to Handling and Recording of Incidents of Prejudice'. However, it is still up to each school to request support and training, therefore implementation remains flawed.

EMPLOYMENT

Events continued to be held this year to address LGBTQI+ rights in the workplace, resulting from the collaboration between some large companies and CSOs. In January, the governments of Cyprus and the UK co-hosted a conference on workplace diversity and LGBTQ+ inclusion.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

ECRI's report on Cyprus called for the development and adoption of a national LGBTI strategy. The Justice Ministry has been tasked with creating a multi-ministerial committee to develop this strategy.



FAMILY

In October, the Green party tabled a [bill](#) in parliament to remove the exclusion of same-sex couples from adoption in the civil union's legislation. Any proposal must first be heard by the relevant committee of the Parliament. It is up to the president of the committee to include it in the agenda, which currently has not been done.

FOREIGN POLICY

Cyprus acted as vice-chair in the Council of Europe's newly formed Working Group on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics ([GT-ADI-SOGI](#)) of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) this year.

Civil society [expressed](#) alarm that Cyprus [did not join](#) the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Cyprus Pride 2023 was [held](#) in May in [Nicosia](#) under the theme 'In solidarity we thrive'. Over 6,000 people attended.

On 17 June 2023, the bicomunal event United by Pride was held for the second time in Nicosia, with two parallel Pride marches on both sides of the cities, [bringing together](#) people from across the island. The [African LGBTQ Community Cyprus](#), [LGBT Pilipinas](#), LGBTI Cyprus Diaspora, and two LGBTI university student organisations co-hosted the marches with Queer Collective Cy and Queer Cyprus Association (QCA).

Several LGBTI groups [joined](#) anti-fascist marches and [actions](#) in response to the unprecedented wave of xenophobic and racist rhetoric and [violence](#) against migrants in late summer.

HEALTH

Accept LGBTI Cyprus continued advocating for inclusive healthcare, engaging with the European Commissioner of Health and urging the Ministry of Health for LGBTI-inclusive medical services. This effort resulted in a December 2023 meeting chaired by the Health Ministry's Director General. Key outcomes included plans on updating trans-related hormones coverage, establishing a medical centre for trans healthcare, and more.

Trans people continued facing difficulties in accessing hormonal therapy. Some also shared that endocrinologists were unwilling to help adjust their dosage, and they were struggling with depression as a consequence.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Accept-LGBTI Cyprus and Queer Cyprus Association [won](#) the European Citizen 2023 award for Cyprus, for organising the Annual Cyprus Pride Festival, given out by the European Parliament.

INTERSECTIONALITY

(see under Freedom of Assembly)

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Despite major advances in 2022 for a legal gender identity recognition [bill](#) including a first reading of the bill in November 2022, there have been no developments in 2023.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The fourth Queer Wave film festival [took](#) place in September 2023. The State Gallery of Contemporary Art - SPEL hosted a series of queer-themed performances between June and December.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Accept presented a seminar in Nicosia in collaboration with the Cyprus Police. The plan is to extend the seminar to other districts in 2024. There are ongoing talks exploring the inclusion of an LGBTI-focused course in the Police Academy's curriculum.

PUBLIC OPINION

There has been an increasing wave of homophobic and transphobic rhetoric, especially within social media, with creation of online communities for so-called protection of traditional families and of children from sexual education.

Cyprus Youth Council research showed that 20% of respondents found same-sex relationships somewhat acceptable and 54% fully agree with equal marriage. Another [survey](#) highlighted that one in three Cypriots support same-sex couples having children.



NORTHERN CYPRUS

**Areas not under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus.*

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

The economic challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic persisted impacting the LGBTI+ community with income loss and food affordability issues. QCA's Social Welfare team created a list of supportive NGOs and local authorities. This list included different services like food donations, psychosocial support, and more for the LGBTI+ community.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech towards LGBTI+ people continued to be an issue and was particularly common on social media platforms in May and June when Pride events were held.

In January, civil society condemned the speech held by the President of Religious Affairs, Ahmet Ünsal in Famagusta, who normalised child marriage, compulsory heterosexuality, and patriarchal norms.

Also in January following the protests against Ahmet Ünsal, MP Erhan Anklı of the Rebirth party questioned the right to freedom of LGBTI+ people and attacked the QCA awareness campaign.

Editor-in-Chief of Cyprus Media Group Özer Kanlı published a LGBTI-phobic article in Kıbrıs Newspaper.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Several people reported harassment and violence to QCA. In March, for instance, a young man was attacked in Famagusta and verbally harassed by a man, who also poured sewage water on him.

On 27 January 2023, a minor attempted to tear the rainbow flag hanging outside the youth centre of Famagusta.

DATA COLLECTION

The Human Rights Platform (HRP), launched by QCA in 2021, continued monitoring the situation of LGBTI+ community. The report showed that local authorities rarely investigate hate speech cases and that the absence of legal recognition for trans and non-binary people results in rights violations, impacting their access to health services and in prisons.

QCA requested permission from local bodies to collect data in educational and medical settings. Both requests were denied.

EDUCATION

As part of continuous advocacy, research and capacity building to promote greater inclusivity in education, QCA released the *LGBTI+ Inclusive Education is Possible* brochure on LGBTI+ terminology, the effects of bullying faced by students, and ways to support LGBTI+ students in education.

QCA met with the VP of the Assembly of the Republic and discussed school curriculum, fighting hate speech, and more (see under Legal Gender Recognition).

QCA criticised the intention of the local body responsible for education to revise a number of primary school textbooks and bring them more in line with conservative values, and called for a curriculum that promotes diversity on SOGIESC grounds.

QCA research on teachers' attitudes showed that a large proportion of teachers support LGBTI+ inclusive education.

FAMILY

A trans person reported receiving death threats from their family to the QCA Solidarity Line.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In January, civil society with the support of political parties Bağımsızlık Yolu, CTP Kadın Örgütü, TDP, and YKP, organised a joint protest against the hate speech of Ahmet Ünsal.

On 17 May, QCA held a Pride march in the northern part of Nicosia.

On 17 June, the bicomunal event United by Pride was held for the second time in Nicosia, with two parallel Pride marches on both sides of the capital and bringing together people from across the island. The African LGBTQ Community Cyprus, LGBT Pilipinas, LGBTI Cyprus Diaspora, and two LGBTI university student organisations co-hosted the marches with Queer Collective Cy and QCA.

Several LGBTI groups joined anti-fascist marches and actions in response to the unprecedented wave of xenophobic and racist rhetoric and violence against migrants in late summer.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Two rainbow coloured sculptures were removed from the METU



Northern Cyprus Campus in July, seen by civil society as a move to restrict freedom of expression.

HEALTH

Trans people continued facing difficulties in their access to hormonal therapy and gender-affirming healthcare, as reported to the QCA Solidarity Line. The QCA Solidarity Line continued providing essential psychological aid and other social services to LGBTI+ people in need.

QCA research on health provider attitudes revealed that 60% reported having no prior experience in handling situations involving LGBTI patients. Only 10% reported having lots of experience with the LGBTI community.

HOUSING

Famagusta's safe housing for women now welcomes LGBTI+ people .

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Sixty organisations, including CSOs, unions, foundations, political parties, municipalities, media and companies supported QCA's ninth anniversary of the decriminalisation of homosexuality campaign.

INTERSECTIONALITY

QCA held a thematic discussion event on disability and gender in collaboration with the Cyprus Turkish Orthopaedic Disabled Association (KTOÖD)

CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The fourth Queer Wave film festival took place in September.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In late 2022, a court in Nicosia affirmed that keeping trans detainees in solitary confinement for their own protection was unacceptable. Despite this decision, in 2023 a trans woman was detained and kept in solitary confinement at the Kyrenia police station. She was then sent to prison, where she also spent time in solitary confinement.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

After the revision of the list of dangerous infectious diseases, people living with HIV will not be subject to deportation when seeking a student visa or residency permit, as long as they can cover their medication expenses and comply with quarterly

check-ups. However, the potential for deportation still exists for those applying for a work permit.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The social welfare department of Northern Cyprus, in collaboration with QCA, provided guidance to trans youth and will receive specialised training on LGBTI+ issues.



[CYPRUS WEB PAGE](#)
[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG)

CZECHIA

ASYLUM

The new [Asylum Law](#) includes protection based on SOGI grounds. It allows applicants to request interviews with authorities of the opposite gender, for example, in cases when the applicant is non-heterosexual.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech continued to be a serious issue this year and can most often be carried out [with impunity](#). Many politicians continue to spread false narratives about equal marriage harming society and children.

A study [revealed](#) a significant rise in politicians' anti-LGBT+ speech, rising from 43% in 2018 to 71% in 2023. 63% of LGBT+ respondents attributed the increase in prejudice and intolerance towards the LGBT+ community to negative attitudes from politicians.

Anti-trans rhetoric and actions also [continued](#).

In June, a group [disrupted](#) a drag story time event at the [Brno Pride Week](#), shouting homophobic slurs.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

51% of LGBTIQ people have been [targeted](#) by insults, assault, or threats in the past five years. No steps towards a bill against hate crimes based on SOGI grounds were taken this year.

The police [reported](#) high rates of hate crimes and hate speech against LGBT+ people.

As part of its Universal Periodic Review (UPR), States [recommended](#) that Czechia sanction hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ people.

In July, the Constitutional Court [ordered](#) the lower courts to revise the amount of compensation in the case of a trans minor who was repeatedly raped during her psychiatric hospital care.

EDUCATION

Trans*parent offered accredited trainings for teachers and educators on trans and non-binary issues in schools, and started working with the Ministry of Education on a methodology to promote trans inclusivity in schools, to be published next year.

In April, the Regional Court in Ostrava [ruled](#) that an educational institution had to re-issue a trans graduate's certificates and diploma following their change of name and gender marker.

A report from Queer Geography, "Being LGBTQ+ in Czechia" found that LGBTQ+ people feel discriminated against based on their identity most often in [schools or universities](#).

EMPLOYMENT

The Pride Business Forum published a toolkit for employers, in cooperation with Trans*parent, on how to create a safe and inclusive workplace for trans employees.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The report '[Being LGBTQ+ in Czechia](#)' found that 43% had been [discriminated against or harassed](#) in the past five years and over a third just in the past 12 months. These rates were the highest among trans and non-binary respondents.

In its assessment of the implementation of priority recommendations in March, ECRI [urged](#) the government to adopt its draft comprehensive strategy on LGBTI equality.

FAMILY

The legal process to introduce marriage equality, including joint parental rights, [continued](#) this year. On 29 June, the marriage equality bill, first introduced in 2018, [passed](#) its first reading and was [sent](#) to the second reading and to the committees for consideration. SPD (far-right), ODS (Conservatives), KDU-ČSL (Christian Democrats) maintained their almost unanimous opposition to equal marriage. At the same time, the proposal for a constitutional ban on equal marriage also passed to the second reading due to roughly 80-90% support from SPD, ODS, KDU-ČSL and the ANO Movement.

KDU-ČSL (Christian Democrats) attempted to stop the marriage equality bill by [proposing](#) a minor extension of registered partners' rights, excluding any possibility of joint parental rights.

On a positive note, President Petr Pavel remained consistent in his support for equal marriage.

In March, Czechia received UPR [recommendations](#) from at least 12 states to introduce marriage equality. The Czech government did not accept, only noted, this recommendation.

Various stakeholder groups continue to publicly support marriage equality and call on politicians to adopt it: 80 [corporations](#), six [youth political organisations](#), [religious leaders](#), 25 [theatres](#), 31 [cinemas](#), [celebrities](#) etc. By the end of



the year, over 170,700 individuals [signed petitions](#) calling for equal marriage.

FOREIGN POLICY

Several politicians [criticised](#) Hungary's ongoing crackdown on LGBT+ rights, such as fining a bookstore for selling a YA novel with queer characters. Nevertheless, Czechia [did not join](#) the European Commission's [infringement](#) proceedings against Hungary.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The Prague Pride Festival was [held](#) in August and focused on the theme of "More traditional than you think". No incidents were recorded during the festival and the annual [Pride march](#), which [gathered](#) again at least 60,000 people.

HEALTH

Two trans women [shared](#) that they were placed in the male unit during hospitalisation.

Trans*parent continued to hold courses for professionals working in psychology, psychotherapy, psychiatry, social work, and other areas, focusing on working with trans and non-binary clients.

The National Institute for Mental Health, in collaboration with trans experts, is developing healthcare services for trans patients, with a focus on e-health accessibility.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The Ministry of Interior [published](#) a list of 4,000 names that could pass as gender-neutral, available for trans people in transition. It is still not possible to choose a non-gender-neutral name before changing the gender marker.

In February, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, Dunja Mijatović [urged](#) the government to abolish the sterilisation requirement as part of legal gender recognition (LGR). In March, Czechia received UPR [recommendations](#) to abolish the sterility requirement and introduce LGR on the basis of self-determination.

The Ministry of Justice [announced](#) in March that they [want](#) the mandatory sterility requirement for LGR [removed](#). The Ministry would support a model whereby only a personal statement and a report from the attending physician will be required, with an age limit of 15 and over. Civil society has been [fighting](#) for this change for many years. To date, LGR has [remained](#) burdensome,

invasive, time-consuming, making everyday life very difficult for many trans people.

However, no bill to end mandatory sterilisations of trans people as a requirement for LGR has yet been introduced.

In a regressive move, the Supreme Administrative Court [ruled](#) in favour of the sterility requirement on 18 August. The trans man's lawyers will turn to the Constitutional Court and the European Court of Human Rights, if necessary.

[T.H. vs Czech Republic](#) case proceeded to the hearing stage at the European Court of Human Rights.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

One of the most well-known football players, Jakub Jankto [came out](#) as gay in February.

'We Have Never Been Modern', a film about intersex people living before the Second World War in Czechoslovakia, [premiered](#) this summer and [features](#) a trans actor as its protagonist.

PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion [continued](#) to be positive on marriage equality, based on surveys from several different agencies, averaging around 65%. Significantly, support is up by 11% since 2019 to 58% in 2023 based on a survey carried out by state-owned agency CVVM.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Conservative politicians called for the regularisation of surrogacy and populists called for its criminalisation. A parliamentary working group was set up. Conservative politicians and anti-LGBTI organisations continue to link marriage equality with surrogacy.



[CZECHIA WEB PAGE](#)
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DENMARK

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

Some trans people, QTIBIPOCs and/or migrants continued to struggle financially. Queer and trans communities provided sporadic and informal aid.

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Several trans people continued to report to civil society being denied access to spaces and services and threatened or assaulted.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The anti-trans and anti-gender discourse continued to intensify, particularly when lowering the age limit for legal gender recognition was discussed by Parliament. Christian sites called trans groups “gender lobbyists”, claiming they took children “hostage” and wanted to perform “medical experiments” on them.

Threats and online hate comments, including death threats and being called a ‘paedophile’, targeted a drag performer ahead of a drag story time event in Frederiksberg. Several politicians made hateful remarks about the event (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The police’s hate crime report published in January and focusing on the year 2021, found a 29% increase in anti-LGBT hate crimes compared to the previous year.

The court procedures started in the case of an 18-year-old man who planned anti-LGBT violence and arson in Aarhus 2022. Trans organisers continued receiving reports of police attacks on BIPOC queer and trans people.

Every year, between 2,000 and 3,000 LGBTI people experience violence due to their perceived sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and/ or sex characteristics, accounting for about 4% of victims of violence, according to a Ministry of Justice’s study on crimes between 2005 and 2021. The number is probably higher as many trans people and QTIBIPOCs do not report to authorities.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In October, Denmark signed a joint statement calling to better protect intersex people. The statement was delivered during the 54th UN Human Rights Council. However, civil society organisations criticise that the government continues to not abide by its commitments.

In December, the UN Committee Against Torture issued its concluding observations on Denmark as part of its 8th Periodic Review, noting that it received evidence that “unnecessary and irreversible surgery and other medical treatments” are performed in Denmark without the personal consent of the individual. The Committee recommended that Denmark undertake studies of intersex people and their experiences, offer robust psychosocial counselling and support to the parents of intersex people, ensure that those subject to unnecessary interventions have access to remedy, and intersex adults should have access to treatment without discrimination based on their gender identity.

EDUCATION

The government launched a consultation on the draft law on mandatory sex education in upper secondary education – civil society recommended to include GIE issues in its scope. In 2023 the government also launched the first major survey of the wellbeing of LGBT+ pupils from 15–25 years in the Danish educational system, results are expected to be published in 2024. Queer educational centre Normstormerne continued to be targeted by politicians, and the centre lost major funding.

EMPLOYMENT

LGBT+ Denmark and the Boston Consulting Group’s study ‘Danish Companies Miss the Mark on LGBT+ Inclusion’ found that 81% of LGBT+ people have experienced or witnessed discrimination against LGBT+ people at work.

Large companies continue to enrol employees in awareness-raising workshops on making safe and inclusive workplaces, e.g. by using gender neutral pronouns, installing gender neutral bathrooms, etc.

Trans people, particularly those from racial and ethnic minorities, continue to struggle due to unstable income.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

One of Denmark’s largest companies Chr. Hansen withdrew its support to Copenhagen Pride in June, for fear of boycotts and loss of income. 400 employees signed a letter of protest.

For the first time, both municipalities of Aarhus and Odense adopted broad LGBT+ policies covering a wide array of initiatives. In 2023, the new government reconfirmed its intention to fulfil the LGBT+ Action Plan (2022–2025) of the previous government.



FAMILY

On 26 January, the Supreme Court [ruled](#) in favour of a lesbian couple whose child was conceived through home insemination and ordered that the child's birth certificate recognise both women as co-mothers. The couple used sperm from a known donor and carried out the insemination after consulting a doctor. The court found this was sufficient to be in compliance with the Children's Act, [amended](#) by the parliament in 2022.

Civil society [has been calling](#) on the Ministry of Health not to block the adoption of the amendments ever since.

In December, the Ministry of Health gave up their refusal and the Ministry of Social Affairs now enforces the changes to the Children's Act.

In January, the Ethics Council [published](#) new recommendations, stating that healthcare personnel should be able to participate in altruistic surrogacy, but maintained its position against commercial surrogacy. The government [announced](#) reform plans in family law in April, including recognising the parenthood of intended parents in both altruistic and foreign commercial surrogacy. In September, an expert group [published](#) its [report](#) on commercial surrogacy, with recommendations on how to regulate surrogacy and parenthood recognition, centering on the rights of the child.

The National Research and Analysis Centre for Welfare (VIVE) [released](#) a new study in August, focusing on three- and four-parent rainbow families, finding that they face challenges on a daily basis and risk having no rights in case of separation and breakup. Civil society continued to lobby for multiple parenthood recognition (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Based on the study, a [government working group](#) is looking into giving multi-parent families better rights. The working group is expected to reach a decision in the summer of 2024.

FOREIGN POLICY

The Ministry of Development redirected aid to Uganda following consultations with civil society after the country [passed](#) its harshest ever anti-LGBT passed this spring.

Denmark [joined](#) the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The number of Pride marches in the country continues to grow, with Prides now taking place in 17 cities. The municipalities of

[Aarhus](#), [Aalborg](#) and [Copenhagen](#) are all funding LGBT+ safe spaces.

HEALTH

A longitudinal academic study [found](#) that over the last four decades, trans people have been 7.7 times more likely to attempt suicide and 3.5 times more likely to die of suicide than the general population.

The state monopoly of trans-specific healthcare (TSH) continued, split between three clinics. Trans people continue to report rigid gatekeeping, medicalisation, pathologisation, racism, binary gender regimes, anti-migrant, anti-sex worker, anti-poverty, anti-fat and ableist structures and approaches that prevent access to trans healthcare. Access to TSH continues to be denied or delayed indefinitely for people with certain psychiatric diagnoses and/or who have survived severe trauma. Waiting times have also continued to be long, resulting in many trans people, who have the financial means, [resorting](#) to purchasing hormones abroad.

Despite a continuous dialogue with few select LGBT+ organisations, the Danish Health Authority [published](#) new guidelines for gender affirming surgeries that do not meet the needs of the target group, especially regarding the lack of access to mastectomy without hormone treatment, lack of solutions for young adults who have already received gender affirming care as teenagers, and no clarifications for the mandate of surgeons, who continue to have an outsized influence on patient care decisions. The [guidelines](#) further seminate the demand for psychiatric assessment [found](#) in the 2018 national guidelines.

Intersex adults continued to face limitations in accessing hormones and surgeries, requiring a transgender diagnosis for such treatments and receiving care from trans healthcare specialists, instead of intersex healthcare specialists.

One of Denmark's largest insurance companies Sygeforsikringen "danmark" [changed](#) its discriminatory policy this year and will no longer deny coverage to men who take PrEP.

HOUSING

As a result of the '[ghetto](#)' laws, which involves renting at least 60% of rebuilt and renovated homes in poor areas at market rates, many trans people, particularly those from racial and ethnic minorities, continue to struggle with access to housing. Several fundraisers were organised to support the communities.



HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The Danish Institute for Human Rights, Denmark's equality body, launched a LGBT+ barometer on the living conditions of LGBT people in Denmark, grouping existing data from different sources, but failed to include key information on human rights violations against intersex people, which had been supplied by CSOs.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The government published three funding calls to boost research in the area of trans healthcare provision.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The government previously vowed that it would follow up on the previous government's plans to abolish the legal gender recognition (LGR) age limit and remove the six-month 'reflection period'. In March, a parliamentary hearing took place on the issue and several trans minors spoke out in support of lowering the age limit. In August, the civil registry published a statement that trans minors under 18 should also be able to access LGR in line with Denmark's international obligation. This can be done administratively and the first minors have now obtained LGR. The Ministry of the Interior and Health will present a new law in 2024 to bring legislation in line with this practice based on international regulation.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Denmark's two main sports associations introduced a third gender option, allowing sports clubs to register members who do not identify as male or female.

In November, the Danish Football Association, which organises 359,000 professional and amateur football players in Denmark, decided to adopt the recommendations of a working group on inclusion of transgender, intersex and non-binary players. A new diversity officer will implement the changes in the coming years, which will mean full access for all gender minorities in amateur football based on self-id, full access for trans men in the men's elite ranks. For the women's elite ranks, inclusion will be based on individual assessment.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Court cases of trans and intersex people, subjected to violence and discrimination by prison guards and other incarcerated people, are ongoing. In May, the High Court of Eastern Denmark ruled in a regressive judgement that a trans woman's

placement in the male prison was legal. The Court argued that as the prisoner was convicted of rape, he would pose a threat to female inmates and also relied on the fact that the woman changed her legal gender, but has not undergone all surgeries she could.

The Danish probation service launched an internal guide on how to treat LGBTI people in prisons and detention centres. While largely positive, the guide recommends that police officers should frisk detainees based on their sex assigned at birth, and instead of using gender identity as criteria, putting trans and intersex people at risk.

PUBLIC OPINION

A study found that one in five people have a positive attitude towards gender-neutral language.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Following the opening of two LGBT+ shelters in 2022, the demand continued to be high this year.

*Some of the information about Denmark was gathered through counselling and community organising work and is reported here anonymously.



DENMARK WEB PAGE
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ESTONIA

ASYLUM

In April, a first instance court ruled that the non-gestational mother in a same-sex female couple from Russia could not apply for second parent adoption due to the bilateral agreement between Estonia and Russia on legal relations in civil, family, and criminal matters. The family of three previously received refugee status due to them being a rainbow family.

The family appealed but the Supreme Court did not admit the case.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Online hate speech targeting sexual minorities continued to be widespread.

Civil society continued to advocate for legislation that criminalises hate speech targeting LGBT+ people. In June, the new government gave the green light for the draft bill which would sanction hate speech based on sexual orientation, but failed to include gender identity, gender expression and sexual characteristics as protected grounds - civil society continued to call for their inclusion. The bill was sent to parliament. In 2020, the European Commission had launched infringement proceedings against Estonia for its failure to have hate speech legislation in place.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Civil society continued to advocate for hate crime legislation that considers anti-LGBT+ hate as an aggravated circumstance. During Pride week, a man physically assaulted a gay pastor and two others during a Gay Christians discussion group in Tallinn. The Minister of Social Protection condemned the violence. The Ministry of Interior later announced that the perpetrator, originally from Russia, would be deported.

The courts sentenced a man who murdered a migrant black trans woman in 2022 to 12 years in prison.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Civil society continued to advocate for anti-discrimination legislation that covers all areas of life and SOGIESC grounds. Over 200 young people and LGBT+ activists left the EESTI 200 party in February, after one of their members was accused of sexual harassment and attempted rape.

FAMILY

(See also under Asylum)

On 20 June, Estonia became the first Baltic country to introduce marriage equality, making it possible for same-sex couples to get married and also to adopt. Civil society had been advocating for this step for many years. The issue of marriage equality was one of the topics of coalition negotiations this year and the new government received backlash for supporting same-sex marriage. Conservative groups held a demonstration outside parliament to oppose marriage equality in late May. Opposition parties, particularly the Conservative People's Party of Estonia (EKRE), tried to halt the adoption process by submitting over 700 amendments to the Family Law. Estonia's former President and honorary Chair of EKRE, Arnold Rüütel, stated in June that marriage equality would antagonise and split Estonian society.

Incoming Prime Minister Kaja Kallas spoke proudly of the important legislation, which will enter into force on 1 January 2024. Those in a registered partnership will be able to transform the partnership into marriage in a simple procedure. Earlier this year, the Supreme Court ruled in January that registered partnerships have to be entered into the population register and the Minister of Interior announced that registered partners would be able to take each other's names. The first same-sex couple took a common name in February.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

This year's Baltic Pride was held in Tallinn in June, under the motto of "One for all and all for equality". The one-week festival featured many cultural events, a conference, and the Pride march on 10 June, which was attended by a record number of 7,000 people. Incidents were recorded again this year (see under Bias-motivated Violence).

HEALTH

Research from the Estonian LGBT Association and the Praxis Think Tank showed that 23% of healthcare practitioners find that lesbians, gays and bisexuals are treated unequally in the healthcare system. 35% of respondents found that trans and intersex people are not treated equally.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The exhibition on the history of Estonia's LGBT community in the 20th century was added to the Vabamu Museum's permanent exhibition.



PUBLIC OPINION

The Estonian Human Rights Centre's poll found that 53% of Estonians support marriage equality (2012: 34%) and as much as 75% among people in their 20s.



ESTONIA WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG



FINLAND

ASYLUM

LGBT asylum seekers continued to face difficulties in getting status, due to the application procedure requiring a narrative centred around identity, stigma, and shame. Trans asylum seekers and refugees also continued to be denied access to gender-affirming healthcare, unless they become residents, which can take several years.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Several hate speech incidents took place again this year, including during the continued trans law debates in parliament. In April, the screening of *Drag Kids*, a Canadian documentary, was cancelled at the Kulttuurikaappi festival organised by the City of Helsinki due to hateful messages, public hostility, and threats. Several politicians made hateful remarks about the event.

The hate speech trial of former Minister of Interior and Chairperson of the Christian Democrat Parliamentary Group, Päivi Räsänen continued in August at the Helsinki Court of Appeal. In 2022, Räsänen was acquitted, but the Prosecutor filed an appeal. Conservative Christian groups have funded Räsänen's defense. In November 2023, the court of appeal upheld the verdict.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Vandalism continued to be a serious issue this year. Rainbow flags were destroyed, taken down, or burnt in a number of cities and towns, including Masku, Pori, Lappeenranta, Joensuu, and Tornio.

Three people, including a former pastor, were physically assaulted during a Gay Christians discussion group at Tallinn Pride in Estonia.

Several people were harassed or assaulted outside Tampere's oldest LGBTQ bar Mixei.

A man harassed and attacked a female couple at a supermarket's parking in the town of Kaarina in November.

BODILY INTEGRITY

A citizens' initiative to ban so-called 'conversion practices' gathered over 50,000 signatures in only a few weeks, but the parliament did not discuss it before the elections. A previous citizens' initiative had been pending in the parliament since 2021. In June, another initiative was launched to ensure that this time the government does have sufficient time to discuss it.

The parliamentary debate started in November 2023 and is set to continue in 2024.

The government made no concrete steps this year to ban non-consensual and medically unnecessary surgeries on intersex children, as set out in the Gender Equality Programme (2020-2023). In 2022, over 60 organisations demanded action. The new government did not mention this in its government program. In June the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommended that Finland ensure bodily integrity of intersex children, provide counselling to intersex children and their parents, and also provide reparations.

EDUCATION

In 2023 the city of Helsinki rolled out "rainbow workshops" to all sixth-to-ninth graders in the city's schools. The project was a result of the city's participatory budgeting process where citizens can make proposals into the city's budget. The city chose Seta as the service provider to design and implement the workshops. MP Päivi Räsänen criticised the initiative.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

432 MP candidates signed Seta's pledge of commitment in the lead-up to the national elections, 33 of whom were elected to parliament, but most are in opposition parties. Seta's target goals for the 2023 elections included a rainbow action plan, making legal gender recognition accessible for minors, a ban on intersex surgeries, the introducing of a third legal gender category, regulations on surrogacy and recognition of multiple-parent families, and a ban on so-called 'conversion practices'.

Seta published a report about the socio-economic marginalisation of LGBTQ+ people, also noting that services such as trans-specific healthcare or surrogacy require capital that many do not have. Seta called for data gathering on the issue.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

(See under Bias-motivated Speech)

Pride events were held in a record number of over 40 different cities and small towns this year, which is twice as many as just five years ago.

Helsinki Pride was held on 1 July, focusing on the themes of triumph and rebellion, and brought together around 100,000 people. No incidents were recorded. Former President Tarja Halonen acted as the matron of Helsinki Pride Week this year.



Several MPs, Ministers, and cabinet members joined the Pride march, but were criticised by the Minister of Agriculture and Forestry and other conservative politicians.

The indigenous Sápmi Pride was held for the ninth time this year and took place in Heahttá in August.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

(see under Bias-motivated Speech)

HEALTH

The latest School Health Survey from the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare found that LGBT+ children and youth, and particularly those who are trans report high rates of depression, anxiety, and are seriously impacted by minority stress.

In August 2023 the Finnish Medicines Agency updated its guidelines on blood donation by men who have sex with men. Previously, a four-month restriction was applied whenever a man has had sex with another man, even within a monogamous relationship. This was considered discriminative, as sex between a man and a woman or two women amounted to the same restriction only in cases where the person had new or several sexual partners. The new guideline lifted the restriction and was implemented in December 2023.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

A new government was formed in the summer 2023 between the moderate right wing National Coalition Party, the right wing populist True Finns, Christian conservative Christian Democrats and liberal Swedish People's Party. The government program has no explicit mention of LGBTIQ+ policies.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

On 2 February, Finland introduced a legal gender recognition (LGR) procedure based solely on self-determination, ending the requirement of sterility and mandatory psychiatric diagnosis. The vote was a firm 113:69. The new law includes a 30-day reflection period and sets the maximum number of changes in legal gender at one per year, unless “for a particularly compelling reason”. The law sets a minimum age requirement at 18 and over, much to the disappointment of civil society and contrary to the Social and Health Committee's report.

It also does not provide for gender marker options beyond male and female. It does however provide for the recognition of trans parents in their legal gender on their child's birth

certificate - upon request. By November, over 1,700 people had applied for LGR based on self-determination.

Civil society organisations had lobbied for LGR reform for long time, and the reform process was delayed for several years. In January, MPs of the Centre Party and The Finns tried to halt the process by raising alleged concerns that men would use the law to harass women. The Centre Party instructed its MPs that they could vote in individual capacity in line with their beliefs.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

(See also under Equality and Non-Discrimination)



FINLAND WEB PAGE
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FRANCE

ASYLUM

Civil society [continued](#) to [call](#) for an end to harassment and violence against migrants and refugees, and a halt to the Darmanin law, that would risk the lives of LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers. Several protests were [held](#) against the law.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-trans speech remained an issue this year. The Association of LGBTI Journalists study [found](#) that 50% of articles about trans people included transphobic content.

Two trans-exclusionary lesbian groups were excluded from Pride in Rennes and Marseille this summer. A trans-exclusionary 'feminist' was [sued](#) for hate speech and incitement after [calling](#) trans people sick and misgendering a trans politician on TV.

Neo-nazi leaflets which included anti-LGBT statements were [found](#) in over 15 town halls in the Finistère region. 'LGBT-free zone' stickers were [reported](#) in Montpellier.

A far-right extremist was [put](#) on trial for anti-LGBT speech targeting a drag story time event in Bretagne. Football player Patrice Evra was [fined](#) 1,000 euro for homophobic insults he made in 2019. A man was [tried](#) for homophobic and sexist harassment of queer singer Hoshi.

In September, former far-right presidential candidate Eric Zemmour was [fined](#) 4,000 EURO for homophobic defamation following his anti-LGBTI and anti-feminist statements in 2018.

In October, a court [ruled](#) that Civitas, an anti-LGBT group, must be dissolved.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

(See also under Education)

Hate crimes continued to be a serious issue this year. The Ministry of Interior [shared](#) that the number of anti-LGBTI hate crimes rose by 3% between 2021-2022. SOS Homophobie's annual hate crime report [found](#) a 27% increase in the number of anti-LGBTI hate crimes in 2022, compared to 2021. Anti-trans incidents also [saw](#) a 27% rise compared to 2021. Le Refuge [reported](#) a 10% increase in requests from young LGBT people for support and emergency housing, compared to the previous year.

Several public spaces were attacked and vandalised this year, including LGBTIQ+ centres in [Angers](#), [Le Havre](#), [Touraine](#), [Arras](#),

[Nantes](#), and [Reunion](#), and an LGBT+ association in [Perpignan](#); among others (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)). The centre in Touraine was [attacked](#) six times in eight months. A community health centre and two employees of the association Grisélidis, which supports sex workers, were attacked in [Toulouse](#). In most cases, local politicians condemned the incidents, the police acted quickly and the perpetrators were held accountable.

In May, more than 50 civil society organisations [called](#) on the government to tackle the wave of hate crimes. In July, the government [said](#) they would invest into awareness raising and victim support and launched the new LGBT+ Action Plan (see under Equality and Non-discrimination).

In April, genderqueer singer Bilal Hassani's performance in a deconsecrated church had to be [cancelled](#) due to multiple bomb and murder threats from far-right extremists; Hassani [filed](#) a complaint.

In May, a black gay man was physically assaulted in Hérault. Several other hate crimes were reported this year ([here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

A street in Nantes, decorated for Pride, was [vandalised](#) with slogans such as "death to LGBT" and "paedophiles". Rainbow pedestrian crossings were [vandalised](#) in Tours.

A report [identified](#) over 300 victims of fake dates over the past five years, mostly gay and bisexual men. Five men were [arrested](#) in what is suspected to be a homophobic murder in Vaucluse - the men allegedly lured others on fake dates. In March, two men were [convicted](#) of kidnapping and extortion in another case.

Two perpetrators of the murder of Vanesa Campos, a trans-migrant sex worker, in 2018 were [sentenced](#) to 14 and 17 years in prison by the appeal court in March - a reduced sentence compared to the 2022 verdict. Several perpetrators of anti-LGBTI hate crimes were convicted this year (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

DATA COLLECTION

An Ipsos survey [found](#) that 10% of people and 19% of those [belonging](#) to Gen Z identify as LGBT+.

EDUCATION

Lucas, a 13-year-old boy, who had been targeted by homophobic bullying, [committed](#) suicide in January. Four students were [convicted](#) of school harassment in the case. The family [appealed](#) the decision as it failed to condemn the minors

for harassment leading to suicide. Media reports suggest the official investigation was inadequately conducted.

Later in January, former Minister of Education Pap Ndiaye announced he would put in place an awareness-raising plan to fight discrimination and bullying against LGBTI students. On 17 May, the Ministry launched an awareness campaign in middle and high schools to combat anti-LGBT school bullying.

Teachers reported a Catholic school and its principal for homophobia and censoring films on abortion and queerness. The Prosecutor launched an investigation.

In May, Bretagne announced setting up an observatory for the prevention and fight against LGBT + discrimination in education.

In September, incoming Minister Gabriel Attal declared that preventing bullying at schools is his “absolute priority”. In the same month, a high school student was arrested after bullying and threatening to kill a 14-year-old trans student.

EMPLOYMENT

In August, the European Court of Human Rights agreed about the admissibility of a case brought by a coalition of 261 sex workers and allies concerning discrimination and violence they have faced since France introduced a law criminalising the purchase of sex and pimping in 2016.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The new National LGBT+ Action Plan (2023-2026) was published in July, consisting of over 100 measures. Activist organisations expressed disappointment with the level of implementation of the previous action plan and the lack of cooperation with civil society in crafting the new plan. The National Consultative Commission on Human Rights strongly criticised the implementation of the previous plan.

Civil society organisations expressed serious concern about the appointment in July of two ministers, Aurore Bergé and Bérangère Couillard, who have had problematic stances on LGBTI- and specifically trans inclusion before.

In March, the municipality of Paris launched an online training platform for civil servants on working with trans clients during administrative procedures.

In November, the Senate passed a draft bill acknowledging the state’s role in wrongly convicting thousands for sexual orientation but rejected the idea of financial compensation.

FAMILY

This year marked the 10th anniversary of marriage equality in France. The Minister of Interior, Gérald Darmanin said in an interview he was wrong to vote against marriage equality back in 2013.

A trans couple shared their experiences of not being recognised on their child’s birth certificate in their legal gender and stated they are willing to start a legal battle for recognition..

FOREIGN POLICY

France joined the European Commission’s infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.

The French envoy for LGBT+ rights cancelled his visit to Cameroon after he was declared persona non grata.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced a 2 million EURO fund for French embassies to support LGBT+ human rights defenders.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In June, Lyon Pride was disturbed twice: one man punched several participants and a group threw bottles at the marchers. A screening of *Tomboy* in Saint-Amand-Montrond received backlash from far-right organisers, but was held and supported by many as a response.

In June, the town of Bastia in Corsica held its first Pride march. Guadeloupe held its second Pride event in July.

HEALTH

The city of Montpellier hosted a conference on chemsex in November.

HOUSING

The police evicted and arrested the inhabitants of an LGBT squat in Montreuil in August.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

A working group will be set up to discuss the increase in legal gender recognition (LGR) requests made by minors. The group is led by MP Jacqueline Eustache-Brinio of the Republican party, who had previously tried to block minors’ access to trans-specific healthcare, such as hormone blockers.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The Minister of Labour, Olivier Dussopt came out as gay in March, seen by many as a political move amidst the pension protests (see under Social Security and Social Protection). The Minister of Youth, Sarah El Haïry, came out as lesbian in April. Mayor of Estevelles, Estelle Szabo, became the first mayor to transition during her mandate. Marseille councillor Nathanaël Bignon also spoke about being a trans man.

Le Bonjour Madame, a queer and feminist bar in eastern Paris, was forced to close in May after a police raid and checks, which the owners interpreted as clear intimidation.

In May, The French Football League launched its annual campaign to tackle homophobia. Several players refused to wear jerseys featuring rainbow symbols or play at all - they were reprimanded by their teams, fined, and/or benched, and their refusal was condemned by the Sports Ministry. The government supports the sanctions. Despite the efforts, an increase in homophobic verbal attacks was witnessed during sports games. In October, the Ministry of Sport, FFF and LFP sent a letter to professional clubs outlining actions to tackle homophobia. In November, Rouge Direct, a collective fighting homophobia in football, closed down, citing institutional inaction and death threats

In May, the LGBT Families association filed a complaint against Amazon Prime Video for broadcasting homophobic chants and banners at football games.

Nicolas Pottier, former referee, spoke about homophobia, rape, and harassment he was subjected to and filed a complaint.

Paris 2024, the organising committee of the 2024 Olympic Games, launched a partnership with Pride House. Nevertheless, female trans athletes will be unable to compete in the women's category - the Sports Minister shared in April that the Olympics will follow the rules of international sports federations. Halba Diouf, French sprinter spoke out against the World Athletics's discriminatory ban against trans women in March. At national level, the Minister of Sport announced in May that an expert group will be set up to make recommendations on the inclusion of trans athletes in sport. No national civil society organisations have been included in the process so far.

A report showed that most LGBT people have either witnessed (73%) or suffered (52%) a homophobic or transphobic attack in sports.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Ministry of Interior sent guidance to all police stations about how to work with trans people. The Ministry also promised to train officers of anti-LGBT hate and violence. SOS Homophobie documented almost 30 cases where trans people were mistreated by the police.

The Minister of Defense announced in May that people living with HIV will be able to join the military and the 'gendarmerie'.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Over 22,000 requests were made for medically assisted procreation (MAP) by the end of 2022, following the 2021 law which made it available to lesbian couples and single women. In 2022, the Constitutional Council ruled that excluding trans and intersex people, whose legal gender is not 'female', from cost coverage for in vitro fertilisation is not unconstitutional. This July, some LFI MPs tabled a bill that would enable trans people to access MAP and also to preserve their gametes; it would also allow egg donation among female partners. The Ministry of Health has so far held its position against these additions.

In December, the 'Conseil d'Etat' delivered an opinion on the constitutional draft bill on abortion, deeming it necessary to name women as beneficiaries of this right and not including gender identity as protected ground.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

LGBTQIA+ people and activists across France joined the pension reform demonstrations, which gathered hundreds of thousands, after the government announced it would raise the retirement age from 62 to 64. In March for instance, protesters of the Pink bloc were targeted by police violence.

The new LGBT+ Action Plan envisions opening 10 new reception and support centres in France by 2027 and also in the country's external territories.

La Bulle, a shelter for the most marginalised with LGBT+ communities opened in Paris in May, managed by LGBTI organisations with financing from the city council. A safe apartment opened in Limoges for LGBT+ people who are victims of violence and harassment. Lyon will open a home for LGBT seniors.



FRANCE WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG



GEORGIA

ASYLUM

LGBTQ people continued to flee from Russia and Ukraine to Georgia. At the same time, there is ongoing concern that Georgia is classified by some EU countries as a ‘safe country’, but positively. Some countries removed Georgia from their list this year.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

(See also under Equality and Non-discrimination; Freedom of Assembly; and Freedom of Expression)

The spread of misinformation and the rhetoric juxtaposing LGBT rights and the West continued this year. ECRI’s report, published in March, highlighted anti-LGBT hate speech and impunity as a key concern. Political movements and parties continued to instrumentalise anti-LGBT hate, particularly as the 2024 elections are approaching. Anti-gender rhetoric in particular, also increased this year.

The Prime Minister and other high officials justified the adoption of the foreign agents law using LGBTIphobic arguments. Preceding the Tbilisi Pride Week, held in July, government representatives, religious leaders, and far-right extremists of the Alt-Info made countless anti-LGBT statements (see here, here, here). Alt-Info spread hateful messages for days prior to the event and called on people to join efforts to attack and disrupt Pride. Pride flags were also burned. Religious groups published a joint letter in July alleging that the Pride week will “promote perverted lifestyles, including propaganda among the youth”.

In July, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili said that ‘LGBT propaganda’ in kindergartens and schools was unacceptable. Earlier in May, the PM joined an ultraconservative conference in Hungary and said that LGBTQ+ “propaganda was destroying traditional family values”.

In July, the Tbilisi City Court issued a ‘protective order’ in the case of a minor who was featured in a homophobic video that was spread on social media.

In September, the Girchi political group suggested in parliament that the term ‘gender’ should be dropped from legislation, including for instance the Law on Gender Equality, and that gender identity and expression should be deleted from the anti-discrimination law.

WISG and TEMIDA submitted a complaint to the Journalist Ethics Charter against a pro-government TV channel for

a transphobic story, alleging a minor underwent gender-affirming surgeries influenced by “LGBT propaganda” and later regretted it.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

(See also under Foreign Policy; and Freedom of Assembly)

In January, the Tbilisi Appeals Court overturned a 2022 ruling and acquitted six people who were involved in the 2021 anti-LGBTQ attacks, by dropping the charges of group violence on grounds of SOGI. The Court also reduced their prison term from five to four years. Human rights groups called the ruling alarming. The Prosecutor’s Office will appeal. In September, the European Commission requested that Georgia submit information about the investigation. The request was made as part of Georgia’s process of being a candidate for EU membership.

In January a Human Rights Watch report highlighted, among other things, violence against the LGBT community.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

(See also under Bias-motivated Speech)

The new State Concept of Gender Equality, adopted in January, is cis/hetero normative and fails to mention sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. The 2022-2030 National Strategy for the Protection of Human Rights also completely omits LGBTQI+ rights. CSOs repeatedly appealed to the government but received no answer.

In March, Levan Ioseliani was appointed as the new Public Defender. Civil society had supported three of the 19 candidates competing for the position, but Ioseliani was not one of them.

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT, the Public Defender released a statement identifying the LGBT+ rights situation in Georgia as a serious problem. Embassies and international organisations also published a statement, highlighting that Georgia’s key policies on human rights and development fail to mention LGBTQI people and that politicians keep perpetuating hate speech.

FAMILY

ECRI’s report, published in March, highlighted that Georgia is yet to analyse where same-sex couples face discrimination due to a lack of legal recognition.



In June, Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili expressed concern that foreigners use surrogacy services in Georgia and that some of them may be LGBT, and announced stricter legislation on surrogacy.

FOREIGN POLICY

The attacks against Tbilisi Pride this year were seen by many as a threat to Georgia's EU candidacy status (see under Freedom of Assembly). In September, the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy said during their country visit in September that "more signs of progress" were required.

On November 8th, the European Commission recommended that Georgia is granted candidate status for joining the EU. The European Commission's report on Georgia critically evaluates a number of LGBTQI protections, including hate crime, hate speech, LGR, etc.

On December 14, Georgia was granted EU candidate status, on the understanding that the steps set out in the European Commission's recommendation of 8 November 2023 are taken.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

Regarding the implementation of the 2020 ECtHR judgement in Aghdgomelashvili and Japaridze v. Georgia, in October, WISG, the European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC), and the Georgian Young Lawyers' Association (GYLA) submitted a report to the Committee of Ministers showing the lack of follow-up action by the government. Since the decision of ECtHR in 2020 and despite ongoing investigation, no one has been brought to criminal justice yet

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Tbilisi Pride Week was held between 1-8 July and was targeted by hate and violence again this year, including by the far-right Alt-Info group. Pride week, held under the motto "Love Cannot Be Defeated!" was joined by the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe and supported by embassies and UN agencies. All the events were held indoors and with pre-registration.

Prior to Pride week, far-right groups carried out mass mobilisation, called for violence, and spread misinformation. Previously, civil society groups called for police protection and the organisers held months-long negotiations with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, who vowed to protect the events.

On 8 July, about 2,000 violent far-right protesters broke the police cordon, and stormed and attacked the venue where the the Pride festival was scheduled to take place. Instead of expelling the mob, the police evacuated the Pride organisers, who had to cancel the event.

In a joint statement, human rights groups have emphasised that the police failed in its duties to protect the participants. The organisers suspect that the government coordinated the disruption with the far-right Alt Info group and the evacuation was the default plan all along. The Ministry of Interior and the speaker of the Parliament both condemned the violence but welcomed that the police were able to prevent physical injuries.

The President said such statements were not meaningful when the government continues to perpetuate hate speech. The Public Defender, several politicians, Embassies, Council of Europe and UN mandates condemned the violence. The Public Defender affirmed that it was the state's responsibility to protect the Pride participants. The European Parliament's LGBTI Intergroup urged the European Commission and the Equality Commissioner to condemn the attack and impose targeted sanctions on Alt-Info and its leader, Konstantin Morgoshia.

On 11 July, MP Fridon Indzhia of the Alliance of Patriots of Georgia party said that while sexual minorities should be accepted, their gathering in public spaces should be limited.

In October, WISG together with EHRAC and GYLA submitted a report to the Committee of Ministers indicating that since the 2021 ruling of the ECtHR in the WISG and others v. Georgia case, no one has been brought to criminal justice, no one has been granted a victim status, the LGBTQI community in Georgia is not able to exercise their right to freedom of assembly and the State is not taking any measures towards minimising the level of LGBTphobia in society.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Media freedom continued to deteriorate. Alt-Info continued attacking events (see here and here).

In March, the parliament voted against the draft foreign agents law following massive public outcry and demonstrations (see here, here, here, and here) in the country and criticism from abroad. Over 60 media outlets and civil society groups had promised they would not comply with the law. The police used excessive force, including water cannons and tear gas, against the protesters.



Far-right politicians and religious leaders [called for](#) a ban on a number of books and screenings this year, for spreading ‘LGBT propaganda’.

Several political and religious leaders again suggested introducing an ‘LGBT propaganda’ law, including the Prime Minister (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

In June, rainbow-coloured umbrellas were [removed](#) from a park in Tbilisi.

HOUSING

Temida [published](#) a report on the housing situation of LGBTQ people, finding difficult access to housing and a lack of state support.

The housing situation of LGBTQI and particularly trans people was further worsened by the war in Ukraine, and state support is still not available.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

ECRI’s report, published in March, [highlighted](#) that Georgia needs to put in place a clear legal gender recognition (LGR) framework. In 2022, several UN and Council of Europe entities, including the European Court of Human Rights called on Georgia to remedy this gap and introduce quick, accessible, and transparent LGR on the basis of self-determination (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

In 2022, the European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) in three LGR cases against Georgia, establishing that the lack of a clear legal framework for LGR is a violation of Article 8. In October, NGOs submitted a report on the implementation of the judgement, [highlighting](#) that one trans man re-applied for LGR this year, but was again rejected.

The appeal of an intersex woman, who was denied LGR without proof of surgery in 2021, is ongoing.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

WISG held training for the staff members of state-funded crisis centres and State legal aid service employees.



[GEORGIA WEB PAGE](#)
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GERMANY

ASYLUM

Civil society firmly [criticised](#) the government's support for the new EU asylum policy and its failure to advocate for the rights of LGBTIQ* asylum seekers. Civil society [demanded](#) that Germany excludes countries from its safe country list that persecute or criminalise LGBTIQ* people.

In October, the Federal government [approved](#) a bill to speed up the deportation of rejected asylum seekers.

As a positive step, the Ministry of Interior [approved](#) funding for special legal advice services for queer asylum seekers and others deemed vulnerable. Civil society can now apply for funding to provide the service. Also in April 2023 the [new policy on SOGI asylum seekers](#) by the asylum agency BAMF became public - that includes changes that go beyond the [repeal](#) of the so-called discretion requirement that became public in September 2022.

In September 2023 the [first](#) queer persons under the Federal Admission Program Afghanistan arrived in Germany.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

An anti-trans actor who sued Bundesverband Trans* and other organisations over the use of a hashtag on social media eventually [dropped](#) the case. Bundesverband Trans* [removed](#) its profile from the social media platform X (previously Twitter) due to the dramatic increase of transphobic and transmisogynistic comments and messages.

The far-right AfD made countless hateful statements this year, for instance saying "there are no transgender people" (see [here](#)), that sexual and gender minorities were sexually abusing children (see [here](#)), and making fun of gender diversity (see [here](#)). AfD MPs also continued to harass and [deadname](#) trans MP Tessa Ganserer (Buendnis 90/Die Gruenen).

An anti-gender activist [launched](#) a petition to end 'the gender language' in February against the use of gender-neutral language in schools and on official forms in Hamburg, calling it 'coercion'. The CDU [distanced](#) itself from the activist after she [made](#) anti-LGBT statements, but continues to support the petition, along with the far-right AfD. The campaign has [appeared](#) in other regions too.

A brochure for parents of trans children was [classified](#) as harmful for its anti-LGBT content.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The Ministry of Interior [shared](#) in May that over 1,000 homophobic hate crimes were recorded in 2022, marking a 15% increase compared to 2021. Sven Lehmann, the Federal Government Commissioner for the Acceptance of Sexual and Gender Diversity, highlighted that three to four queer people per day are assaulted in Germany.

Hate crimes continued to be a serious issue in 2023, with the vast majority going unreported. Several LGBTIQ people (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) were assaulted this year, many of them in Berlin. In August, hundreds [gathered](#) for a demonstration in Berlin to call for action against anti-LGBTI hate crimes. Berlin's LGBTQ Museum (Schwules Museum) was [attacked](#) with bullets in February.

A lesbian space in Berlin was [targeted](#) by an arson attack in the summer. A monument remembering 'homosexual' victims of the Nazi era was [vandalised](#) in August. A banner inciting hatred against queer people was [put up](#) in downtown Berlin. A rainbow flag was torn down and [burnt](#) outside a school in Frankfurt-Sachsenhausen.

In June, the federal working group on anti-LGBTIQ+ hate crimes, established in 2022, [developed](#) a series of recommendations including training at law enforcement agencies, research and setting up contact points and counselling for survivors

EDUCATION

(See also under Bias-motivated Violence)

In April, two teachers in Brandenburg [published](#) a letter of concern about right-wing extremism, sexism and homophobia on school grounds. The police started an investigation. The Brandenburg Minister of Education [called](#) for moral courage and asked schools to promptly report similar incidents. The two teachers received the Prize for Civil Courage Against Anti-Semitism, Right-Wing Radicalism and Racism, but due to hate and harassment, they both [quit](#) their teaching jobs.

Activists at the Technische Universität in Berlin posted gender-neutral signs on toilets, a move [endorsed](#) by the university's Queer Referat.

In January, Humboldt University [allowed](#) trans, inter and non-binary students who have not gone through legal gender recognition or name change yet to use their chosen names on university ID cards, following a class action lawsuit [filed](#) in 2022. The HU took this step before the court decision.



The far-right AfD in Lower Saxony announced their plans to restrict sex education in schools, allegedly to tackle “child abuse”.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The government continued to implement the National Action Plan for Sexual and Gender Diversity, which was part of the government’s 2021 coalition treaty, and was adopted in November 2022. In March this year, the process of setting up working groups started, with the involvement of almost 80 civil society organisations. The thematic working groups will monitor the implementation process and share their assessment with the Federal Parliament in the autumn of 2024. Civil society called for sufficient financing and speedy implementation.

In June, the Independent Federal Commissioner for Anti-Discrimination released its 2022 annual report, finding a 22% increase in reported cases. 4% of the cases concerned discrimination based on sexual orientation and 21% based on gender. Civil society continued to advocate for a comprehensive anti-discrimination law, which is included in the Action Plan (see here, here and here). Over 100 organisations joined the ‘AGG Reform Now’ campaign.

In line with the parliament’s decision in 2022, this year’s commemoration of the victims of nazi persecution remembered LGBT victims for the first time.

FAMILY

The synodal council of the Catholic Church in Germany voted in favour of blessing same-sex unions from 2026 onwards.

Civil society expressed disappointment over the European Court of Human Rights rulings OH and GH v Germany and AH and Others v Germany (see here and here) for failing to establish that the misgendering and misnaming of trans parents, i.e. trans mothers and gestational trans fathers, on their child’s birth certification is a violation of the Convention.

The draft legal gender recognition law (see under Legal Gender Recognition) foresees for trans parents to be featured as ‘parent’ on birth certificates but upholds the misgendering of trans parents in the birth registry.

FOREIGN POLICY

Germany joined the European Commission’s infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.

The Federal Foreign Office and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development presented their new feminist foreign and development policy guidelines.

The German government included sexual orientation and gender identity in the update to its international criminal law legislation in October.

A German citizen was fined and deported from Russia for engaging in so-called ‘LGBT propaganda’.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Several participants of the Berlin CSD (Pride) march were attacked this year, including before and after the event. The police said the number of attacks was not unusual given the size of the march. A high number of Prides across the country were attacked this year.

HEALTH

In January, the Ministry of Health announced they would end the discriminatory restrictions on gay and bi men, and trans people who want to donate blood, and replace them with an assessment of risky behaviours. The change entered into force in April. In August the new rules by the German Medical Association based on this change became public - and were criticised for continuing to ban blood donations from men who have sex with men (MSM).

A new scientific study found high levels of loneliness and social isolation among trans and gender-diverse people.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The Bundestag raised the rainbow flag again this year. The flag will be featured in the German Historical Museum.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In late August, the cabinet presented the legal gender recognition bill, which will move forward to its readings in parliament. While the law introduces a model based on self-determination, it sets out a three-month waiting period and a separate procedure for minors over 14.

Civil society continued campaigning for a law that is fully compliant with human rights (see here, here, here, here, and here). In September, over 350 feminist authors, creators, lawyers, queer, trans*, inter and non-binary groups and professional associations, women’s shelters and leading representatives of women’s associations and equality work co-



launched a petition. By December, the petition was signed by over 16,300 people.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Ministry of Justice in Baden-Württemberg, as part of creating new guidelines to give greater consideration to gender identity in prison, shared that there were eight trans and intersex prisoners in the system; that some detainees have had access to trans-specific healthcare; and that there will be a consultation on further changes that should be made.

The Ministry of Defense launched a website where soldiers can file for financial compensation if they were discriminated against in the military due to their SOGI.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Berlin will put in place a housing project for older lesbians and queer women.



GERMANY WEB PAGE
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GREECE

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

Many trans people continued to struggle financially and be barely able to cover basic needs.

ASYLUM

The government gave a six-day deadline to civil society to comment on the new immigration law, which civil society criticised as outdated on LGBTI+ issues and completely omitting LGBTI+ migrants.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech by political and religious leaders continued to be a serious issue (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), particularly in the lead-up to the national elections in June. Religious figures blamed LGBTI people for the fires during the summer. A well-known veteran athlete called trans people ‘paedophiles’. Stefanos Kasselakis, gay politician and newly-elected President of SYRIZA, was targeted by hate speech online (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). Hateful speech was also common in media outlets (see [here](#)).

In June, the European Court of Human Rights found the case of Aegialia Ambrosios, former Orthodox Metropolitan known for his homophobic stance and speech, inadmissible.

Intersex Greece’s intersex-led report on hate speech against intersex people showed that most incidents are perpetrated by the medical community. Almost one third of online content about intersex used derogatory terms such as “paedophile”, “perversion” or “satanism”.

Two MPs of the far-right Spartan Party, which got into parliament this year, said “we will put an end to this brothel”, referring to posters about rainbow families in Athens. They also called for a counter-protest on the day of Pride in Crete at the end of June. The Pride received so much support, including from anti-fascist organisers, that the counter-demonstration was cancelled and the hateful posts were removed.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The national hate crime monitoring body’s annual report shared that 38 hate crimes were documented against LGBTI+ people in 2022.

Hate crimes continued to be a serious issue this year (see also Freedom of Association) (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). On 10 July, a black migrant trans woman and sex worker, Anna Ivankova was brutally murdered in her home. Media outlets

repeatedly misgendered her. A protest and commemoration was held outside her apartment on 11 July - Anna Ivankova was an active member of the LGBTIQ+ activist and art scene. Some of the organisers were harassed and physically assaulted the same evening by a group of six men. The suspected murderer was arrested.

A former police officer sued an intersex woman, who he harassed and assaulted in 2019, for defamation, after he was exonerated this year.

The second instance trial in the murder of LGBT+ activist Zacharias Kostopoulos, who was killed in 2018, was postponed to January 2024.

In December, Council of Europe’s GREVIO published its Baseline Evaluation Report on Greece, including, for the first time, intersex women.

EDUCATION

In March, parliament adopted legislation to combat bullying and violence in education, which covers SOGIESC grounds.

The Teaching Federation of Greece affirmed that a teacher in an Athens primary school did nothing wrong when showing the film *Boys in the Shower* to his class of ten-year-olds. The teachers received backlash from parents.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The equal treatment law was amended in February to include disability as a protected ground in all areas of life. Civil society voiced firm criticism that SOGI grounds are only included under employment and lawmakers failed to change this.

The conservative New Democracy Party retained its power in the national elections that were held in June. Three far-right parties entered parliament.

Prime Minister Mitsotakis continued to support legal reform to advance LGBTIQ+ rights, following the adoption of the National Strategy for Equality of LGBTIQ+ people (2021-2023) last year. The government is yet to set up a body in charge of addressing LGBTQ rights.

FAMILY

Following the elections in June, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis affirmed that the government wanted to introduce marriage equality within the next four years. Opposition

party SYRIZA shared this stance vocally in the lead-up to the elections. Civil society continued to call for a comprehensive reform of family laws that go beyond marriage equality.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Several LGBTI+ organisations, and over 100 groups in total, joined the Walk against Discrimination on 21 March to say no to racism, discrimination and violence against minorities.

Several incidents took place during Athens Pride, held in June. The starting point of the march was moved due to an election campaign booth in the original location, which many activists criticised as backing down. The new route did not pass by the parliament's building. A group of fascists attacked a trans person on the morning of Pride and took their flag away. Several migrants were also targeted.

On 29 June, Vuziballs held the first Pride march in Chania (Crete).

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Far-right politicians took issue with a rainbow painted on a school's wall in Corinth. The mayor and the deputy Minister of Education both stated the painting had nothing to do with LGBTIQ+ rights and it was merely a rainbow.

HEALTH

Access to trans-specific healthcare, especially for those uninsured remained very difficult. In January, access to an essential hormone-related drug was suspended due to a technical change in prescriptions. The drug is widely administered for a number of conditions, but was only suspended in trans-specific healthcare. The Transgender Support Association (GTSA) immediately intervened and requested the state to remedy the situation, which could leave many without hormonal treatment. 27 SYRIZA MPs joined in lobbying the Ministry.

The Health Ministry's solution is a new procedure that requires an endocrinologist to administer the prescription online and a three-member panel to approve it, which is very complicated and lengthy. GTSA continued to call for depathologisation, access to healthcare for migrants and refugees, insurance coverage, and other key advancements.

HOUSING

On 28 August, the Athens Municipal Council approved the opening of the first shelter for LGBTIQ+ homeless people.

LGBTIQ+ organisations have been consulted prior to the decision and later signed a memorandum of collaboration. The shelter is expected to open in spring 2024.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Stefanos Kasselakis, openly gay politician, became the new president of leading opposition party SYRIZA after the party's crushing defeat during the June elections.

Civil society organisations worked hard throughout the year to lobby journalists and candidates in the national and municipal elections to address LGBTIQ+ rights in their political agendas, but most did not cover them in a meaningful way. Civil society also warned that trans people must be protected from questioning, harassment, and discrimination when going to the voting polls.



[GREECE WEB PAGE](#)
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HUNGARY

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

(See under Freedom of Expression)

ASYLUM

Several hateful articles were published this year in right-wing media alleging that asylum seekers falsely claim they are queer or trans to get status. Hungary refused to support the EU's Asylum Pact.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

(See also under Asylum)

For the second year in a row, Hungary hosted Europe's largest right-wing political event, featuring clear anti-LGBTQI and anti-immigration speeches. Minister of National Defense Kristóf Szalay-Bobrovniczky said at the event "here, in Hungary, there will be neither LGBTQ-XYZ, nor gender neutral, nor any other force infected with progressive ideology".

The Media Council fined HírTV for featuring pro-government editor-in-chief of Demokrata, András Bencsik, welcoming Uganda's new law and the execution of gays in February. In August, Bencsik also slammed Sziget Festival (see under Freedom of Expression) for "making same-sex kissing mandatory". The Council also fined radio Karc FM for featuring homophobic content. Opposition MPs tabled a law to provide civil law sanction for hate speech against LGBTQI people.

In May, the second instance court reaffirmed that Fidesz politician Botond Sára slandered a Budapest municipality in 2021, alleging that its daycare centres run "LGBTQ propaganda". Sára was ordered by the court to apologise, but his failed attempt has prompted another lawsuit.

In July, PM Orbán said the EU was abandoning Christian heritage "in favour of "hedonistic" paganism" of "LGBTQ+ gender campaigns", which is waging against Hungary.

Deputy PM Zsolt Semjén said that if marriage equality was legal, three men would also want to get married. In September, Minister of Transportation János Lázár called the Budapest mayor "crazy" for thinking it was fine for a child to be raised by two men.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Háttér published a report on victim-centeredness and intersectionality in hate crime proceedings. A national and a transnational workshop was organised to discuss good practices in the field.

The perpetrator in a 2021 hate crime against a lesbian couple was sentenced to five years in prison and said at his court hearing that "Viktor Orbán thinks similarly".

A teacher at a school outside of Budapest quit her job after constant harassment, bullying and threats (see under Education).

BODILY INTEGRITY

In March, the Council of Europe's European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published its latest report on Hungary, and called for a ban on medically unnecessary and non-consensual surgeries on intersex children.

Former Catholic priest András Hodász gave interviews this year and apologised for his past stance in support of so-called 'conversion practices'.

A 2022 research showed that so-called 'conversion practices' have caused one in four respondents to attempt suicide and over half to consider it.

DATA COLLECTION

(See more under Freedom of Expression)
Háttér launched its LGBTQI research 2023, the third wave after 2007 and 2010. Háttér and Labrisz are doing research on intimate partnership violence against lesbian and trans women.

EDUCATION

ECRI reminded Hungary that children should receive information about sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) in schools, to tackle anti-LGBT stigma, discrimination, and violence.

A Catholic literature textbook replaced the term "gay" with "Hungarian" in a poem, but corrected this after the poet complained.

A far-right website published a list of LGBTQI and -friendly teachers. The National Authority for Data Protection and Freedom of Information launched an investigation ex officio, Háttér Society's complaint was merged with it. No decision has been delivered yet.

Some teachers have reportedly lost their jobs for speaking about feminism, LGBTI and progressive issues in the classroom. Labrisz educational programme came to an end after 20 years, as schools fear inviting LGBTI organisations to provide workshops.

EMPLOYMENT

(See under Bias-motivated Violence; and Education)

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

ECRI expressed serious concern about the deterioration of LGBTI rights in the past years and recommended that Hungary put in place an LGBTI action plan.

Hungary became the only EU country without a female minister.

The Diverse Hungary cross-party LGBTIQ group held an LGBTIQ forum at the Budapest City Hall in April.

Fidesz and Mi Hazánk representatives vetoed a public place being named after Alan Turing in Budapest, because he was gay.

An assessment of the impact of the abolition of the Equal Treatment Directorate shows that there are barely any cases concerning LGBTIQ or Roma people before the Commissioner of Fundamental Rights.

CSOs continued to request a meeting with the Ombudsman but received no invitation.

FAMILY

In April, the parliament adopted a whistleblower protection law adding that anyone defying the “constitutionally recognised role of marriage and the family” and children’s rights “to an identity appropriate to their sex at birth” could be anonymously reported. A trans activist, Flóris Balta, reported himself at the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights. President Novak vetoed the law and parliament removed the problematic provisions.

The number of single individuals applying to adopt dropped by a third between 2021 and 2022, in what is a consequence of stricter regulations. In at least two cases in 2023, the court quashed decisions of the authorities who denied men, who were open about being gay, to adopt (see here and here). In both cases, the authorities had to start a new adoption process. A third case was refused in 2023 and a review against this decision is ongoing.

On September 14, the European Court of Human Rights declared the application of Sziványcsaládokért Alapítvány, an organisation requesting to be in the list of organisations working for families, inadmissible on September 14.

The U.S. Embassy organised a Family Pride Event for rainbow families during the Pride weekend.

FOREIGN POLICY

(See under Freedom of expression)

In May, the European Parliament adopted a resolution expressing concern about Hungary’s ability to take on the EU Presidency in 2024, as it has systematically undermined the EU’s fundamental values. In 2022, the EP passed a resolution which identified Hungary as a “hybrid regime of electoral autocracy” instead of a democracy.

In June, Hungary also refused to support the EU Justice Affairs Council’s conclusions on the protection of LGBTI communities in Europe.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In April, the Hungarian Asexual Community held Hungary’s first asexual Pride march.

In April, the Curia/Supreme Court upheld the police ban on the far-right Mi Hazánk protest, which would have taken place at the same time and place as Budapest Pride and would have hindered freedom of assembly.

The annual Budapest Pride march, held in July, brought together approximately 35,000 people again this year. The organisers said the crackdown on LGBTIQ visibility has intensified, but also that the government backlash has boosted participation. Pécs held its third Pride march in September - no incidents were recorded.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In January, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in Macatè v. Lithuania that restricting and labelling a book of fairy tales as harmful to children for including LGBTIQ+ characters is a violation of Art. 10 (freedom of expression). The ruling repeatedly mentions the Hungarian Child Protection law and the censoring of Wonderland is for Everyone as a similar example of censorship. Hátter had submitted a third-party intervention.

Also in January, a court confirmed the obligation of the Primer Minister Office to release the data on the measures taken against “LGBTQ propaganda”.

The European Commission’s infringement procedures continued against Hungary over its anti-LGBT Child Protection

Law. By the April deadline, [15 EU Member States](#) and the [European Parliament](#) joined the proceedings this year.

Bookstores were [fined](#) this year for not complying with the ‘propaganda law’ (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). A different decree [sets out](#) that stores within a 200-metre radius of a school or church cannot sell any books that feature LGBTQ characters and that stores outside this radius must remove them from the youth section, wrap them in foil, and put a 18+ mark on them. In July, for instance, the bookshop Líra was [fined](#) 12,000,000 huf (32,000 EURO) for displaying Heartstopper, an award-winning YA novel, at the children’s section without a plastic cover. The establishment requested a review of the case, another fined bookstore too. The author of Heartstopper [condemned](#) the government’s backlash. 34 Hungarian authors [published](#) a joint statement condemning the government’s censorship.

In July, college students [set up](#) tables outside a Libri store with a “banned books for free” sign, selling the foiled books for a donation. Civil society launched the [www.folianelkul.com](#) website (Eng: without a foil) and the hashtag #homofolia trended on social media (ed: ‘folia’ means plastic cover) for weeks.

In May, the Metropolitan Court [ruled](#) that Háltér’s request to the Media Council regarding the number of proceedings the Council was initiated on the basis of the Child Protection Law. Háltér lost the appeal and the case is pending for review before the Curia.

Budapest Pride [turned](#) to court after the Media Council refused to classify this year’s campaign film as a Public Service Announcement and would only allow it to be streamed between 10pm and 5am. TV channel RTLklub also [turned](#) to court to [challenge](#) the Council’s anti-LGBTQ classification.

The Ferencváros municipality and Amnesty International Hungary painted a bench with rainbow colours ahead of the Budapest Pride march. The bench was [repainted](#) every day for a week by far-right extremists, who also tagged it with hateful slogans, and then painted again, or wrapped in foil (see above) by LGBTQ activists. The bench had to be [removed](#) after getting damaged in the process.

The Consumer Protection Department of the Budapest Government Office [launched](#) an investigation into Sziget Festival’s promotional video for featuring a same-sex kiss. Google/YouTube [were](#) investigated as well for showing the video.

The Ministry of Culture [banned](#) the entry of minors to the World Press Photo exhibition because photos of LGBTI seniors were portrayed.

HEALTH

Háltér trained 124 medical professionals in working with LGBTQI people, including 35 doctors and 63 psychologists.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

In February, UN’s CEDAW [published](#) concluding observations and made several recommendations related to LBTI women, for example, providing adequate protection against hate crimes.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In February, the Constitutional Court [failed](#) to affirm trans people’s right to dignity and privacy, [saying](#) that the ban on legal gender recognition (LGR) is constitutional. The ruling [counters](#) the Court’s own 2018 ruling. In May, the Constitutional Court [rejected](#) the constitutional complaints directly submitted against the ban on LGR. Civil society has [turned](#) to the European Court of Human Rights.

In March, the Budapest Metropolitan Court [requested](#) preliminary ruling proceedings from the European Court of Human Rights, asking the Court to rule on whether the right to have one’s data rectified guaranteed in the GDPR regulations extends to trans people who have no access to legal gender recognition.

In March, ECRI [recommended](#) that Hungary overturn its ban on LGR and put in place a legal procedure that is based on self-determination.

On 22 June, the European Court of Human Rights [affirmed](#) in [R.K. v. Hungary](#) that the lack of clear LGR procedures, i.e. the inability to access LGR, is a violation of Art. 8 (right to private and family life). Although R.K. applied for LGR before the procedure was banned in 2020, the Court [affirmed](#) that Section 33 of the omnibus law passed in May 2020 makes it entirely impossible for anyone to access LGR.

At an EU Summit in February, PM Viktor Orbán [tweeted](#) “No migration! No gender! No war!”, which in a humorous response civil society [welcomed](#) as the PM’s plan to abolish the mandatory registration of gender, [binary genders](#), and gender roles.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

(See also under Freedom of Expression)

In July, German football fans put up an anti-homophobia banner during a game against a Hungarian team.

The LIFT festival on lesbian identities was celebrated in October after a three-year break.

A lesbian-themed film was released in November. The Petőfi Literary Fund, which had previously translated *Wonderland is for Everyone* into Estonian with public funding, stopped translations of the book into other languages.

PUBLIC OPINION

A representative public poll found that despite Hungary's anti-LGBTQI laws, support for LGBTQI rights has increased. 72% think LGR should be available, 56% support adoption by same-sex couples, and 62% think the state is obliged to protect LGBTQI people from discrimination.

In ten years, support for marriage equality increased by 150%. However, another study published by the Social Science Research Centre showed that almost half of Hungarian respondents think that same-sex couples and their children are not a family.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

(See under Institutional Support)

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

In July, the Fejér County Government Office acknowledged that trans women, whose legal gender is female, are also entitled to pension benefits granted to women, in line with the Veszprém Court's ruling from 21 April 2023. Also in July, two government MPs tabled a bill that would strip trans women of this right. The proposal was withdrawn in October. In late October, the same government office re-issued a decision holding that only the years after the legal gender recognition count towards the beneficial pension years.



[HUNGARY WEB PAGE](#)
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ICELAND

ASYLUM

Civil society [condemned](#) and organised protests against the reform of the asylum system, which further marginalises queer asylum seekers. The new law, [adopted](#) in March, [strips](#) asylum seekers from essential services, including housing, social support and healthcare, 30 days after the application was rejected, civil society came together to protest the law (see [here](#) and [here](#)). In August, 29 NGOs [called on](#) the government to ensure the safety of queer refugees and actively consult civil society.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-LGBTQ, and particularly anti-trans, hate speech was common again this year (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) and [increased](#) during international days and events related to LGBTI rights. Hate speech concerning trans minors' access to care also [remained](#) common.

Sex and queer education was a particularly heated topic this year - Samtökin '78, which [does](#) educational work in several municipalities, was [targeted](#) by hate speech on a daily basis for months (see more under Education). Terms like "groomers" and "child abusers" were commonly used against the organisation.

In January, a proposal for a parliamentary resolution on an action plan against hate speech 2023-2026 was [open](#) for comments. The results have not been published yet.

Trans rights activists campaigned against a gender-critical conference which was to be held in Iceland this year.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Civil society noted with concern that harassment and violent attacks [increased](#) this year. Anti-LGBTQI+ 'barking' still [happens](#), but is less common.

Rainbow flags were again [vandalised](#) this year during Pride month.

In September, a guest of the Nordic LGBTI conference was brutally [attacked](#) on his way to the hotel. The investigation is ongoing.

In June, a woman was [sentenced](#) to two years of probation and fined for harassing a lesbian couple who were her neighbours.

BODILY INTEGRITY

On 9 June, Iceland [banned](#) so-called 'conversion practices'

covering sexual orientation, gender expression and gender identity and [protecting](#) both children and adults. The vote was unanimous.

EDUCATION

There was serious backlash this year, including hate speech, [misinformation](#) and negative talk about sex education and education on sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (SOGIE) issues in school (see also under Bias-motivated Speech). In September, the Ministry of Education, municipalities, the Children's Ombudsman, the National Parents Association, and civil society organisations [co-published](#) a statement condemning these attacks and defending children's right to comprehensive sex education and information about SOGIE issues. Samtökin 78' signed agreements with several towns and municipalities this year to continue its education program (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

EMPLOYMENT

The company Ölgerðin is the first to be [certified](#) as a queer-friendly workplace.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

As part of Iceland's Presidency of the Council of Europe, Iceland [hosted](#) this year's IDAHOT Forum in May in Reykjavik. Implementing Iceland's first-ever comprehensive [LGBTI Action Programme](#) (2022-2025). Some ministries [received](#) training on LGBTI issues from civil society this year. All ministries have actions assigned to them in the Action Programme and some have started implementation already. A dashboard is now [available](#) where the public can follow the process implementation under each action.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Hinsegin Vesturland [held](#) a queer festival in July, which [included](#) a 400 metres rainbow flag painted in Akranes, the longest rainbow street in the country.

Reykjavik Pride, held in August, [brought](#) together a record number of people this year. Pride events were held in several towns.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Rainbow flags and trans flags were raised across the capital on the occasion of IDAHOBIT on 17 May and during trans visibility week.



HEALTH

The [LGBTI Action Programme \(2022-2025\)](#), adopted in 2022, commits to improving trans healthcare provision. Nevertheless, access to gender-affirming surgeries [remained](#) difficult this year, with waiting times remaining extremely long.

On 28 June, the Supreme Court [ruled](#) that a trans man, who underwent a mastectomy, was entitled to sick pay. In 2022, the National Court [ruled](#) against the man.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Trans Iceland [received](#) the Reykjavík Human Rights Award 2023 in May.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

A new bill was [tabled](#) in parliament in the autumn, to change a number of laws in an effort to bring them more in line with Iceland's Act on Gender Autonomy (2019). The changes include allowing people to choose -dóttir, -son or the gender-neutral -bur as endings to their family name, regardless of legal gender, and based on self-determination.

The Reykjavik Human Rights and Democracy Office shared that the number of non-binary applications [increased](#) by 75% in 2022.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Reykjavik [voted](#) to make its rainbow crossing a permanent part of its city landscape.

Samtökin '78 [continued](#) its [education program](#) targeting coaches, staff, and other key stakeholders in sport associations.

The Archery Association [introduced](#) a third gender category for competition and will organise unisex events as well.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Samtökin '78 [signed](#) an agreement with the National Police Commissioner to carry out education activities.

The prison authorities [shared](#) that no trans person was currently held in prison in Iceland. They affirmed that an individualised plan would be made for each trans inmate regarding their placement, which would take into account their gender identity.



[ICELAND WEB PAGE](#)
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IRELAND

ASYLUM

LGBT Ireland's [report](#), commissioned by the government, [affirmed](#) Direct Provision centres continue to fail protecting LGBTQ+ asylum seekers from violence and harassment.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Transphobic speech remained a serious issue. Anti-trans speaker Posie Parker was [met](#) with hundreds of trans people and allies protesting against her transphobic and misogynistic rhetoric. The pro-trans rally greatly outnumbered Parker's crowd.

A cancer foundation [received](#) transphobic backlash after publishing a trans-inclusive article saying that prostate cancer also affects people who are not men.

Singer Róisín Murphy [published](#) a post against puberty blockers in August, followed by significant backlash. Murphy's label [announced](#) it would donate proceeds of her next album to trans charities.

Several politicians [reported](#) threats and harassment due to [being](#) LGBTQ+ or because of their support for LGBTQ+ people and migrants.

Far-right anti-government protests were [held](#) in the autumn, featuring transphobic and anti-migrant messages and criticising the hate crime bill.

A civil society campaign #StrongerTogether was [launched](#) to strengthen collaboration between different groups who are targets of far-right organisers.

LGBTQI+ young people continued to face toxic comments, abuse, and online harassment. BelongTo's study, released in March, [found](#) that a staggering 87% of young LGBTQ+ people have experienced hate and harassment online. Several drag performers were targets of transphobic online harassment (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

Dozens of civil society groups [addressed](#) Taoiseach (ed: Prime Minister) Leo Varadkar to stop enabling hate on social media sites and ensure that the Irish Data Protection Commission enforces European privacy regulations.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Hate crimes against LGBTQI+ people continued to be a serious issue (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). The

police's annual hate crime statistics [found](#) a 29% increase in reported hate crimes and related incidents in 2022, of which 22% was based on sexual orientation - the [second highest rate](#) following hate crimes based on race. Several victims were minors. In May, a brutal attack against a 14-year-old gay student was filmed and went viral on social media and [shocked](#) the country. Three minors were [arrested](#). The Taoiseach [condemned](#) the attack.

Protests and vigils were [held](#) in several cities against transphobic hate crimes after a trans teenager was killed in broad daylight in England.

The [new hate crime bill](#) passed at the Dáil, the Parliament's lower house, and it is currently before the Seanad, [third stage](#). One of the reasons of the delay is disagreements on the definition of gender. The bill recognises anti-LGBTI violence as aggravated offences. Civil society [continued](#) urging lawmakers to pass the bill.

The perpetrator in the two homophobic murders in 2022 [pleaded](#) guilty in July and was handed two life sentences, plus another 20 years for assault on another gay man.

On November 23, violent far-right riots [broke out](#) in Dublin following a knife attack that left five injured including three children. The events, spurred by online disinformation and filled with anti-immigration chants, were [seen](#) as the worst riot in decades.

In November, results of a [survey](#) carried out by the University of Limerick (UL) and Queen's University Belfast of 2,000 people from either side of the border found that 39% of people think hate crimes have risen a lot over the last five years. More specifically, 69% of respondents said that hate crime is a very serious problem for trans people followed by black people (64%) gay, lesbian, and bi people (60%), and Muslim people (60%).

BODILY INTEGRITY

Trinity College Dublin [published](#) its comprehensive report on ongoing so-called 'conversion practices' in Ireland, commissioned by the government in 2022. In February, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights [urged](#) Ireland to adopt a ban. In June, the Minister for Children and Equality again [promised](#) to pass the ban this year, which was [welcomed](#) by civil society.

No progress was made on banning medically unnecessary and non-consensual surgeries performed on intersex children.

DATA COLLECTION

Civil society continued to [advocate](#) for the 2027 census to include questions on sexual orientation and gender identity.

EDUCATION

In January, the first cohort of 34 people joined a new postgraduate programme for post-primary teachers teaching Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and/or Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE). In addition, between March and May, over 400 teachers attended a seminar on the new specifications for Junior Cycle SPHE.

In March, the Catholic Primary Schools Management Association [sent](#) letters to two ministries to ask that pupils are not taught about trans issues in primary schools. [Civil society](#), the [Irish National Teachers' Organisation](#) and the government all [condemned](#) the contents of the letter. The President, the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste all [expressed](#) support for informing students about gender diversity. The Minister for Children and Equality [said](#) students should “absolutely” be taught more about trans people and respect for diversity.

Civil society [welcomed](#) that the new Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) and Relationship and Sex Education (RSE) junior cycle curriculum, [published](#) by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, [includes](#) LGBTQ+ rights throughout. The primary school curriculum is currently undergoing revision. In September, a Catholic group printed 100,000 leaflets to [invite](#) parents to a meeting against the SPHE curriculum.

Enoch Burke, the teacher who was [put on administrative leave](#) in 2022 for intimidating the then-principal Wilson's Hospital School in County Westmeath by confronting her following a request to address a student who was transitioning by a new name and the pronouns they/them, continued to be fined and [held](#) in custody for refusing to stay away from the school, despite a High Court Order for him to do so. In September Burke was [jailed](#) for repeatedly turning up at the school in breach of the Court order and remained in prison at the end of 2023.

A primary school teacher [penned](#) a letter criticising Cork businesses for supporting Pride.

EMPLOYMENT

The Workplace Relations Commission [ruled](#) for financial compensation to a queer employee who was outed at work in 2021.

In March, a new bill was [passed](#) to ensure trans men who give birth have equal access to leave and benefits.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Several rainbow crossings and steps were installed again this year (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

The government [published](#) a report summarising the issues raised by the 569 submissions to the public consultation of the Review of the Equality Acts. Submissions addressed all the equality grounds, as well as proposed protections for gender identity and more.

Following a working group's [final report](#) on the issue, the government [announced](#) it would introduce a law to exonerate gay and bisexual men who were prosecuted when 'homosexuality' was still illegal. In June, the Government [issued](#) a long-awaited apology.

Trans organisations, groups and peer support initiatives [launched](#) the Trans Groups Alliance Strategic Plan (2023-2027). CSOs also [launched](#) an all Island LGBTQIA+ Forum in April.

FAMILY

In December, the government [approved](#) amendments to the new [Assisted Human Reproduction Bill](#). Civil society [welcomed](#) the decision but expressed concern over the bill still falling short in ensuring adequate protection for rainbow families.

A Private Members Bill, written by LGBT Ireland and Equality for Children and sponsored by the Labour Party, was [tabled](#) in June to ensure that all children born to female same-sex parents are treated equally, for instance by automatic parenthood recognition. The Bill will go to second stage in early 2024.

FOREIGN POLICY

Ireland [joined](#) the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Numerous Pride events and marches were [held](#) across the country. The 40th Dublin Pride was [attended](#) by tens of thousands in July.

A record number of 3,000 people [attended](#) Trans and Intersex Pride in Dublin in July.

[Clare](#), [Letterkenny](#), [Navan](#), and [Athlone](#) held their first Pride events this year.

Pride events in Meath were [disrupted](#) by anti-LGBTQ+ protesters.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Several protests [took place](#) across the country against LGBTQ+-themed books and/or books [written](#) by trans authors in public libraries, for instance in [Dublin](#), [Cork](#), among other towns (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). The far-right protesters [harassed](#), intimidated and filmed librarians and called for the removal of the books. The cities' leadership and Ministers [condemned](#) the attacks. In July, the Cork library [closed](#) due to safety concerns after the protesters hung up a "there are only two genders" sign at the entrance. Kerry's library was [stormed](#) during a drag storytime event in July. Solidarity protests were also held (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)) throughout the year.

Children's Books Ireland [launched](#) a new campaign, Reading Matters, in response to the hateful attacks.

Several young adult books with LGBTQ content have been [reclassified](#) by some libraries as adult content.

In December, Dublin City Council passed a [motion](#) to support libraries that provide LGBTQ literature and protect them from intimidation by far-right protesters.

HEALTH

Ireland [recorded](#) an increase in STI infections, with gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men (gbMSM) being disproportionately affected. New monkeypox cases were also [recorded](#) among gbMSM in the spring. Several groups [co-launched](#) the Proud and Prepared campaign to encourage sexual health and wellbeing in the community.

BelongTo's annual report [showed](#) a continued need to support LGBTQ+ youth in a worsening climate of fear. In 2022, youth workers carried out 2,395 support interventions.

HIV Ireland [launched](#) a pilot peer-led rapid HIV testing programme to improve trans people's access to the service. In 2022, the number of new HIV infections [doubled](#) compared to the previous year. However, only 20% (173 people) were newly diagnosed, representing a 16% [decrease](#) compared to 2019. 62% of the new notifications in 2022 corresponded to people previously diagnosed abroad who transferred their care to Ireland.

The crisis in gender-affirming healthcare provision continued, with youth being the worst impacted. Trans groups [launched](#)

the '[Transgress the NGS](#)' campaign in the spring, in part to demand that the NGS discourage GPs from supporting trans patients. Several protests were [held](#) this year demanding access to trans healthcare. There remains no clinic to which young trans people can be referred - the Child and Adolescent service is closed and waiting times are indefinite.

TENI [launched](#) a new training program for general healthcare professionals.

HOUSING

LGBTQ+ people continue to be disproportionately [impacted](#) by the housing crisis, with many [searching](#) for accommodation on dating sites and targeted by predators. The government [announced](#) that 'sex for rent' will be banned by law.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The government [made](#) 900,000 EURO in funding available to groups that support community services and promote the inclusion of LGBTI+ people.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

In March, the new Coimisiún na Meán (media commission) was formed. A Gender, Equality, Inclusion, and Diversity Strategy is being developed to bolster the positive portrayal and representation of LGBTI+ identities in the media.

The Ladies Gaelic Football Association [approved](#) its first trans applicant this year, implementing new guidelines.

Four runners [participated](#) in the Dublin Marathon's non-binary category.

A mural was [unveiled](#) in Dublin during Pride week.

The Irish football league [carried](#) a large campaign ahead of Pride in support of LGBT Ireland and the National LGBT+ helpline.

This Solution, a documentary-theatre piece about the gay porn industry [premiered](#) in October. A theatre piece about an Irish-born trans soldier [toured](#) this year.

After [backlash](#) in the LGBTQ community, Cork's only queer bar Chambers [issued](#) an apology after rebranding itself and removing all Pride-related decor and cancelling drag performances during the first week of the University term.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Association of Garda Sergeants and Inspectors called for the withdrawal of the new 'Gender Identity in the Workplace' policy to provide a safe and inclusive environment for all trans staff in the Gardaí, saying officers are not yet trained on GIE issues.

In November, LGBT Ireland along with representatives from Trade Unions and migrant groups, held a meeting with the Garda Commissioner to discuss the policing of far-right activities.

PUBLIC OPINION

A government-commissioned study found that the vast majority of the population accepts LGBTQ people, but trans/non-binary people are supported less than cisgender LGBTQ people.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

State funding was made available for IVF treatments this year, but completely excluding single persons, same-sex couples and other couples who require donor eggs or sperm.

The government said the eligibility criteria would later be expanded.

The government is undertaking a review of the 2018 abortion law, which still bars many from accessing services.



[IRELAND WEB PAGE](#)

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ITALY

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech continues to be a serious issue in Italy and openly perpetuated by the government of Georgia Meloni, who has [vowed](#) to tackle the so-called 'LGBT lobby' and 'gender ideology'. Meloni herself made several hostile comments this year, including about [same-sex parenthood](#). In January, the Minister for Family, Birth and Equal Opportunities [called](#) surrogacy a crime and [said](#) children have the right to have a "mom and a dad". In March, Brothers of Italy MP Federico Mollicone [said](#) same-sex parenthood was not "normal" and that surrogacy was a crime [worse](#) than 'paedophilia'. Ignazio La Russa, president of the Senate [said](#) he would be sorry to have a gay son. Senator Lucio Malan [shared](#) a post on social media equating gay men with 'paedophiles'.

In August, an army general was transferred after publishing a book that includes anti-migrant and homophobic content. In December he was [promoted](#) to Chief of Staff, but a [disciplinary action](#) against him was begun at the same time for a lack of impartiality during active service.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Anti-LGBT [hate crimes](#), including rape, assault, murder and beating continued and escalated since the Meloni government got into power. Arcigay [shared](#) in May that the past 12 months had marked the most violence the community has faced, including three suicides and three murders. Several people were physically assaulted, including young [men in Turin](#) and [Rimini](#), and a young woman in [Pavia](#). On May 17, Medus3 Observations on Lesbophobia published its second annual [report](#), documenting 20 lesbophobic attacks that came to media attention in 2022. In March, a man was lured on a fake date and was murdered. In May, three police officers brutally [beat](#) a migrant trans woman in a [racist](#) and transphobic attack in Milan.

In November, a 13-year old boy [committed suicide](#) after being bullied for his alleged sexual orientation.

EDUCATION

ProVita and Brothers of Italy continued sending [warning notices](#) to all schools that grant 'alias careers' to their students. An "alias career" allows trans students to have their gender identity recognised in class registers and participate in their education accordingly, without change of official documents.

In April, a demonstration was held in support of trans youth in [Rome](#). In September, a similar demonstration took place in [Milan](#).

EMPLOYMENT

UNAR's study [found](#) that one in four LGBT+ people have experienced discrimination at work.

The new national collective labour agreement for the education, university and research sector 2019/21, signed in July, now [obliges](#) employers to allow trans employees to use gender-neutral bathrooms or bathrooms matching their gender identity, and an alias on name tags and email addresses. Teachers will also be equally treated, regardless of whether they are married or are in a civil union. The changes were welcomed by the Minister of Education. In some regions, Brothers of Italy tried to [sabotage](#) the measure, so far without success.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May, President Sergio Mattarella [spoke](#) up for LGBT rights again this year. The Senate [adopted](#) a motion to [combat](#) criminalisation based on sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) worldwide.

In early October, the outgoing government [adopted](#) a National LGBT+ Strategy for the period of 2022-2025. The Strategy features six key areas, work, safety, health, education and sport, culture and media, monitoring and evaluation, but some have [highlighted](#) gaps in terms of indicators, deadlines, and resources. The new government [condemned](#) the adoption.

FAMILY

This year marked major setbacks in the area of family rights, in line with Prime Minister Meloni's [promises](#) during the 2022 elections. Meloni had previously said LGBT people [should not be allowed](#) to have children.

In January, the Ministry of the Interior [sent](#) a letter to municipalities across the country to ensure that only the biological parent is featured on the birth certificates of children with same-sex parents. In March, the Ministry [called on](#) Milan's mayor to stop providing legal recognition to both parents, citing that this goes against Italian law. The Ministry's measures [mean](#) that only biological parents would be recognised, while the other parent would have no legal tie to their own child. Stepchild adoption would still be [available](#) for same-sex couples, but it is a costly and invasive procedure that can [take](#) years and highly depends on the composition of the court in the region.

Thousands [protested](#) against the Ministry's move (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Famiglie arcobaleno Association [called on Italian](#)



[mayors to disobey](#). The European Parliament [condemned](#) the developments in March, [called](#) for the measure to be withdrawn, and [tabled](#) written [questions](#) to the Commission. Several mayors [want](#) to [continue](#) providing legal recognition to rainbow families. The mayor in Milan [vowed](#) to continue [fighting](#) for rainbow families and said he would leave birth certificates already approved, unchanged. Other cities have also stood with rainbow families (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

The Turin Medical Association [wrote](#) an open letter to say the measure will cause children in rainbow families to suffer discrimination.

The Prosecutor in [Padua](#) [requested](#) that all 33 birth certificates that feature same-sex parents be revoked, and the registry offices [complied](#). Since January, countless families have received letters informing them that the non-gestational parents were removed from the child's papers (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)). In November, the Prosecutor held hearings about the opposition from the families and decided to move the question of unconstitutionality to the Constitutional Court. In April, the government [tabled](#) a bill to [extend](#) a national ban on surrogacy to those who go abroad to access the service. The bill was approved by the Lower Chamber in July. Those prosecuted could face prison for up to two years and a fine of up to 1 million EURO.

The European Court of Human Rights [declared](#) several cases submitted by same-sex couples concerning parenthood [recognition](#) and the [surrogacy ban](#) inadmissible. In August, the Court did [find](#) a violation of Art. 8 in [C. v. Italy](#), where the authorities refused to recognise the [parenthood](#) of a heterosexual couple to their child born out of surrogacy abroad.

Since January, fathers have also [faced](#) difficulty getting any kind of legal recognition of their parenthood. In August, Milan was able to continue [registering](#) at least one father on the birth certificate of children born out of surrogacy abroad.

FOREIGN POLICY

In March, the Senate [voted against](#) Italy's support for the European Commission regulation for cross-border recognition of same-sex parents.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

53 Pride marches were held in a [coordinated](#) manner across Italy between April and September, with family rights [being](#) at the forefront of Pride events.

Following Pride marches, participants were [harassed and assaulted](#) in Bologna, Chieti, Lombardy, Pavia, Palermo and [Toscana](#).

The Lazio Region withdrew its patronage of Rome Pride this year, [saying](#) the Pride posters were "promoting illegal behaviour", such as surrogacy.

HEALTH

ArciGay's mapping in 31 cities [found](#) huge variations in the quality of HIV/AIDS care across the country, generally poor access to PrEP, and instances of discrimination in more than half of the cities covered. A full panel of STI tests is free in only six cities.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In July, for the first time, a trans woman was able to have her gender marker [changed](#) without having undergone any surgeries, after the Trapani court [ruled](#) in her favour. The case received some attention in the media, which [prompted](#) transphobic backlash.

In October, another trans woman was able to [change](#) her gender marker without surgeries.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

MEP Elly Schlein [became](#) the first openly bisexual woman to lead the Democratic Party.

Miss Italia [refused](#) to open the competition to trans women. In protest, several trans women and [over 100](#) trans men [applied](#) to compete.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The national LGBT helpline [documented](#) 400 cases in 2022 where LGBT young people were kicked out of home, with only 10% being able to find emergency shelter.



[ITALY WEB PAGE](#)

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KAZAKHSTAN

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

In August, the NGO Education Community applied for registration on the employment site Headhunter (hh.kz), mentioning their focus on LGBTQI+ activism. Headhunter initially denied the application, citing terms of use prohibiting associations that could harm the site's reputation. After the request to elaborate on the application denial, the NGO was registered on the platform.

ASYLUM

Hundreds of trans people have reportedly come to Kazakhstan from Russia in the past year, either because of the war or because of the laws banning so-called 'LGBT propaganda'.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

(See also under Freedom of Assembly)

Politicians, journalists, religious leaders and other public figures made several anti-LGBTQI statements again this year.

In April, the muftiate published a statement saying that same-sex relationships were "obscene" and "degenerate" and called on the public before the 8 April feminist rally (see below) to "avoid obscenity". The statement alleges that under the "guise of protecting women's rights, obscene, degenerate same-sex relationships are being promoted" and that LGBT people are cursed by God, are against nature, deviant.

In April with help of anti-gender movement represented by Kazakhstani Union of Parents, MP Mazhilisman Ardak Nazarov said that "LGBT ideology is aimed at disabling the centuries-old traditions and national values of the Kazakh people" and called for a ban on "promoting same-sex marriage and gender reassignment." He proposed a ban on films and TV shows with LGBT characters. In April, he tabled a request for a ban in parliament, saying the "epidemic has already arrived".

The Kazakhstani Union of Parents issued a statement in April, saying that 'feminists' and especially Kazakhstan Feminist Initiative 'Feminita' "gather young people, teenagers to rallies and carry out prohibited LGBT propaganda". One of the activists B. has been stalking Zhanar Sekerbayeva and Gulzada Serzhan since 2021. She claimed that these LBQT-activists corrupt youth and the Kazakh ethnicity.

A video of two men kissing went viral and brought on a stream of hate comments. In the second half of this year, the video was posted on social media again, but now with mentions of

the person's workplace and Instagram nickname. The person believes that this publication was intentionally commissioned.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Several hate crimes were committed again this year and LGBTQI+ people continued to face police abuse.

In July, an LGBTQI activist was almost run over by a driver who recognised her. The man also verbally assaulted her. The activist filed a police complaint. but there was no investigation or follow up.

A trans sex worker was harassed, blackmailed and threatened with eviction when police officers came to her apartment pretending to be clients. The officers extorted money from her, as others had done in the past. Several other trans sex workers reported being harassed, detained, and abused by police.

Several lesbian, gay, and trans people shared their stories this year (see here, here, here, here, and here), speaking about hiding, stigma, family and police violence and harassment in employment.

In autumn, a group of ex military officers proposed that homosexuality be criminalised again.

A man was sentenced to five years in prison for luring a gay man on a fake date, robbing and assaulting him.

Out of 440 Education Community study participants, 73 or 17% LGBTQI+ people reported experiencing violence in the past year. Additionally, 40 (or 9%) chose not to respond. Most instances of violence were categorised as psychological (77%), physical (55%), sexual (32%), or economic (14%).

EDUCATION

Young people shared experiences of bullying in a campaign from NGO's in the media.

EMPLOYMENT

In February, a queer man faced job dismissal threats over a customer comment on the 2GIS application. Despite getting the comment removed and settling with his employers, he later chose to resign due to the homophobic workplace environment.

In May, in Almaty a lesbian woman was compelled to resign from her job due to a hostile environment.



EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

On the occasion of IDAHOLBIT in May, activists held up the rainbow flag at the mausoleum of Khoja Akhmet Yasawi in the Turkestan region.

Over 20 embassies released a support message urging the government to respect the rights of the LGBTQI+ community on IDAHOLBIT.

FAMILY

In July, Kaspi bank introduced a beta version of its online marriage registration application service, excluding same-sex couples.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

Humiliation and torture in detention centres continued to be reported this year, including affecting trans detainees. In 2023, for example, reports were received of a gay prisoner being restricted from legal travel and phone calls, being assigned physically demanding work using forged medical documents, and not receiving wages. (source unavailable due to confidentiality).

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Several activists who participated in the 2022 protests were sentenced to prison this year. Many activists were punished on fabricated grounds (see the story of Aigerim Tleuzhan). The sentences were a worrying sign for civil society in Kazakhstan about the growing pressure from Tokaev's authoritarian regime.

Several protests were denied permission this year in Almaty, with fabricated justifications such as “ongoing repairs” or “patriotic events”. The 8 March rally was also denied a permit, in what the organisers saw as a clearly political and discriminatory move. In the end, after four rejections, the Feminist Women's meeting was allowed to go on in a more remote area of Almaty. The authorities wanted to limit participants to 300, but between 700-1,000 people joined the rally. This year's event called for bodily autonomy and protection against sexual violence.

On 8 April, a feminist rally against domestic violence took place in Astana bringing together 400 people urging the government to adopt laws that protect women. A day before the event, the Spiritual Administration of Muslims of Kazakhstan (SAMK) published a hostile and stigmatising statement (see also under Bias-motivated Speech). A few days later, MP Nazarov (see also

under Bias-motivated Speech) suggested that young people who participated in a march in April, which featured rainbow flags, should be monitored and their parents should take responsibility for the participants' actions.

In January, an LGBTQIA+ activist from 'Feminita' applied to hold The Equality March (Pride event) in June in Almaty several times. She got the denial from the local council. 'Feminita' has an ongoing trial process regarding this case.

In May an LGBTQI+ activist applied to organise a Pride event in Astana. The city administration falsely cited ongoing repairs and cultural events to deny the request. A court hearing took place in October after the activist's appeal to the decision. The court withheld the ruling of the previous court and refused to satisfy the activist's appeal.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

Civil society groups continued being harassed and raided by the authorities.

Since 2017 'Feminita' cannot register a public fund and work with legal status. In 2023 activists lost trials again and the number of these denials equaled 11.

On 21 September, the State Revenue Committee of the Finance Ministry published a “foreign funding register”, which lists organisations and individuals who receive funds from abroad for research, legal assistance, and other areas of work. The publication of this information was required in the 2012 amendments of the tax law and the Committee's did announce in March that they would publish later in 2023. Civil society organisations in Kazakhstan and abroad called for the immediate withdrawal of the register (see here, here, and here), which lists several groups working on LGBTQI rights issues, as well as journalists and bloggers.

Only a few days later, NGOs started facing close monitoring and new reporting and administrative burdens, for instance, from banks.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In October, the Kazakhstan Parents' Union launched a campaign against the children's theatre studio, 'Fourth Wall' in Semey after a post on Instagram claimed the teachers were inviting children to a “homo-performance.”



HEALTH

In 2022, the Kazakhstani transgender initiative 'Alma-TQ' conducted a study finding that transgender people face problems accessing prevention and treatment for HIV and other STIs.

HOUSING

Among 440 participants in the NGO Education Community survey, 73 (or 17%) LGBTQI+ respondents experienced housing instability in the past year.

Due to the war in Ukraine and mobilisation in Russia, Kazakhstan faced economic problems in 2022-2023. As a result, prices for housing rentals, services, as well as food and essential goods have increased significantly. These problems were experienced specifically by trans people through forced eviction from rented housing.

'Alma-TQ' received many requests for housing from trans people from Russia who came to Kazakhstan, thus a temporary Residence Center was created to meet the need.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In April, two LGBTQIA+ activists collaborated, suggesting a link between the "Kazakhstani Union of Parents" and separatist activities in North Kazakhstan ([Russian](#), [Kazakh](#)). In response, anti-gender activist Olga Shantal posted three denials (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)) on Instagram, disassociating herself from the Union and calling for legal action against Sadykov and two others for defamation, spreading false information, and inciting interethnic conflict. Two other representatives from the Union - Yurkovskaya and Yurkina - subsequently filed statements against Sadykov.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In July, the Kazakh authorities [granted](#) a correct birth certificate to an intersex child, marking the end of a months-long legal battle.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

LGBTQI activist Zhanar Sekerbayeva [ran](#) elections as an open lesbian for Almaty's local council (Maslikhat) in March. She was not elected but came in third among participating candidates.

The closed screening of *Queer in Kazakh*, a film by Mutali Moskeu, was [held](#) in June in Almaty. The film was first [posted](#) on social media in May.

Aid Yesimova's collection of stories of LGBT+ people from Kazakhstan, *On the Other Side of the Rainbow* was [published](#) in August.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In July, two men on a date in a legally parked car were attacked by patrol officers. The officers, without presenting badges or legal reasons, attempted to force them out of the car, demanded documents, and used derogatory homophobic language. They also threatened to distribute a potentially embarrassing video allegedly filmed on their work camera. Following a threat to file a complaint, the police left the scene, and the men later received an apology from the department.

In 2023 in Shymkent a transgender woman experienced business seizures and forced expulsion from the city by law enforcement. An attack on her in her own home occurred, and the police refused to take any action.

*Some of the information about Kazakhstan was shared with ILGA-Europe by activists who for safety reasons need to stay anonymous. These accounts were not publicly shared online or otherwise.



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KOSOVO

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

CSGD published a report on LGBT and Roma people's access to services in Prizren.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

CSGD's 2022 Annual Report on the Status of LGBTIQ+ Persons in Kosovo, published in May, concluded that 2022 was marked by intolerance and hatred towards the LGBTIQ+ community and that hate speech by politicians was particularly common during discussions about the Civil Code (see under Family).

A reality TV show's characters made stigmatising statements about LGBTI people in January.

Artist, Ermira Murati, also known as Orange Girl, received several death threats for her painting featuring a kiss between the leaders of Kosovo and Serbia. (See under Freedom of Expression).

The local Islamic Community held a protest against a queer performance in August (see under Participation). One of the organisers, the head of the Prizren Islamic Community, said that children should be "strictly kept away from this degeneracy".

Chairperson of the Commission for Human Rights, Gender Equality, Victims of Sexual Violence during the War, for Missing Persons and Petitions, Duda Balje, continued to make statements against legal recognition for same-sex couples. Civil society organisations continued to call for her removal.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The Prosecutor's Office filed charges against a man who allegedly planned a terrorist attack against LGBTI people.

In August, a graffiti was painted in Prishtina saying "kill the gays". The graffiti was reported to the police. Activists replaced the word "kill" with "kiss".

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Civil society marked IDAHOBIT in May. The Government Building was lit up with rainbow lights again, and several state institutions, embassies, the National University Library, and the EU Office in Kosovo raised a rainbow flag. Prime Minister Kurti tweeted in support of the community, but did not post on Facebook, which many saw as reluctance to stand with LGBTI people on platforms where he has a huge following.

Civil society continued its cooperation with the Office of Good

Governance and the Prime Minister and held several meetings on the rights of LGBTI people.

FAMILY

Prime Minister Albin Kurti said during Pride week that he would "do his utmost" to get the Civil Code adopted by parliament. In 2022, the parliament voted against amendments to the Civil Code that would have opened the path to provide legal recognition to same-sex couples.

The Minister of Justice shared that a working group was set up to focus on legal recognition and draft a concept note and that the Ministry wants to send a bill to the parliament this year.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

CSGD, CEL, and other human rights groups jointly organised Kosovo Pride Week again this year, between 5 - 10 June. This year's motto was "I love you as you are!". The Prime Minister joined the opening event, which his office and the Office for Good Governance co-organised with civil society. President Vjosa Osmani spoke about hate crimes and violence against LGBTI people in Kosovo and globally.

Pride Week featured various events, including movie nights, parties, exhibitions, discussions, and a conference. For the first time, Prime Minister Kurti also attended the Pride march. Other political figures were also present. The march was celebrated by hundreds on 10 June and no incidents were recorded.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Artist, Ermira Murati, also known as Orange Girl, presented her newest painting on the 15th anniversary of Kosovo's independence from Serbia (see under Bias-motivated Speech), portraying a kiss between the two countries' leaders.

Canadian queer singer Peaches performed at the DokuFest in August, the biggest cultural event in Kosovo. A protest was held against the performance (see also under Bias-motivated Speech) and some journalists were attacked.

HEALTH

CEL and CSGD continued to offer psychological support to LGBTI people and their families.

In October, the head of the HIV department at the Infectious Disease Clinic of the University Clinical Center of Kosovo (QKUK) announced that 10 people were diagnosed with HIV this year.



PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

CEL Kosovo [launched](#) Queer TV this year.

The first Pristina Queer Festival was [held](#) in September. The three-day cultural festival featured film screenings, concerts, and the promotion of the Albanian language edition of the Kosovo section of the 2022 book, *Transgender in Post Yugoslav Space*. The organisers shared that some performers were reluctant to participate.

Kosovo's first gay bar, Bubble, [continued](#) to operate since the opening in 2022. Bubble regularly receives threats, but none of them have materialised to date.

The Sekhmet Institute [conducted](#) a study on queer people's access to voting.

At the end of November, the play [The Apple Was Not an Accident](#) premiered, a performance about the power of not giving up. The play was directed and performed by a lesbian couple and was supported by [CSGD](#).

PUBLIC OPINION

The regional organisation ERA's [report](#) Attitudes towards [LGBTIQ+ people in the Western Balkans](#) concluded that Kosovo needs to step up efforts to raise awareness and improve public perceptions about LGBTIQ+ people.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The construction of a shelter for LGBTI people was delayed again this year.

* Included in this Review as a separate jurisdiction following UNSCR 1244/1999



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KYRGYZSTAN

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Due to the continued tension at the Tajikistan border and the war in Ukraine, a lot of Kyrgyz internal and external migrants returned home and Russians fled to Kyrgyzstan. The political situation hiked up inflation rates, unemployment, and rent prices.

ASYLUM

In 2023, there has been a discernible surge in the demand for specialised assistance from LGBT+ organisations in addressing cases pertaining to individuals seeking asylum in other countries.

Given the escalating anti-LGBT+ policies and sentiments in Kyrgyzstan in 2023, for many LGBT+ people residing in other countries, returning home was deemed too dangerous. Consequently, they often seek asylum in their host countries.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

According to Kyrgyz Indigo's monitoring of the media space, all news about LGBTI rights or people shares the same rhetoric, emphasising the danger of moral decay, "wrong democracy," "psychological and physical health of children," etc. Almost every article which mentions non-governmental organisations (NGOs) is about receiving foreign funding, and is replicating the rhetoric of Russian propaganda related to "traditional values," "Western ideology," and "imposing values." The majority of articles were either based on homophobic statements by decision-makers or initiated by the editorial boards themselves.

Labrys continued to publish a quarterly analysis of media and social media content on LGBT issues, finding that a significant rate of articles and posts remains hostile.

In February, chairman of the NGO World League of Citizens and Civil Associations, Bolotbek Batilov wrote that the US State Department gave a grant to Kyrgyz Indigo "to promote transgender ideology in schools".

Anti-LGBT hate speech remained common among politicians. In March, several MPs criticised UNDP funds for HIV-related work going to NGOs in the country and questioned what they were really used for. Speaker of Parliament, Nurlanbek Shakiev said NGOs who receive the money influence youth, and that the state should tackle the 'issue' of trans people. In April, MP Zhyldyz Sadyrbaeva (Ata-Zhurt Kyrgyzstan) alleged that instead of fighting HIV, the funds are used to build the LGBT movement and sex worker movements. Also in April, MP Meikinbek

Abdaliev (Ata-Zhurt Kyrgyzstan) said "let them get infected", meaning that LGBT people should not receive any HIV-related treatment or preventive services.

In June, MP Bakytbek Sydykov (Ata-Zhurt Kyrgyzstan) said that talking about 'homosexuality' made him "sick to [his] stomach"; that a "man is a man and a woman is a woman"; and that LGBT people should live in countries where they are accepted, not in Kyrgyzstan.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

According to monitoring of a local organisation, Kyrgyz Indigo, LGBT people continue facing discrimination, harassment and violence both from state and non-state actors.

In 2023, according to the organisation, 119 cases of such discrimination and violence were reported. Furthermore, trans people continue facing difficulties in obtaining legal gender recognition (LGR) as a result of removal of legal provision for LGR in 2020. Kyrgyz Indigo reported 15 such cases. Local organisations also continue providing legal consultations for LGBTI people. Within this year, Kyrgyz Indigo reported providing such support to 105 cases: outings and threats (18%), fake dates and blackmail (13%), physical violence (10%), family violence (16%), theft and extortion (10%), police violence (20%). It should be noted that more than a third of fake date cases were perpetrated by the police.

ECOM's annual Report on Violations of LGBT People's Rights in Kyrgyzstan in 2022 documented 31 cases. Most cases related to discrimination in employment and healthcare, and being lured on 'fake dates'. Most of those discriminated against were people living with HIV.

On December 25, 2023, members of the Kyrgyz Parliamentary Committee on social policy rejected a draft bill on anti-discrimination, citing the need for improvements. In the discussions, MP Aigul Aidarova (Butun Kyrgyzstan) emphasised the necessity of clearly defining the grounds for non-discrimination in the law. She expressed concern that without precise definitions, "people with other sexual orientation" might exploit the law, suggesting that the anti-discrimination legislation should not be misused to shield the LGBTI community from discrimination.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

(See also under Freedom of Expression)

Since 2020, authorities continue to impose bans on peaceful assemblies and protests in city locations. To conduct the



Women's Day March on [March 8](#), it is mandatory to obtain approval from both the mayor's office and law enforcement agencies.

In 2023, a prohibition was instituted regarding the display of paraphernalia such as flags representing specific countries, notably Ukraine and Russia, as well as items associated with the rainbow symbol. A man who wore a rainbow-coloured face mask was [detained](#) by the police. Several others who had symbols relating to LGBT+ rights or Ukraine were also approached by the police.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

After MP Nadira Narmatova's (Ata-Zhurt Kyrgyzstan) [request](#) for a stricter foreign agents law in 2022, the public consultation on amending the law on non-profit non-governmental organisations was [launched](#) in May. The bill would place NGOs under the control of the General Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Justice with regard to internal and financial matters. It would also [introduce](#) the concept of 'foreign non-governmental organisation'. The law aims at restricting the freedom of speech of civil society, as it threatens the closure of NGOs in the Kyrgyz Republic, including LGBT+ organisations, as well as the persecution of human rights defenders and activists.

The law introduces the term "foreign representative," and equates advocacy and civic activism with "political activity" and activists who are undesirable to the authorities may be subject to a fine or five to ten years in prison. In October, at the meeting of the parliamentary committee discussing the amendments a video was [shown](#) by the members of the parliament about the alleged harm that NGOs cause in the country, including through 'LGBT propaganda'. On 25 October, the draft bill passed the first reading without public discussion.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In Spring, several draft amendments to the Mass Media Law were [tabled](#), [prohibiting](#) materials that "form a positive attitude towards non-traditional sexual relationships" and promote the "propaganda of same-sex marriages". National and international civil society called for the withdrawal of the amendments (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

In June, the parliament [adopted](#) the new law On Measures to Prevent Harm to Children's Health, Their Recovery, Intellectual, Mental, Spiritual, and Moral Development, which was first [tabled](#) in March and [signed](#) into law by the President in August.

The law is similar to those in Russia and Hungary, and [bans](#) the

spreading of information that denies family values, promotes "non-traditional sexual relationships". The law [calls for](#) age limit signs on media content, books, and other materials, similar to the 'foiling' in Hungarian bookstores and a complete ban on discussing LGBT rights and experiences in schools. The law also calls for SIM cards for children to be registered, to ensure that harmful content is blocked on their phones.

In July, the European Parliament adopted a [resolution](#) on the crackdown on the media and freedom of expression in Kyrgyzstan, expressing deep concern about the law, which was also criticised by civil society in the country and abroad (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

HEALTH

The political rhetoric against LGBT people and sex workers seriously threatened [critical](#) healthcare service provision this year. In March and April, several parliamentarians attacked the distribution of Global Funds in the country (see under Bias-motivated Speech). In April, the Country Coordination Committee to Combat HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (CCM) was [disbanded](#) after MP Zhyldyz Sadyrbaeva's [appeal](#).

The government decided to merge the Republican Centre for Control of Viral Hepatitis and HIV with the National Institute of Public Health. The Center and people living with HIV, hepatitis, and TB their loved ones [sent](#) a joint letter of concern to the government, saying the move could completely jeopardise the ongoing work and what Kyrgyzstan has achieved to date. They argued that the system is working effectively and patients have trust in the Centre, but would avoid seeking care through the state. In May, MP Meikinbek Abdaliev [asked](#) for a list of people living with HIV in the country.

In June, the Ministry of Health [adopted](#) an order introducing the merger. In July, patients and representatives [held](#) a rally at the Ministry of Health building to demand an explanation. The head of the National Institute of Public Health, Zharkynbek Kasymbekov, later [made](#) derogatory statements about them on social media, for which the advocates [demanded](#) an apology.

A week later, the same advocates [filed](#) an administrative complaint with the Ministry of Health, demanding that the order be withdrawn. The Ministry issued a [statement](#) saying that the Center will remain independent and would not be affiliated with the National Institute of Public Health. At the same time, the order was [not](#) withdrawn. In August, activists [turned](#) to the Ombudsman, who called on the Ministry to ensure that it respects the rights of people living with HIV and hepatitis.



The Global Fund considered suspending its funds to Kyrgyzstan in September, but negotiations continued. In December 2023, the Global Fund approved the next cycle of funding until the end of 2026 through UNDP in Kyrgyzstan in spite of Kyrgyz Parliament's objections to not include LGBTI people. Sufficient funding will be allocated for support to MSM and trans communities.

LGBT+ organisations continue providing mental and general health support to LGBT+ people. KI provided psychological assistance to 62 people and Labrys provided psychological assistance to 61 people and medical care to 34 people.

HOUSING

Due to social stigma and discrimination, LGBT+ people often choose to reside independently from their families. However, the influx of immigrants to the Kyrgyz Republic from Russia and subsequent rise in rental costs have obliged LGBT+ individuals to return to familial homes, despite facing emotional abuse (see under Access to Goods and Services).

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Since 2022, the persecution of civil society by the state has become more frequent, with foreign media and people speaking out against NGOs in Kyrgyzstan. An ultraconservative organiser in the US appealed to the Kyrgyz President to monitor the work of Kyrgyz Indigo.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Since amendments were made to the Law of the Kyrgyz Republic "On Civil Status Acts," in 2020, legal gender recognition for transgender individuals has become impossible.

In 2023, 22% of all documented cases concern the consequences of the aforementioned law change, including document alterations, document loss, conscription into the military, difficulties in securing housing, job searching, and more.

*Some of the information about Kyrgyzstan was shared with ILGA-Europe by activists and so far had not been public.



[KYRGYZSTAN WEB PAGE](#)
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LATVIA

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In January, the Ombudsperson called on politicians to refrain from prejudicial and stigmatising statements about same-sex couples during parliamentary debates on the Civil Union Law (see under Family).

Several politicians made hostile comments about Agnes Kalniņa, Latvia's Ambassador to Hungary, posing in front of the Latvian flag with her same-sex partner.

The police started an investigation after former MEP Andrejs Mamikins published a homophobic social media post in response to the election of President Rinkēvičs (see under Participation in Public, Cultural and Political Life).

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Mozaika documented nine anti-LGBT hate crimes this year. In May for instance, two people were attacked in Daugavpils for being LGBTQ+. One suspect was identified, but the police dropped the criminal case. Prosecutor General Jūris Stukāns questioned the legality of the police's decision and reopened the investigation.

Civil society reported that more and more people report hate crimes and police investigation has improved.

EDUCATION

Liene Voronenko, president of the Latvian National Centre for Education was suspended in September after releasing educational materials to help teachers run sex education classes and including information about gender identity and the existence of trans people.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Riga's mayor, Mārtiņš Staķis, raised the rainbow flag on the City Council's building ahead of the Pride festival, but was criticised by several conservative politicians who demanded its removal (see here, here, and here). In June, the mayor said the flag would not be removed, but apologised for not coordinating with Council members about flying it. Hundreds of businesses and organisations expressed support for Staķis's action and asked for the flag to stay on the building.

FAMILY

Following the Saeima's failure to adopt the Civil Union Law in December 2022, the Ombudsperson called on the parliament in January to respect, recognise and protect rainbow families.

In 2020 and 2021, the Supreme Court ruled that same-sex partners should be given civil status, and also are entitled to be recognised as a family. The Ministry of Justice again expressed commitment to legislating the issue. Prime Minister Krišjānis Kariņš also expressed hope for the adoption of the necessary legislative changes.

In April, the parliament amended the Law on the Protection of Children's Rights, setting out that children can only be adopted by foreign couples if they are in a heterosexual marriage - in line with the Constitution.

Dozens of same-sex couples have turned to administrative courts across Latvia requesting to be recognised as a family. 31 were recognised in 2022 and 40 in 2023, clearly signalling that the courts are ahead of legislators on the issue.

In November, the parliament adopted legislation on civil unions. The law finally grants legal recognition of same-sex couples. The couples can register their partnerships by contacting a notary. However, following the requests of right-wing MPs from United List, National Alliance and Latvian First to hold a nation-wide referendum with a view to cancel the amendments, the President has delayed the promulgation of the law. The MPs have two months to gather necessary signatories to call for a referendum on the issue.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

This year's Riga Pride was held under the motto 'We are Latvia too'. The festival ran between 29 May and 4 June. The march was the largest to date with over 7,000 participants, and an outdoor party was held for the first time this year. No major incidents were recorded, but one counter-protester was detained.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

(See also under Equality and Non-discrimination)

Riga's mayor Mārtiņš Staķis spoke at the opening of a new gay club, Skapis.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The parliament elected openly gay Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs as the country's new president, becoming the first LGBTI person to hold this post in the EU.

'Daugavpils', a film about being LGBTQ+ in Daugavpils was released this year.

PUBLIC OPINION

In March, the social opinion polling agency SKDS and Mozaika's poll found that half of the population had a neutral stance towards 'homosexual' people and 26% were accepting (2015: 9%).



LATVIA WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG



LIECHTENSTEIN

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In January, Bishop Haas cancelled the traditional mass for parliamentarians because the majority voted in favour of marriage equality. Haas had previously described marriage equality as ‘LGBT propaganda’ and a “diabolical attack”.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The government committed to commission a study on the lived experiences of LGBT people in the country.

On the occasion of Pride month in June, the bus company Liemobil introduced buses with a rainbow design.

FAMILY

In March, the parliament amended the law on adoption, ensuring that same-sex couples enjoy the same rights as heterosexual couples in all aspects of adoption. In a January interview, Hereditary Prince Alois said he would support the parliament’s decision. Stepchild adoption for same-sex couples is also available as of 1 June.

Debates on marriage equality continued this year. Fulfilling its promise to host broad public discussion on the topic before enacting any legislation, the government launched a consultation in the summer. In late 2022, 23 out of 25 parliamentarians voted in favour of drafting a proposal.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Liechtenstein held its second Pride event on 10 June in Schaan, featuring the first Pride march, panel discussion, performances, and a party. The event called for marriage equality, comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation, employment integration, and education on LGBTI issues in schools.

FLAY’s main annual event was held on the national holiday in August.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The Minister for Society and Culture issued a statement on the occasion of IDAHOBIT on 17 May.



LIECHTENSTEIN WEB PAGE
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LITHUANIA

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Three victims were identified in the investigation launched against MP Petras Gražulis in 2022 after he called LGBT people “degenerated” and “spreading diseases”. Seimas revoked Gražulis’ legal immunity in November. The investigations are still ongoing. This year, Gražulis tabled an amendment to the Law on the Protection of Minors from the Negative Effects of Public Information, which calls sex education in schools “sexualisation” and “sexual exploitation” of children. The Speaker of the Parliament said the attempt was more about political gain than genuine concern for children.

Mayoral candidate in Kelmė, Asta Zavadskienė (Homeland Union - Lithuanian Christian Democrats) called ‘homosexuality’ a disease that was important to recognise so children can be protected. Zavadskienė later apologised and said her statement was misinterpreted.

Former MEP Vytautas Landsbergis (Homeland Union) compared ‘homosexuals’ to paedophiles in a statement that was condemned by the Minister of Justice and other politicians. Landsbergis issued a defensive apology later.

A man was found guilty and fined 1,500 euro for an article about Baltic Pride in 2022, where he said ‘homosexuals’ should be “isolated and killed”. Another man was also fined 3,000 EURO for hate speech targeting gay politician Tomas Vytautas Raskevičius in 2022.

The news portal Kaunožinios received threats and faced homophobic comments on social media. Although the outlet reported these incidents to the police, authorities did not initiate an investigation.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Civil society continued to document cases of sexual violence, family violence, and LGBT people being lured on fake dates. At the same time, victims are scared to come forward in fear for victim blaming or additional harassment and trauma due to their identity.

A man painted hateful slogans and nazi symbols on a rainbow crossing in Vilnius in July - the police launched an investigation.

In December, a gay couple was violently attacked by a group of perpetrators, LGL prompted the General Prosecutor to start the pre-trial investigation.

EDUCATION

(See also under Bias-motivated Speech)

A draft amendment to the Law on Education was tabled in September. The amendment proposes integrating sex education into religion and ethics courses.

Following the ECHR ruling on *Macaté v. Lithuania* in January (see also under Freedom of Expression), the Ministry of Justice proposed to repeal the anti-LGBTI “propaganda” law. In response to this, MP Gražulis initiated a proposal to ban the “sexualisation of children”.

An LGL survey showed that LGBT students aged 14 to 19 feel more insecure about their sexual orientation in the classroom compared to the previous survey from 2017. Over six hundred students participated in the survey, examining their experiences between 2021 and 2022.

EMPLOYMENT

LGL held the first ever conference focusing on employment, Direction: Employment. Strengthening LGBTQ Workplace Inclusion, which was joined by the Minister of Economy and Innovation and several Ambassadors.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The Vilnius City Hall was lit up in rainbow colours on the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May. Previously, a number of politicians from the Lithuanian Farmers and Greens Union party requested LGBTI-related flags to be removed from state institutions.

FAMILY

In March, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights urged Lithuania to provide legal recognition for same-sex couples.

Three same-sex couples turned to the courts in April to have their partnerships legally recognised as marriages. The couples presented different requests to the courts, namely, the recognition of civil partnership, the recognition of marriage, and the recognition of a marriage formed abroad in the Lithuanian civil registry. The courts rejected the first attempt on 21 April, saying there was no legal basis for the claim. The second attempt was denied in July, but the couple appealed and asked the second-instance court to request clarification from the Constitutional Court on whether the current legal system is discriminatory.

The parliament's Human Rights Committee hosted a [conference](#) about parenting, including the rights and challenges of LGBT+ parents.

In May, the parliament [passed](#) the Civil Union Bill in its first reading with a [vote](#) of 60:52. The draft bill makes civil unions available for any couple regardless of gender. The draft is considered a much weaker version than the 2021 [Partnership Bill](#) and [seen](#) by many as too much of a compromise. Civil unions would be registered by a notary, not the civil registry office, and partners could not take each other's last names. The law would be a positive development in terms of inheritance rights and accessing a partner's health information. It however does not mention children at all, and like the previous Partnership Bill, does not allow for adoption either. The second vote was [put](#) on the agenda of the autumn session. The vote was delayed, and there has been no announcement of a new date.

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT, 22 embassies [expressed](#) support for the LGBTIQ+ community, including the right to be recognised as a family.

The Vilnius District Court [denied](#) the request of a long-term same-sex couple, who sought to legally require the Vilnius City Civil Registry Office to recognise their marriage. The couple intends to pursue cassation.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Vilnius Pride, [held](#) on 1 July, was [attended](#) by over 5,000 participants and was joined by the city's newly elected [mayor](#). This year, the march was [organised](#) by trans organisation Trans Autonomija and Demonstrate. Despite road closures, one car [drove](#) through the crowd on one of the main streets, which many understood as a dangerous provocation. No one was injured, but the police started an investigation. Several counter protesters [were](#) also in the streets.

LGL's demonstration in September (see Freedom of Expression) was [disrupted](#) by counter-protesters. The police did not take action to secure the safety of LGBTI protesters from hostile crowds. A pre-trial investigation was initiated regarding the actions of the counter protesters, however the actions of police officers have not been investigated, despite authorities [acknowledging](#) that mistakes were made (see under Police and Law Enforcement).

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In January, the European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) in

[Macatė v. Lithuania](#) that restricting and labelling a book of fairy tales as harmful to children for including LGBTIQ+ characters is a violation of Art. 10 (freedom of expression) (see more [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). To implement the judgement, the Ministry of Justice [prepared](#) the necessary amendments to the Law on the Protection of Minors from the Negative Effects of Public Information in July. With the proposed change, information about same-sex relationships and diverse families would no [longer](#) be [considered](#) harmful. Heated debates are [expected](#) on the issue. LGL started a [petition](#) in support of the legal amendments and [held](#) a protest in September.

The Lithuanian Family Movement [announced](#) plans to submit motions to municipality councils to adopt a declaration on "stopping gender propaganda and LGBTIQ+ ideology". The plans included motions in Kaunas, Šilalė, Šilutė and Pagėgiai. Some council members expressed their support (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Motions were tabled but rejected in [Prienai](#).

In November, the Parliament [rejected](#) the Ministry of Justice's proposal to repeal the "anti-LGBTIQ propaganda" law. President Gitanas Nausėda [said](#) that a repeal would give "green light to denigrate family."

HEALTH

Fulfilling its promise made in 2022, the Ministry of Health [made](#) monkeypox vaccines available and free for men who have sex with men.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Trans people continued to be able to access legal gender recognition (LGR) through a judicial procedure, without surgery or sterilisation.

In April, the Ombudsperson [reiterated](#) the call for a LGR procedure that is set out by law. The case L. v Lithuania remains under the enhanced supervision of the Council of Europe.

The Ministry of Justice took steps to create a working group on trans-specific issues, involving CSOs.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

An exhibition at the National Art Gallery [celebrates](#) the work of Veronika (Vėra) Šleivyte, the first Lithuanian photographer to capture love in lesbian relationships.



POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

(See also under Freedom of Assembly)

Following the disruptions of the LGL demonstration in September, the police officers conducting the investigation insisted on obtaining information about the activists' ethnicity, failed to protect the privacy of a victim during their testimony, and did not inform them about support mechanisms available.



LITHUANIA WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG

LUXEMBOURG

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech against LGBTIQ+ people was on the rise this year, particularly during Luxembourg Pride week, in what civil society views as the instrumentalisation of LGBTIQ+ people for political gain. Two MPs and several other members of the Alternative Democratic Reform Party (ADR) criticised the parliament's support for Pride week, sparking countless hateful comments online.

Hate speech also targeted a drag story time event in the public library in Esch, including threats of violence.

In July, Centre LGBTIQ+Cigale, together with Rosa Lëtzebuerg and eight other associations, launched a platform statement against right-wing hatred and hostility.

BODILY INTEGRITY

CSOs also continued to lobby for a ban on non-consensual medical interventions performed on intersex children. The working group, gathering representatives of the ministries of justice, health and family have not reached an agreement on the scope of a possible ban.

EDUCATION

The University of Luxembourg signed an agreement with Centre LGBTIQ+ Cigale to support, train, and empower LGBTIQ+ staff and students.

EMPLOYMENT

Luxembourg ranked first in the LGBT Worldwide Workplace Index, published in July.

FAMILY

In July, the parliament extended parental leave to non-gestational parents in same-sex couples. Leave was previously only available for fathers in a heterosexual couple or if the second parent in a same-sex couple proceeded with adoption.

The new Constitution, which entered into force on 1 July, enshrines that everyone has the right to start a family.

FOREIGN POLICY

Luxembourg joined the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary in April.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Luxembourg Pride Week took place in July this year. Roughly 3,500 people joined the Equality March on 8 July.

HEALTH

Civil society continued to lobby for a complete lifting of the blood donation restrictions on men who have sex with men (MSM) and women who have had sex with MSM. The Minister of Health supports the reform, but no policy changes were made this year, despite the blood shortage announced in January.

HOUSING

Some LGBTIQ+ people continued to face housing insecurity as a consequence of family rejection and unemployment.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

On May 17, Rosa Lëtzebuerg inaugurated the Rainbow Centre. This queer cultural centre is subsidised by the Ministry of Family, Integration, and the Greater Region.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Centre LGBTIQ+ Cigale's "Marc Grand" library entered the national network of libraries as the only one specialised on queer topics in Luxembourg.

In 2023, Rosa Lëtzebuerg launched the Queer Archive Luxembourg to document contemporary queer life in Luxembourg. In this context, parts of the exhibition 'LGBTIQ+ History in Luxembourg,' which originated from a project of the Queer Archive, were displayed in Berlin.

In the final agreement released on October 17, the government coalition incorporated 6 out of 37 of Rosa Lëtzebuerg's election demands, published before the elections.

These included the establishment of a Ministry for Gender Equality and Diversity, automatic recognition of same-sex parents in cases of assisted reproduction or surrogacy abroad, a ban on 'conversion practices,' and enabling full blood donation for men who have sex with men. However, Rosa Lëtzebuerg expressed disappointment with the new coalition government's reluctance toward broader reform.



LUXEMBOURG WEB PAGE
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MALTA

ASYLUM

Civil society continued to lobby for the government to remove all countries that criminalise LGBTIQ+ persons, such as Algeria, Bangladesh, Egypt, and Morocco, from the list of safe countries and to stop processing claims from LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers in accelerated procedures. This year's March for Peace in June also addressed these issues.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Online hate speech was widespread before and during EuroPride, hosted by Malta this year. For instance, countless hateful comments were posted about 'Dancing with Pride', a communal dance event championing diversity. Politicians and veteran television presenters implied that LGBTI people should hide from children. Eight human rights organisations issued a statement, calling out the hateful events. Several memes and posts were spread online ahead of EuroPride, conflating the event with "paedophilia" and "child grooming".

Following his acquittal in 2022, Catholic priest Fr David Muscat was found guilty on appeal of online hate speech in May for his statement that "gayness" was worse than "being possessed". The sentence is six months of prison with two years of suspension.

In another appeal, a man was found guilty of hateful comments in 2022 against the Pride March in Gozo, when he commented on a Gozo Pride Facebook post, "should bomb u all u freaks". He received a 3,000 EURO fine and six months of prison with three years of suspension.

Two suspects were acquitted in the murder trial of a trans sex worker, Sion Grech, back in 2005. Her family filed a judicial protest over the acquittal and the fact that the investigation took 18 years.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Several incidents took place this year in response to Pride events. Ahead of the opening ceremony of EuroPride, a poster about the event was vandalised in Valletta. A group of Pride participants in Gozo were verbally harassed after leaving the march and one of them was physically assaulted. The police started an investigation.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In February, three people were charged with promoting so-called 'conversion practices', including a man who claims to have "healed" from 'homosexuality' through his religion, and the two owners of a website that live streamed the man's interview. Several LGBTIQ+ people spoke about the harmful impact of the man's claims and of other forms of so-called 'conversion practices' (see here and here).

In March, a parliamentary committee approved amendments to the 2016 ban on these harmful practices, including clearer definitions of what counts as promotion and advertising.

EDUCATION

The Ministry of Education launched a new policy to make schools more inclusive to trans, gender variant and intersex children.

EMPLOYMENT

As part of EuroPride 2023, Malta's Chamber of Commerce together with the Allied Rainbow Communities (ARC) hosted a conference to raise awareness and promote engagement among industry experts and LGBTIQ+ communities and later signed a memorandum of understanding.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

On the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May, the government launched and presented the new and third LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and Action Plan (2023-2027). The plan covers 10 sectors and 94 measures to combat discrimination and violence. It includes police training; addressing data gaps; inclusive education and review of sex-ed curricula; mainstreaming sexual health; and capacity building of professionals working with asylum seekers and migrants. The plan was drafted in cooperation with the LGBTIQ Consultation Council, which includes a range of stakeholders, including civil society groups.

The SOGIGESC Unit of the Maltese government published its annual report in September during its annual conference.

After a year of consultation, the group Drachma Parents presented the manifesto of Parents of Trans Persons to the Speaker of the Parliament in January.

FOREIGN POLICY

Malta joined the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.

In May, activists gathered outside the Honorary Consulate of Slovakia in Malta to protest on the de facto ban on legal gender recognition.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Malta hosted EuroPride Valletta 2023 between 7-17 September, under the theme #EqualityFromTheHeart. The ten day festival featured cultural events, a Pride march, discussions, a conference, and a community dialogue held by the NCPE and with the participation of Maltese EU Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli. The conference and the Pride march



were attended by the Prime Minister. The Pride march, held on 16 September, gathered thousands, including the staff of the NCPE, and featured Christina Aguilera as the final performer. The Maltese President of the European Parliament, Roberta Metsola, did not join the events.

Several human rights groups and the former president Marie Louise Coleiro Preca urged the organisers to withdraw the invitation of the 2018 EuroVision winner Netta Barzilai from Israel and show that EuroPride does not support apartheid and occupation. EuroPride did not follow suit. Several people chanted 'Free Palestine' during Barzilai's performance. Gozo, a more conservative area in the Maltese Islands, held its second Pride march on 9 September. One incident took place (see under Bias-motivated Violence).

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Nationalist MP Julie Zahra criticised a theatre performance and workshop in Żiguzajg, a cultural festival for children, about gender fluidity. Several politicians, including the Minister of Culture, condemned her statements and called them anti-trans and anti-gender sentiments. The ADPD international secretary wrote to the Commissioner for Children urging an investigation into reported intimidation and harassment of attendees by members of an ultra-conservative party. The commissioner asked the police to investigate.

HEALTH

The media reported in July that Malta's sexual health clinic has a six-month waiting list for routine check-ups. In July, the Ministry of Health announced that three new GU community clinics were set to be opened. Checkpoint Malta carried out free community testing throughout the year and during EuroPride 2023.

Civil society has been campaigning for a new national sexual health policy, last updated in 2010, and carrying on awareness-raising campaigns. Malta has one of the highest HIV transmission rates in Europe. PEP is not provided for free to people involved in consensual sexual relations, nor to survivors of sexual assault or health workers injured by needles. The Minister for Health stated that free PEP and PrEP will be part of the new sexual health strategy, which they said will be out for public consultation later in 2023.

HOUSING

MGRM's Dar il-Qawsalla (Rainbow House), which will provide housing to LGBTIQ people kicked out of their homes, is on track to open in 2024.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The Ministry for the Family and Children's Rights will provide financial support to MGRM in a three year agreement to continue providing services to the LGBTIQ+ community.

INTERSECTIONALITY

The National Strategic Policy for Active Ageing (2023-2030), presented in January, includes actions to support LGBTIQ+ elderly people.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The exhibition Tender and Masculine was hosted in Rosa Kwir in January.

In September, several cultural events and performances were held in Valletta as part of EuroPride 2023, including exhibitions, theatre, concerts, drag shows, literary events, and more.

PUBLIC OPINION

The Parliamentary Secretariat for Reforms launched guidelines for media reporting on the LGBTIQ+ community.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Malta's Parliament legalised abortion in cases where a woman is at risk of dying. The majority of MPs voted in favor, removing Malta from the list of the last four countries with a complete abortion ban. The bill allows for abortion after the approval of three doctors and only when the pregnant person's life is at risk.

Abortion in cases of rape, incest and domestic abuse are still prohibited. Pro-choice activists criticised the amendments. MGRM joined the pro-choice civil society coalition this year, and participated in the pro-choice rally on September 30. There, Cynthia Chircop, coordinator of MGRM, stressed the paradox of Malta's civil rights record and added "LGBTIQ rights and the right to reproductive healthcare, including abortion, have one common foundation; bodily autonomy. This is a fundamental right."



[MALTA WEB PAGE](#)

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MOLDOVA

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

A trans woman was denied service in a bank due to the mismatch between her documents and her gender expression. Her complaint to the Equality Council brought a decision confirming the discrimination and recommendation to the bank to take measures to prevent such situations in the future.

In June, an online news site disclosed the location of GENDERDOC-M's Trans Camp that was planned to take place in July. Following the news and threats to the originally designated hotel, the organisers moved the event to another location.

ASYLUM

Civil society organised help for LGBT+ people fleeing Ukraine and Russia.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Despite the 2022 law making anti-LGBT hate speech and hate crimes a criminal offence, hate speech by politicians and religious leaders remained a serious issue this year, as highlighted by the Ombudsperson. In January, the Metropolitan of Chisinau, Vladimir said that the Orthodox Church would firmly respond if Moldova provided legal recognition to same-sex couples (see more under Family) and that the authorities would become "traitors" to promote foreign values and the "propaganda of sin". Genderdoc-M filed a hate speech report against the Metropolitan. In June, several politicians made hostile statements about the Pride march (see here and here). Paediatrician Igor Pletosu called LGBT people "mentally ill" in June. Hate speech, misinformation and stigmatising statements were also common in the lead up to the municipal elections in November.

A man was found guilty of hate speech and fined for hate messages and threats to an activist last year.

A man who threatened to kill gay ex-soldier Marin Pavlescu (see under Police and Law Enforcement), was arrested upon entering the country in June.

A two-day event bringing together thousands of evangelical Christians, known for their anti-LGBT views, was held in Chisinau - the organisers met with the mayor.

GENDERDOC-M revealed this year's anti-LGBT awards in June, featuring Orthodox Bishop Markel, the leader of "Our Party" Renato Usatii and Communist Party MP Diana Karaman. Usatii,

for instance, said in January that he would give a house in Italy to same-sex newlyweds as long as they get married there and move from Moldova. Karaman had made several statements against Pride and also against the Istanbul Convention. The Shor party, which was found to be unconstitutional and banned this year, received the main prize.

Hate speech by politicians increased during the campaigns for local elections. For example, the Socialist Party distributed a newspaper that said "Ban on gay parades and LGBT propaganda in schools". In October, Maxim Moroşan, a candidate for the mayor of Bălţi and a TV presenter engaged in a homophobic dialogue with threats and incitement to hatred during the TV show *Evening Conversation*. Both cases have been reported to the police.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Several hate crimes took place this year and several LGBT people reported domestic violence cases to civil society. In June, a gay man was attacked while he was walking to, and in his car. The police detained the attackers and classified the case as a criminal offence.

In September, the Renaissance Party organised a protest in the city centre against European integration. At the protest, a flag with rainbow colours and the EU flag colours was torn apart by the party leader, Alexandr Nesterovskii.

In October, a young man was attacked outside a nightclub by other club customers with homophobic slurs and physical violence. Neither the security nor police identified the attackers. A misdemeanour case has been opened.

EDUCATION

In February, a school psychologist in Chisinau told students to "not tolerate 'dysfunctions' like lesbians, gays, and bisexuals" and "report those people to her" so she can "cure them". GENDERDOC-M reported the case and suggested the Ministry of Education hold awareness training for psychologists at schools. The Ministry did not accept the offer.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The buildings of the EU Delegation and the US Embassy raised a rainbow flag on the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May. 30 Embassies joined this year's IDAHOBIT statement and urged the authorities to protect Pride participants in June. In his 2022 annual report, the Ombudsperson called on the state to protect the rights of LGBT people.



FAMILY

Following the ruling of the European Court of Human Rights on [Fedotova v. Russia](#) in January, family rights [became](#) a heated topic in Moldova. The Court affirmed that the lack of legal recognition for same-sex couples is a violation of the right to private and family life (Art. 8). Moldova's Metropolitan for instance [called](#) the judgement "outrageous" and ex-President Igor Dodon [said](#) recognition for same-sex couples would never happen in Moldova. In June, the People's Advocate, Moldova's NHRI, [said](#) the state will have to find a solution to comply with the ECtHR ruling. Currently, the Constitution defines family as marriage between a man and a woman and the Family Code sets out that same-sex marriage is not permitted.

Six couples turned to the authorities to request legal recognition, including in the form of marriage (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)) - all six were [denied](#). Several couples shared their stories in interviews this year (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). Six couples [turned](#) to the courts after the registry denied their request.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

On 25 May, the National Assembly of Gagauzia [adopted](#) a law banning 'LGBT propaganda'. Civil society firmly [condemned](#) the move, reminding that such a ban violates Moldova's Constitution. The Ombudsperson [issued](#) a statement reminding of the obligation to uphold freedom of expression and assembly without discrimination.

This year [marked](#) Moldova's 22nd Pride Festival, which [focused](#) on the theme of same-sex partnership and marriage equality, and was held between 12-18 June. The [Pride march](#) on 18 June was the [biggest](#) to date, [attended](#) by over 500 people. A number of MPs from the ruling Action and Solidarity party (PAS) were [present](#), but one of them [said](#) Moldova was not ready for marriage equality.

No attacks were recorded and [fewer](#) police officers were present than before, which the organisers [welcomed](#) as a positive step towards marching freely. Small groups of counter-protesters [were](#) present, [holding](#) religious symbols and chanting "shame".

A week [before](#) the march, Chisinau's mayor Ion Ceban [said](#) he would not give the organisers a permit - similar to last year. Nevertheless, the mayor [had](#) no mandate to ban Pride. The PAS mayoral candidate [condemned](#) Ceban's statements and said he would support the Pride march. Several memes were [posted](#), making fun of Ceban's stance. Ceban was re-elected in local elections in November.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Disney's *Strange World* was [removed from](#) cinema schedules in the Transnistrian region due to alleged 'LGBT propaganda'.

In February, Alexandr Nesterovschi, a deputy from the Communists and Socialists Bloc, [proposed](#) the inclusion of a draft law on the parliamentary plenary session's agenda that bans LGBTI "propaganda" in schools. The parliamentary majority declined this initiative.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

This year, the Ministry of Justice continued to work on the legal gender recognition law. In 2022, the Equality Council [established](#) that the lack of a legal framework constitutes discrimination against trans people.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Soldier Marin Pavlescu, who had [suffered](#) homophobic [abuse](#) and mocking at his army base in 2021, [filed](#) a lawsuit against the [Ministry of Defense](#).



[MOLDOVA WEB PAGE](#)
[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](#)

MONACO

EMPLOYMENT

A bank and a hotel, two sponsors of this year's Pride, introduced diversity and inclusion programmes in the workplace.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

AS Monaco's players wore a rainbow jersey on IDAHOBIT in May.

A bank (see under Employment) lit up its building for Pride month in June.

FAMILY

Following its 2022 country report, ECRI organised a roundtable in Monaco in April. The roundtable focused on ECRI's recommendations, including the importance of tackling hate speech and ensuring that same-sex and heterosexual couples enjoy the same rights. ECRI highlighted that the recognition of same-sex marriages formed abroad are very difficult in Monaco, jeopardising family rights.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Monaco held its second Pride event this year. Over 100 representatives from the government, the National Council, businesses and others gathered on 1 June.



[MONACO WEB PAGE](#)
[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG)



MONTENEGRO

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-LGBT and misogynistic hate speech and political rhetoric continued to be a serious issue and civil society continued calling for appropriate sanctions.

Psychologist Petar Marković, who wore non-gender conforming clothes on a TV show in May, was targeted by hate comments, threats, and several physical attacks. The Council for Citizen Control of Police Work has monitored the effectiveness of the police's response and civil society called for protection for Marković.

Queer Montenegro, Spektra, Juventas and Stana called on Radio Television Montenegro to cancel the show "The City I Love" for its homophobic and misogynistic content. The same organisations also filed a complaint against a civil servant who used homophobic slurs in emails to the Ministry of Agriculture. LGBT Forum Progress reported over 222 online hate speech cases between January and October.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The European Commission's report on Montenegro highlighted that misdemeanour charges are overused in the justice system and more capacity was necessary to deal with hate crimes and hate speech. The Commission's Delegation expressed concern about the rise in hate crimes against LGBTIQ+ people. Distrust in the authorities and low reporting rates also remained an issue.

Two perpetrators in a 2019 assault against a trans man were sentenced to four and six months in prison. The courts previously gave eight months to both men. Spektra expressed concern about the lengthy procedure and prejudice in the judiciary.

As part of its fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR), UN States recommended Montenegro to collect data on domestic violence, disaggregated by sexual orientation and gender identity.

EMPLOYMENT

Economic marginalisation and discrimination in employment continued to be serious issues for the community (see here and here). Companies that have equality policies in place that cover sexual orientation and gender identity, remain the minority. Spektra launched a survey on the socio-economic position of transgender, gender-variant and intersex people, with a special focus on work and employment, housing and health issues.

In April, LGBT Forum Progress published the results of the research "Montenegrin companies and anti-discrimination", which was a groundbreaking study conducted for the first time in Montenegro. Only 28.1% of companies stated that their anti-discrimination policy explicitly mentions sexual orientation and gender identity.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In May, the government adopted a new Action Plan for the implementation of Montenegro's 2019–2023 LGBTI Strategy. The Action Plan envisions more research and training for the police, judiciary, teachers, medical professionals and civil servants. The government put in place 45,000 euro to accomplish this. In October, civil society started calling for a new strategy as the current one expires at the end of the year. In June, Juventas, Queer Montenegro, Spektra and Stana refused to attend a meeting with the Minister for Human and Minority Rights, Fatmir Đeka for his failure to make progress on LGBTI rights equality. The Minister, for instance, failed to appoint a director for the human rights directorate, which caused the delay in the implementation of the Strategy; slowed down the LGR law reform process; failed to intervene when politicians engaged in hate speech; and did not make progress on family rights.

As part of its fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR), UN States recommended Montenegro to tackle discrimination and violence against LGBTIQI people. The Ministry of Minority and Human Rights continued the preparation of the anti-discrimination law, with support from the EU.

In June, incoming President Jakov Milatovic convened his first meeting with civil society organisations, including those working on LGBTI rights, and assured them of his support.

FAMILY

According to Queer Montenegro, more than 100 couples have entered a same-sex partnership since the law entered into force in 2021. Most ceremonies were held in Budva. The amendment process of roughly 20 by-laws that are necessary for the implementation of the 2020 same-sex partnership law remained stalled this year, much to civil society's concern. As part of its fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR), UN States recommended Montenegro to remedy this gap and adopt the necessary by-laws. The European Commission echoed this concern in May and in November.

Children of same-sex parents, one of whom is a Montenegrin citizen, continue to be unable to access citizenship. The



Ministry of Interior has delayed deciding on the issue over the past six years. This year, the family and Queer Montenegro sued the state to challenge the discrimination, after the ministry rejected the mediation initiative.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Transpozijum IX / Transposium 9, a rich cultural, educational, and social event bringing together trans activists from the region, was held in Petrovac in September, in cooperation with Trans Mreza Balkan.

The 11th Montenegro Pride was held in October, organised by Queer Montenegro, featuring a range of events. The Pride march in Podgorica was held on 21 October and was attended by almost 3,000 people and several government representatives, Ministers, and the Ombudsman. No incidents were recorded. With this year's motto 'Self-determination', Pride organisers called for a legal gender recognition law that is based on self-determination (see here and here).

HEALTH

CSOs continued responding to the growing need for mental health support in the community and called for targeted funding. A research study published by Spektra about necessary psychosocial support programmes for transgender, gender-variant and intersex survivors of violence was presented in July. A discussion on the mental health burden of LBQ women was held during Pride week in October.

PrEP became available for free through a CSO-sponsored programme by Queer Montenegro, Juventas and partner NGOs in October.

An analysis and research by LGBTIQ Social Centre, published in September, found that 77% of LGBTIQ persons fear that they will be rejected and/or discriminated against if others found out about their sexual orientation and/or gender identity (SOGI). This fear is predominantly caused by perceived hatred of others towards the LGBTIQ community (56%). The data also shows that 69% of LGBTIQ persons would not seek specialised support or mental health counselling, while 37% have no trust in the public healthcare system.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

LGBTIQ activists were again targeted by hate speech throughout the year.

Death threats to the LGBTIQ activist Danijel Kalezić happened

over the past two years have not been adequately investigated, and there is no available information on the actions of the relevant authorities, nor any person prosecuted.

LGBTIQ civil society faced huge issues with the continuation of their work due to lack of funding.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Legal gender recognition reform continued this year and civil society kept calling for a procedure that is based on self-determination, including as the main theme of this year's Pride (see under Freedom of assembly). The Working Group, which included Spektra and Juventas, prepared the draft law in late 2022, and continued meeting this year. The draft is endorsed by the government and the LGBTIQ Strategy sets out that it should have been adopted in 2023. However, the draft had not yet been sent to Parliament by the end of the year.

As part of its fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR), UN States recommended Montenegro to introduce legal gender recognition procedures that uphold the dignity, self-identification, and autonomy of trans people.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Montenegro held its general elections in June. Civil society analysed the list of candidates and party programs, finding a serious gender gap; a complete lack of candidates who are openly LGBTIQ+ and very little coverage of gender equality and LGBTIQ+ issues by parties.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

LGBT Forum Progress, Queer Montenegro, Spektra and CeMI trained police officers, judges and prosecutors.

PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion regarding the LGBTIQ community remains negative. A survey conducted by LGBTIQ Social Centre in 2023, published in September, found that 80% of citizens of Montenegro believe that "homosexuality is deviant, unnatural, and not normal".

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In March, the Ministry of Health adopted regulations related to the Law on Medically Assisted Fertilisation. The regulations ban anyone who had engaged in same-sex relations in the past five years from donating gametes. They also exclude women in



a same-sex partnership from undergoing medically assisted reproduction. 20 NGOs launched a joint call for the withdrawal of the regulations, which are explicitly discriminatory. The Ombudsperson started investigating the regulations.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The LGBTIQ Shelter remains closed, due to continuous lack of systemic support. The Shelter had to temporarily be closed in January 2022 and remained so throughout 2023.



MONTENEGRO WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG

NETHERLANDS

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Several people [reported](#) being harassed by Uber and Bolt drivers during Pride.

ASYLUM

LGBTI asylum seekers continue to be denied status on the basis of stereotypical criteria, unlawfully, and in fast-tracked procedures. LGBT Asylum Support [launched](#) the #NietGayGenoeg (Eng: Not gay enough) campaign and presented their call to the parliament. The group also continued [documenting](#) violence and harassment against LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers in reception centres, while several people were [deported](#) or awaiting deportation.

Two LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers committed suicide, several others [made](#) attempts, and at least six people [went](#) on hunger strike this year. The organisation's report [found](#) that over half of LGBTI asylum seekers who responded felt unsafe in the asylum application and three-quarters went back into the closet. The organisation [held](#) a sit-in during the Pride march in the capital in July.

A 21-year-old transgender refugee from Russia [committed](#) suicide in an asylum camp in Drachten.. She had previously complained about the unavailability of hormone therapy.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

(See also under Participation in Public, Cultural and Political Life)

Threats and anti-LGBTI+ speech [increased sharply](#) online. Transgender Netwerk's (formerly known as Transgender Netwerk Nederland) annual media monitoring report found that anti-trans rhetoric still remains a serious issue. Another study affirmed the findings, showing that anti-trans hate online has significantly [increased](#) over the past years and instances multiplied by five between 2020–2023. Anti-trans speech remained common during the parliamentary debates.

Transgender Netwerk and Transvisie [filed](#) a complaint about an article on trans healthcare in the Volkskrant.

In June, the Appeals Board of the Advertising Code Committee [re-affirmed](#) that Gendertwijfel's (Eng: Gender Doubt) radio spot against the new Transgender Act [contained](#) factually incorrect information and therefore damaged the public's trust in advertising.

In May, the court [found](#) that the firing of a teaching assistant at a school, who said homosexuality was sinful and led to hell, was justified.

Homophobic chants were common at football games again this year (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). Following the Dutch Football Federation's (KNVB) [announcement](#) in June that no agreement was made on how to tackle homophobic speech in stadiums, civil society and some sports clubs [launched](#) a petition. In July, KNVB announced they would take action from the 2023/2024 season onwards. Those who chant discriminatory slogans will be warned if the chants are repetitive, prolonged and involve many, and the game will be suspended after two warnings. Perpetrators can be banned from stadiums for up to 17 months.

In October, KNVB [announced](#) it would no longer encourage clubs actively to join the OneLove campaign.

The suspect in the 2003 murder of a migrant trans woman sex worker was [arrested](#) in July.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Hate crimes continued to be a serious issue (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)), including against minors. The government [reported](#) 2,654 cases of anti-LGBTI+ violence and discrimination in 2022, up from 2,471 in 2021. Many attacks occurred against symbols of the rainbow community; a rainbow flag was [set](#) on fire in Delft in May and in [Wageningen](#) in June, and another one was [binned](#) in Haarlemmermeer; an intersex-themed Pride [exhibition](#) in Alkmaar was [vandalised](#) in May and a monument remembering LGBTIQ+ victims of Nazi persecution in the Hague was [vandalised](#) in July and again in [November](#). In May, a group of 20 [threatened](#) a COC support group for LGBTI+ teenagers in Eindhoven, attacked a volunteer and took away their rainbow flag. After a [call for solidarity from COC](#), many people, companies and almost 70 local and regional governments put up a rainbow flag in response.

EenVandaag's annual Pride survey [found](#) that 28% had negative experiences the past year (2021: 41%), and only 23% consider the Netherlands to be a leading country in LGBTI equality (2019: 51%).

CSOs continued to urge the government to take action. The [Rainbow Ballot Agreement of 2023](#) includes measures like tougher sanctions, more capacity for the police and more inclusive legal protection against LGBTI+ discrimination. In October, Queen Máxima [met](#) with victims, NGO's and authorities to discuss anti-LGBTI+ violence.

A minor was [sentenced](#) to community service and two years of probation for assaulting a trans asylum seeker on 1 January.

BODILY INTEGRITY

The Dutch professional association for psychiatrists [issued](#) an apology for [harming](#) and trying to ‘cure’ LGBTIQ+ clients because they considered them ‘disordered’ in the past. The bill on banning so-called ‘conversion practices’ was [submitted](#) by the parties D66, VVD, PvdA, GroenLinks, SP and the Party for the Animals to the Lower House in [October](#). The bill sets out a 22,500 EURO fine or one to two years in prison for those administering the harmful practice. The law is part of the 2021 [Rainbow Ballot Box Agreement](#), which was adopted as part of the coalition agreement.

In July, the Minister of Education and the Minister of Health, Welfare and Sport [announced](#) an exploration of the ‘pros and cons’ of a ban on medically unnecessary and non-consensual treatments on intersex children. In January, a Parliament-initiated study [confirmed](#) that the surgeries continue to take place in the Netherlands, reporting up to 8461 surgical interventions in a period of seven years (2014-2020) of which many were medically non-necessary. Civil society continued to [lobby](#) for a ban throughout the year, including through a petition that almost 90 organisations [signed](#).

Trans and intersex people who were forcibly [sterilised](#) in the past as a requirement for legal gender recognition could [apply](#) for financial [compensation](#) of 5,000 euro until 18 October.

EDUCATION

In December, about half a million students in more than 3,000 schools participated in the 14th Purple Friday, organised by COC’s [GSA Network](#).

EMPLOYMENT

The government’s proposed Municipal Supervision of Sex Businesses Act would make it possible for municipalities to register each sex worker. Civil society is [concerned](#) about the discriminatory bill that will harm sex workers.

Introducing transition leave [remained stalled](#) this year, but more and more companies provide this to their employees (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Civil society [addressed the stagnation](#) of LGBTI+ emancipation in The Netherlands during Pride Amsterdam 2023.

Organisations asked government and political parties for strong measures, with [research](#) for the first time showing a small decrease in acceptance among the population, the country taking [fourteenth place](#) in the Rainbow Europe Index, [increased](#) online hate speech, more reported [incidents](#) of violence and discrimination and [increased](#) feelings of unsafety.

55 rainbow municipalities [continued](#) their work this year, and with government [funding](#).

Transgender Network’s annual monitoring report [found](#) that the number of reported anti-trans discrimination cases almost doubled from 78 in 2021 to 149 in 2022. This was the highest annual number to date.

After almost 20 years of campaigning by COC, in January the Senate [adopted](#) Constitutional amendments to cover sexual orientation and disability in the prohibition of discrimination. During the parliamentary procedures, it was made explicit that the existing constitutional ban on discrimination on the basis of sex, includes gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. The provision [entered](#) into force in February. After calls from civil society, the Dutch government published its first policy document addressing [emancipation of bi+ people](#), probably the largest group in the Dutch LGBTI+ community.

FAMILY

Civil society continued calling for legal recognition for families with more than two parents. The outgoing Cabinet stated that recognition should be introduced, but would be the task of the new coalition.

The government [tabled](#) an altruistic surrogacy bill in June. The rules are currently unclear, [jeopardising](#) the child’s best interests, and creating uncertainty for the surrogate and the intended parents. The bill [envisions](#) automatic legal recognition for the intended parents, financial support for the surrogate, and a registry where the child can look into the surrogacy agreements made by their families.

The regulation [giving](#) gestational trans men the option to be featured as ‘parent who gave birth’ on their child’s birth certificate, [entered](#) into force in March.

FOREIGN POLICY

The Netherlands [joined](#) the European Commission’s infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.

HEALTH

In May, the Minister of Health [shared](#) the findings of the Mijn gender, wiens zorg? (Eng: My gender, whose care?) research project, which [concludes](#) that due to a lack of knowledge, society and general healthcare settings are currently unable to support trans people and that there is a parallel need for temporarily increased capacity in specialised trans healthcare to address the years-long [waiting times](#). The Minister [proposed](#) a twin-track approach to improve the situation.

A second research report [concluded](#) that the increased demand for trans healthcare does not necessarily mean there are more trans people than before, but that due to more information, trans people may recognise their identity and find healthcare providers more easily than before.

In September, the right-wing Forum for Democracy (FVD) [presented](#) a bill at the House of Representatives to ban puberty blockers and hormonal therapy for minors. A few days later, the House [voted down](#) the motion with a clear majority.

The Minister of Health [announced](#) that PrEP would be more accessible from August 2024 onwards. Amsterdam is close to [achieving](#) zero new HIV transmissions per year.

Monkeypox vaccination [continued](#) this year after an increase in cases in March.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

COC celebrated 50 years of official recognition by the government this year. The Ministry of Finance [issued](#) a commemorative euro coin in honour of COC's work.

Trans [activist](#), writer and researcher Alejandra Ortiz [received](#) the Winq Community Award.

INTERSECTIONALITY

After calls from civil society, parliament in January [adopted](#) a resolution demanding the government to more intensively counter intersectional forms discrimination.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Civil society continued to lobby for the new LGR bill to be adopted (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), but the law reform remained stalled this year. In September, the standing committee on Justice and Security of the House of Representatives [voted](#) to halt the process until a new cabinet takes office, arguing that the bill is 'controversial!'

The bill provides for LGR on the basis of self-determination and expert [statements](#) would [no longer](#) be required. However, gaps [remain](#). First, those under 16 [must go](#) through a court procedure. Second, trans refugees need to present a birth certificate from their home countries. Third, married trans mothers are not granted automatic and presumed parenthood, contrary to how a cisgender father would be recognised.

Civil society continued to lobby this year to make it easier for anyone to access alternative gender markers, and the Minister of Education, Culture and Science [expressed support](#). A Rutgers study [found](#) that 1.8% of the Dutch population over 16 identify as outside the gender binary. In October, the District Court in The Hague [ruled](#) that there was an ongoing distinction between binary and non-binary trans people, the latter being unable to change their gender markers. The court acknowledges that the change is not simple and requires lawmakers to amend a range of laws, but stated that its patience was not infinite. Meanwhile, the online [petition](#) calling for alternative gender markers launched in 2021, has gathered over 10,000 by the end of September and was [presented](#) to the House of Representatives in late October. On October 27, Lisa van Ginneken MP [presented](#) a draft law for making alternative gender markers more easily accessible for anyone, which was welcomed by NGOs.

The municipalities of [Rotterdam](#), [Utrecht](#), [Amersfoort](#) and [Deventer](#) announced that they would reimburse the costs of legal gender recognition, which can amount to 400 EURO. Amsterdam [plans](#) to do the same.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

(See under Bias-motivated Speech)

The [Rainbow Ballot Box Agreement 2023](#) by COC, addressing issues such as countering violence and discrimination, acceptance in schools and improvement of LGBTI+ human rights, was signed by ten political parties ahead of the general elections in November.

In February, NOC*NSF [presented](#) their updated Guide to Gender and Sex Diverse People in Sports, which was welcomed by Transgender Netwerk.

Rikkie Kollé, a trans woman, [won](#) Miss Netherlands 2023. She was targeted by endless hate comments afterwards.

The Dutch competitor, Solange Dekker, [won](#) Miss International Queen 2023, a beauty pageant for trans women.

PUBLIC OPINION

A poll from the media outlet Hart Van Nederland found that two-thirds of the Dutch population have no issues with gender-neutral toilets.



NETHERLANDS WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG



NORTH MACEDONIA

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech remained a serious issue and despite countless reports being filed, the authorities took no meaningful action. The European Commission's country report on North Macedonia also highlighted that hate speech and hate crimes remain common, without an effective response from the justice system. Comments on social media often include death threats and calls for violence against the community. Several cases were submitted to the Media Ethics Council and The Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (CPPD) for review and prosecution. In April for instance, the Council found that Alfa TV's negative reporting on state funding for the Pride Festival violated media ethics.

The anti-gender movement gained more ground, spreading countless hostile and hateful statements and posts all year (see here, here, here, here). Politicians, religious leaders and newly formed organisations were among the most common perpetrators of hate speech, but intellectuals, academics, and public figures also joined in. In March for instance, Bishop Jakov Stobiski of Strumica said "transgenderism" was a "disorder" and the work of the devil and incited hatred against civil society organisations and activists. In June, he called LGBT people "sick" and "Satan's emissaries". The CPPD established that the bishop's statements were discriminatory on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity. Following the bishop's refusal to apologise, the Commission filed a criminal complaint for misdemeanour.

Legislative initiatives were also demonised by the Orthodox Church who launched a misinformation campaign against the Gender Equality Law and the amendment of the Birth Registry Law concerning legal gender recognition (see here, here, here, here). In June, Archbishop Stefan called for a nationwide demonstration against the reform of the Gender Equality Law and the Birth Registry Law. The Archbishop alleged that under these new laws could result in "different genders could emerge every day"; and that it would harm "women and children" in particular. The Platform for Gender Equality, the National Network against Homophobia and Transphobia, and the Network Against Discrimination condemned the hostile and stigmatising statements. In addition to gender equality, the Church also attacked the concept of gender identity and the Istanbul Convention.

Sexuality education was also a common target. In March for instance, the Coalition for the Protection of Children equated sex education with the promotion of pornography and paedophilia.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In September, the Basic Criminal Court of Skopje sentenced a man to two years in prison for assaulting an LGBTI activist in 2022, applying the aggravating grounds of sexual orientation of the Criminal Code.

BODILY INTEGRITY

ECRI published its report on North Macedonia in September and called for a ban on medically unnecessary and non-consensual surgeries on intersex children.

EDUCATION

In March, parents that are supported by anti-gender groups campaigned against a first-grade class handout that included a gay couple and their child. The school defended the material.

The Orthodox Church demonised comprehensive sexuality education throughout the year. HERA warned about the dangerous spread of misinformation and false allegations about sex education, and harassment of civil society organisations. The 2021 Law on Prevention of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence envisioned sex education in schools and violence prevention, but implementation has been lacking since.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The parliamentary Intergroup on LGBTI people's rights celebrated IDAHOBIT again this year. President Stevo Pendarovski also published a supportive statement.

Following the adoption of the new Gender Equality Strategy in 2022, the draft bill on Gender Equality was published in June, which sparked intense anti-gender backlash and hate speech (see Bias Motivated Speech). The bill would distinguish between 'sex' and 'gender'. Under the influence of the anti-gender movement, the Minister of Labor and Social Policy did not continue the process of adoption of the law.

In its September report, ECRI warned that the government is yet to carry out a comprehensive study on all forms of discrimination against LGBT persons. ECRI expressed disappointment that the 2022 Equality and Anti-discrimination Strategy hardly mentions LGBTI people. It recommended that an LGBTI working group be set up to facilitate communication between the government and civil society.

In November, the Parliament started the procedure for the election of four members of the Commission for Prevention



and Protection from Discrimination. The Network for Protection against Discrimination demanded a transparent election based on merit and in accordance with legal criteria, demanding that all four mandates be for five years. After a public interview, the parliamentary commission adopted a proposal list in which three candidates were chosen because of party affiliation without particular experience or knowledge.

One candidate, a co-ordinator of the Network for Protection against Discrimination and an advocate for LGBTI rights, was elected for the term of one year and two months. Civil society accused the Assembly of partisan and illegal elections and of political discrimination.

FAMILY

ECRI urged the government to provide some form of legal recognition to same-sex couples.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

In October, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in D.H. and others v North Macedonia that the 2008 police action against sex workers, including detention, physical abuse, forced medical tests, and the publication of the victims' photographs without their consent violated the applicants' freedom from inhuman and degrading treatment (Art. 3) and their right to privacy (Art. 8).

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The 11th Skopje Pride Weekend art and cultural festival was held between 1-13 June and featured discussions, exhibitions, performances, and parties again this year.

The fourth Skopje Pride march was held on 24 June, with the motto 'Loud and Proud!'. CSOs published safety guidelines ahead of the march, advising participants to avoid the Church-led demonstration (see under Bias-motivated Speech), and to remove Pride-related symbols before and after the event. The march was attended by thousands, including several Ministers and MPs. No incidents were recorded.

HOUSING

Housing remained challenging for many LGBTI people. The Safe House shelter provided housing to LGBTI persons, but funding by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy is limited.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Following the much criticised withdrawal of the draft Civil Registry Law in 2022, the MPs from the Inter-parliamentary group for LGBTI rights announced in January that they would put (LGR) back on the agenda. On Trans Day of Visibility, Transforma held a demonstration calling for the law to be adopted.

The new draft law entered into its first parliamentary reading in June. In July, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights called on the parliament to adopt the draft, despite the ongoing pushback from anti-LGBTI and anti-trans groups and the Orthodox Church. The draft sets out an LGR procedure without medical interventions or diagnosis as requirements, but excludes minors and only features male and female gender markers. The Commissioner recommended to the government that it remove the mandatory divorce requirement. The law was not put on the parliament's agenda until the end of the year. With a lack of clear LGR procedures, North Macedonia continues to fail to comply with the 2019 European Court of Human Rights judgement in X v. FYROM.

In September, ECRI called on the government to adopt a clear LGR framework. In October, the government submitted an updated plan of action to the ECtHR, saying the law may be adopted before the end of the year.

Transforma launched a campaign about the importance of the law for trans people in the country.

Four trans people changed their gender marker, all of them on the basis of self-determination. The procedures were faster compared to the previous year.

PUBLIC OPINION

A poll found that over half of North Macedonians support sex education in school, but less approve that LGBT topics should be included.

Coalition Margins published a study in October, finding that homophobic views are common regardless of political affiliation.



[NORTH MACEDONIA WEB PAGE](#)
[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG)

NORWAY

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Trans people and allies continued to be targeted by the rapidly growing anti-gender movement. Much of the hostile rhetoric was about access to trans-specific healthcare, particularly for minors, legal gender recognition and generally against the trans movement.

The Conservative party, which in the 2023 local election received 0,5 % of the total votes and became Norway's thirteenth largest party, targeted FRI's education program Rosa Kompetanse, claiming that it was linked to paedophilia and nazi ideology; that it tells children to break from gender and sexuality norms; that it makes children "gender-confused"; among others.

Trans-inclusive women's organisations and other NGOs continued to be targeted by anti-gender forces and accused of being influenced by the "LGBT-lobby".

An adviser from FRI filed a report against the leader of Women's Declaration International (WDI) for anti-trans harassment and hate speech. This case received international attention and led to demonstrations in several countries. A similar case was also investigated on initiative by the police themselves. Both cases were dropped.

In the aftermath of the Oslo shooting (see under Bias-motivated Violence), a report by Analyse & Tall was released on the social media climate for queer and trans people. It found that the number of X (formerly known as Twitter) posts about trans people has increased from 1,485 in 2018 to a striking 23,465 in 2022, with a large proportion of them being critical, negative, or hateful. It also showed that the percentage of supporting tweets towards Pride had dropped from more than 60% in 2018 to less than 40% in 2022, and the amount of hateful tweets increased from 16% in 2018 to 27 % in 2022.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In March, 17 LGBTI groups petitioned the government to demand a wider investigation into the terrorist attack in 2022, which killed two people and wounded more than 20 people outside Oslo's queer haven and oldest queer bar, the London Pub. In June, the police-commissioned investigative report concluded that the police had known about terror threats before it, but failed to prevent the attack or inform the organisers. The alleged main perpetrator was charged with murder, attempted murder and terrorism, but no trial date has been set and the case is still under investigation. So far five people have been charged for the attack. Commemorations were held across the country on the anniversary of the attack.

Threats targeted this year's Oslo Pride again this year - one suspect was detained. The police released a threat report in May.

The 2023 hate crimes report from the police found a continued increase in anti-LGBT hate crimes, from 97 in 2020 to 240 in 2021 and 285 in 2022. According to the police, hate crimes linked to sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression are solved in 45% of cases, while the total for all hate crimes are higher (51.9%).

BODILY INTEGRITY

In June, the government tabled the ban on so-called 'conversion practices', which was one of the government's commitments in the 2021 LGBTQI Action Plan. The new text suggests an absolute ban on the harmful practice regarding sexual orientation and gender identity, both exercised in Norway and abroad, and also sanctions advertisements. The bill envisions special protections for minors. Civil society criticised the suggestion for not including gender expression and covering a wider understanding of sexual orientation. The parliament had two hearings in December and approved the ban with a majority vote.

In October, the Nordland Research Institute published a report in which one in four respondents stated they had been subjected to actions which could be understood as conversion practices in Norway.

EMPLOYMENT

Esben Esther Pirelli Benestad, a prominent figure within trans healthcare and professor of sexology, had their medical licence revoked in February for providing trans healthcare outside the monopolised system. Several protests were held across Norway in solidarity with the doctor. In July, the Health Authority partially reinstated their licence, with limitations such as only being allowed to practise under supervision in the public healthcare system.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The new Action Plan for Gender and Sexual Diversity (2023-2026) was published in February. It identifies three priority areas: LGBT+ people with a minority background and in religious communities; trans people and people with gender incongruence; and sports for all. The Action Plan includes 49 measures. Civil society criticised the plan for not including people with disabilities explicitly.



The Co-operative Council for Religious and Belief Communities (STL) has organised dialogue meetings between representatives from queer organisations and religious and belief communities. They published a joint [statement](#) in September, emphasising a wish to listen more to each other and focus on common ground, as well as supporting each other when being subjected to attacks.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

A year after the deadly at the London Pub (see under Bias-motivated violence) Oslo Pride was held in the summer. The Pride march [gathered](#) over 90,000 people and was joined by several politicians, including the Prime Minister.

The seventh Barents Pride, half an hour from the Russian border, was [held](#) in September.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The commission reviewing the state of freedom of expression in Norway [published](#) its report. The Norwegian Patient Organisation for Gender Incongruence [criticised](#) the report for being more focused on the chilling effects of the hate speech legislation than protecting minorities from hate speech, which also was supported by other organisations.

HEALTH

Despite the 2020 [guidelines](#) on trans healthcare, which centre user participation and an individualised approach to care, care provision remained centralised again this year. Civil society and the city of Oslo continued to demand that HKS become the national competency centre but the Health Ministry [denied](#) this request in March. Previously, only one hospital in the public healthcare system, in Vestfold, has provided services to non-binary people, such as wigs and prosthetics, but not hormones or surgeries. Other such regional centres are underway in the other regions of Norway.

Trans healthcare for minors became a particularly critical issue this year. In March, the Norwegian Healthcare Investigation Board (UKOM) [published](#) its recommendations, urging the government to revise the care provision guidelines and to redefine trans healthcare for minors as 'experimental', which would also demand mandatory participation in research for minors receiving care'. Civil society and [civil rights attorneys](#) expressed deep concern about the report, which ignores international standards, relies on very limited literature, and [fails](#) to meaningfully involve trans youth and organisations. CSOs [published](#) a detailed response to the report. In June, the

Ministry of Health announced it may [reconsider](#) the provision of care to minors and was quoted as saying that care for minors should only be provided by the specialist health service at Rikshospitalet. Civil society met with the Directorate the next day and was reassured that they would be involved in decisions, and [they](#) received the clarification from the Ministry that as long as it is safe, treatment can also be carried out in municipal or private institutions.

In September, the Nordland Research Institute published a damning [report](#) about service provision in Rikshospitalet. Rikshospitalet has long been criticised by service users and trans organisations for [unethical research](#), unethical treatment, using a [pathologisation](#) as standard and rejecting more than half of those who turn to them for help.

Civil society is [alarmed](#) by all these developments, particularly as the denial of HKS as a national competency centre came a month after the adoption of the new LGBT+ action plan, which identifies trans people as a priority group.

Despite clear signals from the County governor that a GP referral is sufficient to have access to trans-specific healthcare, Rikshospitalet has not implemented this in practice.

Despite calls from civil society, the Minister of Health has still not organised targeted and proactive support for those affected by the Oslo shooting in June 2022 - an estimated 200 people.

The Minister of Health [changed](#) the blood donation regulations, which no longer impose a 12-month deferral period on men who have sex with men. The change will enter into force in 2024.

Access to the Monkeypox vaccine [improved](#) this year.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

FRI [received](#) the 2023 Humanist Award from the Human-Etisk Forbund.

FRI [apologised](#) that the organisation in the 1980's, by a small, but prominent part of the leadership, had given the so-called 'paedophile working group' acknowledgement as a subgroup of the organisation. The group was quickly excluded. FRI states that inclusion of the group never should have happened, and hopes that more openness regarding abuse can provide necessary support for victims.



LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Non-binary recognition remains a gap in Norway. In June, the Directorate for Children, Youth and Families finalised its report on introducing a third legal gender category and submitted it to the Ministry of Culture and Equality. The report envisions three possible measures, namely: to no longer include gender in ID documents; to introduce a third legal gender option; or to prepare a national guide for recognising gender diversity. The parliament had previously decided that the gendered social security numbers would be changed due to the system running out of numbers, but that this change would only be introduced in 2032. Thus hindering the implementation of a full third legal gender for nearly a decade.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The police uniform regulations have been changed, so that police employees now can wear whichever uniform they want regardless of gender. The police will no longer allow off-duty officers at Pride to wear their uniform.



NORWAY WEB PAGE
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POLAND

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

A taxi company decorated some of its fleet with rainbow colours on the occasion of Pride in Białystok, Warsaw, Gdańsk, Zielona Góra and Kielce, despite criticism from drivers and passengers.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

(See also under Education)

Hate speech and anti-LGBTQ+ messaging was used significantly less through the campaign period leading up to the general elections held in October, yet remained prevalent in discussions about education in schools.

In January, Deputy Minister of Justice, Marcin Warchoń, said that the TVP2's New Year celebration, which featured the Black Eyed Peas with rainbow armbands, was the "New Year's Eve of Abnormalities". In May, PiS leader Jarosław Kaczyński said that information on LGBTQI+ issues in schools exposes students to "practices that are certainly harmful to them and may cause serious damage to their psyche". Also in May, Ombudsman for Children Mikołaj Pawlak said his inspection of LGBTQI-friendly schools is to protect children from "criminals" and "paedophiles". In a statement in May, Education Minister Czarnek blamed the spread of "LGBTQ+ ideology" and "brainwashing" for the rise of suicide among minors.

In January, the Szczecin-Centrum District Court found a truck driver guilty of spreading homophobic statements and defamation and fined him 15,000 PLN (3,360 EURO). Also in January, the Polish National Television appealed the 2022 verdicts that found it guilty of slandering the LGBT community in a prime time report in 2019. Following the broadcast, a group of activists and KPH filed lawsuits against the channel. The activists' lawsuit appeal is planned for January 2024.

In March, the head of the fundamentalist group Right to Life (Fundacja Pro Prawo do Życia) was found guilty of defamation for its "Stop Paedophilia" campaign, which links sex education to the "sexualisation of children" and runs vans around the country with anti-LGBT messages displayed on them. This was the first conviction of a responsible manager in such cases. Deputy Justice Minister Marcin Romanowski and PiS politicians called the ruling a "repression against opponents of LGBT ideology".

In February, the European Commission closed its infringement procedure against Poland over the so-called 'LGBT-free

zones'. Local municipalities continued to withdraw anti-LGBT resolutions or Family Rights Charters this year (see here, here, and here), but some of them remain in place. In 2022, the European Commission amended its Partnership Agreement with Poland to ensure that municipalities that have anti-LGBT resolutions in place do not receive financial support. Following a European Commission visit in February, the Commission affirmed that this remains the case. Monitoring Committees are now monitoring non-discrimination in the distribution of EU funds in Poland with the participation of both LGBT+ NGOs and far-right fundamentalist organisations like Ordo Iuris. In October, the Supreme Court declared another five anti-LGBT resolutions invalid, in Niebylec and Lipinki counties, the poviats of Ryki and Tarnów and the Lublin Voivodeship.

The National Broadcasting Council started an investigation against the TV show Contact Lens for a transphobic joke that was made on air. A few weeks later, the Provincial Administrative Court in Warsaw issued judgments in three cases condemning the Council's lack of action in tackling hateful content on TV and radio in 2022.

In July, the Basta Foundation submitted a complaint to the European Commission, alleging that the state is failing to take adequate action against anti-LGBT+ hate speech in Polish media.

In May, several NGOs and INGOs sent an appeal to the EU Ministers ahead of the next EU General Affairs Council about the continued erosion of democracy and human rights in the country.

Several groups that organise Pride marches received threats this year.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In January, far-right MP Grzegorz Braun banned a Christmas tree in Krakow that featured pro-LGBT messages.

In May, a woman carrying a rainbow flag was shot in the head with a BB gun at the Olsztyn Equality March. On the day of the Equality Pride in Warsaw in June, a 15-year-old was verbally harassed and then pushed off the tram for wearing a rainbow-coloured outfit. The police officer at the scene made offensive remarks to the teenager. The teenager reported the perpetrator and the police officer. Several rainbow flags were set on fire by Life and Family Foundation (Fundacji Życie i Rodzina) members during the march.

In July, Attorney General and Justice Minister Zbigniew Ziobro

released a neo-nazi organiser who had served one of three years of her sentence for assaulting a Pride participant and taking away her rainbow-decorated purse. In August, Ziobro requested that the National Council of the Judiciary examine court rulings he thought to have been political and biased, and allegedly lenient towards leftist and LGBT people but strict against conservatives.

EDUCATION

PiS continued to make stigmatising statements about information on LGBTQI+ issues to students. Education Minister Czarnek said he would put the controversial ‘Lex Czarnek’, vetoed by President Duda twice in 2022, back on the parliament’s agenda following the elections.

Upon the initiative of Ordo Iuris, leader of the governing party PiS Jarosław Kaczyński proposed a bill against the “sexualisation” of children called “Protect Children, Support Parents” in May, similar to ‘Lex Czarnek’. The ‘Let’s protect children’ citizen’s initiative gathered 250,000 signatures and led to the lower parliament chamber (Sejm) passing an amendment of the Education Law in August that bans external organisations from “promoting issues related to the sexualisation of children” in preschools and primary schools.

The initiative was supported by the Speaker of the Sejm. In September, a coalition of NGOs turned to the European Commission to ask for the temporary suspension of funds to the Ministry of Education and Science, listing among the reasons the head of the Ministry’s anti-LGBT statement and the planned registry of youth, including LGBT+ youth, seeking support.

This year’s LGBT school ranking, published by LGBTplusMe.com in May, identified the most inclusive and accepting schools in Poznań, Warsaw, Łódź, Gdańsk, Olsztyn, Kraków and Kędzierzyn-Koźle. A protest was held outside the school in Kędzierzyn-Koźle, featuring signs “School should teach, not corrupt” and “NO to LGBT in schools”. The Ombudsperson for Children Mikołaj Pawlak announced he would inspect the top ranking schools, to see if they had screened their teachers and staff for ‘paedophilia’. In July, the Commissioner for Human Rights questioned Pawlak about the legal basis of his planned inquiry. This year’s Rainbow Friday on October 27 supported LGBT+ students in over 100 schools with workshops and educational packages, earning extensive media and social media coverage.

EMPLOYMENT

In January, the European Court of Justice ruled that the ban on discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation applies

to self-employed persons too. The District Court in Warsaw affirmed in April that the Polish National Television’s refusal to extend a contract due to a person’s sexual orientation was discriminatory.

A priest was fired from the Pontifical University in Krakow, for having visited gay clubs 13 years ago.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In March, the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women and girls visited Poland and emphasised concerns about restrictions on access to abortion, inequality, and the mistreatment of non-Ukrainian refugees and asylum seekers.

In March, the Katowice District Court ordered that PiS councillor Grażyna Welon apologise to city council chair Ewa Szota (KO) for outing her in 2020 and pay PLN 30,000 to KPH. Krakow City Hall raised the rainbow flag on the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May.

On 5 June, the European Court of Justice ruled that Poland’s 2019 justice reforms, which for instance prevent courts from applying EU law, are incompatible with EU legislation. Much of the year centred around the autumn general elections. During the summer, mass protests were held against the government’s policies, including those targeting LGBT people and women. The government, which had been in power since 2015, lost the elections to the opposition coalition in October. By the end of the year a government coalition was formed with a clear commitment to LGBTI rights.

The Opatrzności Bożej Evangelical-Augsburg parish in Wrocław stood in support of the June Pride march and invited the community to a mass.

FAMILY

14 rainbow families requested that local authorities change their children’s IDs to recognise both parents. Faced with a refusal, some families filed a complaint to the European Commission against the Polish government. In 2022, the CJEU ruled that Poland has the obligation to legally recognise both parents in a same-gender couple in travel documents to ensure the family’s freedom of movement, but the government failed to do this.

In December, the ECHR ruled that Poland had failed to ensure a specific legal framework providing for the recognition and protection of same-sex unions in the Przybyszewska and Others v. Poland case. The applicants were five same-sex couples.

FOREIGN POLICY

Poland did not join the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation. Poland refused to support the EU Justice Affairs Council's conclusions on the protection of LGBTI communities in Europe. The Minister of Justice said the conclusions force "special LGBT rights" on people.

The European Commission continued to withhold EU funds due to rule of law violations.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

2023 has seen nearly 40 pride marches organised all over Poland, including towns as small as 10,000 inhabitants. The Warsaw Equality March, held under the motto "We foretell equality and beauty" was opened by mayor Rafał Trzaskowski and was joined by tens of thousands.

The police asked the authorities to modify the route of the fifth Pride march in Częstochowa, for it to not interfere with religious celebrations. Authorities denied the request. Several smaller cities held Pride events or marches this year, including Zielona Góra and for the first time Ślupsk and Piaseczno.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In April, the Częstochowa District Court sentenced, in first instance, two activists to community service and a fine for carrying a picture of Virgin Mary with a rainbow halo and the 2021 Equality March.

General Prosecutor Ziebro sent an extraordinary complaint following the 2022 ruling of the Częstochowa District Court, which found that carrying the rainbow-haloed Mary at the 2019 Equality March was not offensive. The case is with the Supreme Court.

The trials against the creators of Atlas of Hate continued this year. The Białystok appeals court ruled in favour of the activists in April. In October, the Powiat Przysuski Court decided to discontinue the case.

HEALTH

The far-right Ordo Iuris announced it would seek to ban legal gender recognition for minors.

Academic research showed that living in "LGBT-free zones" harms LGBT people, confirming earlier findings by KPH and Lambda Warszawa. Since the anti-LGBT resolutions, the annual suicide attempt rate has risen by 16%.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In May, three LGBTQI+ activists were sentenced to six to twelve months of community service for attacking a religious fundamentalist van which spread anti-LGBT messages in 2020.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

The Parliamentary Committee of Ethics issued a reprimand, the maximum punishment in Parliament, to a far-right MP for referring to the LGBT community as "the rainbow plague".

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

Civil society submitted an opinion to the Supreme Court this year, following the Minister of Justice Ziobro's 2022 request for the Supreme Court to consider that in addition to their parents, trans people should also file a court case against their children and spouse when they want to access LGR.

In August, the Human Rights Ombudsperson filed an extraordinary complaint in response to a court's denial of legal gender recognition for a trans person.

PUBLIC OPINION

An Ipsos poll found that over half of the population supports Pride marches and a quarter think that the growing number of marches is a positive phenomenon.

Another Ipsos poll showed that support for equal marriage has grown from 21 to 32% in the last decade. 64% of respondents believe that trans people should be protected from discrimination.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Huge protests were held in June after yet another woman died due to the strict abortion laws.



POLAND WEB PAGE
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PORTUGAL

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

The Pride 2023 Report by the LLYC Consultancy found a 185% increase in anti-LGBTQI+ content on social media between 2019-2022, with a large portion focused on so-called 'gender ideology'.

The process of introducing the self-determination of gender in schools (see under Education) sparked numerous anti-trans articles and comments.

A religious event for LGBTQIA+ people at the Church of Encarnação da Ameixoeira was disturbed, when a dozen ultraconservatives entered the parish. The Secretary of State for Equality and Migration condemned the incident.

The owner of an LGBT sauna was targeted by transphobic hate speech and threats.

In November, ILGA Portugal shared the findings of SafeNet research, analysing what social networks consider hate speech and whether or not this content is removed. From a total of 164 complaints made since the beginning of the project, the social networks removed only 37 of the posts reported. 49% of the reported hate speech cases were based on sexual orientation, 30% on gender identity, and 20% anti-LGBTI+.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

An exhibition about LGBTI+ issues in a church in Évora was vandalised by three men in June. The incident was condemned by the church and the city and the police are investigating.

BODILY INTEGRITY

On 21 April, the parliament adopted a ban on so-called 'conversion practices' based on SOGI, which punishes their solicitation or management. Those promoting the practice face up to two years in prison.

EDUCATION

(See also under Bias-motivated Speech)

In April and August, the parliament adopted amendments to ensure the law on self-determination of gender identity is applied in the education system. Schools will now be in charge of ensuring that children and youth can use their self-assigned name in all school activities. In 2022, The National Council of Ethics for Life Sciences (CNECV) presented its opinion on the issue, encouraging the parliament to adopt a wider education anti-discrimination and anti-bullying law, advocate for mandatory gender-neutral toilets and locker rooms, and

increase training, awareness-raising, and inclusive policies.

In June, the Portuguese government launched new guidelines to prevent discrimination against LGBTI students at school and educational settings and provide guidance on the transition of trans pupils.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Chega, the national conservative, right-wing populist political party, continued to try blocking legal measures for LGBTQIA+ equality and made hostile remarks throughout the year.

The President made a statement and Prime Minister António Costa committed to continuing to tackle discrimination against LGBTI people on the occasion of IDAHOBIT in May. The Lisbon City Councils raised the rainbow flag and for the first time, Ministries did the same and the Parliament was lit up in rainbow colours. There was considerable debate in parliament whether the flag should be raised and the Porto City Council voted down the move to 'officially' raise the flag. It was later displayed on the square outside the Council. The trans flag was also raised at the Lisbon City Council on Trans Day of Visibility in March.

The Observatory on Discrimination Against LGBTI+ People received 469 complaints between 2020-2022 on cases of discrimination and violence based on SOGIESC. Less than a quarter of the cases were reported to the authorities.

In November, after a legislative process initiated by the extreme-right wing party, proposals for a Constitutional revision were submitted, with political parties amending the equality principle to, namely, include gender (BE, PAN), gender identity (LIVRE, PS), gender expression and sex characteristics (LIVRE).

FAMILY

The National Council of Ethics for Life Sciences published an advisory report to the government on regulating altruistic surrogacy, which recommends that children born out of surrogacy could have three parents on their birth certificate, if the surrogate revokes their contractual agreement. The Council also recommends ongoing psychological support for surrogates. The parliament previously adopted a surrogacy law, in 2021, but implementation and regulation has been lacking since, forcing many to opt for surrogacy abroad.

FOREIGN POLICY

Portugal joined the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.



FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Lisbon Pride was held in person this year, with an estimated 100,000 participants. Pride in Porto was held in July, without any incidents, but following disputes with the municipality over the event's location. The organisers launched successful asking for Pride to take place in central Porto.

An LGBTI+ march was held for the first time in Évora.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The second edition of the children's book *No Meu Bairro* was presented in a bookstore in Lisbon and was met with a hostile and intimidating protest outside. The book features 12 stories of children who talk about their lives, racism, gender identity, religion, bullying and activism.

HEALTH

In March, the parliament adopted a regulation which allows for people to be manually added to the registries for cancer screening regardless of their legal gender.

From August on, the Monkeypox vaccine became more widely available to men who have sex with men and sex workers, among others.

The University of Algarve's study found that LGBTQIA+ people report worse health conditions than the general population and fear discrimination and microaggressions in healthcare settings.

The story of Keyla Brasil, a trans migrant woman living in Portugal, sparked civil society calls for trans healthcare services to be made available to migrants. Brasil is a trans activist in Portugal, but had to seek trans-specific healthcare services in Thailand, where she had a stroke.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

This year marked the fifth anniversary of the 2018 legal gender recognition law, which introduced self-determination.

The PS tabled an amendment in May, which would introduce gender-neutral name options in the civil registry.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The short film *Um Carroço de Avocado*, featuring the story of a trans woman, won the award for best queer film at an international film festival.

Mariana Mortágua, leader of the Left Bloc, came out as lesbian in May.

In October, Marina Machete, a trans woman, won Miss Portugal.

In October, Festival Imersão, a festival promoting emerging LGBTQI+ talent, was held for the first time in Lisbon.

Porto will have a street named after Gisberta Salce Júnior, a migrant trans woman who was brutally murdered in 2006.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The Minister of Labour, Solidarity and Social Security and other key stakeholders agreed to open a temporary emergency shelter for LGBTI+ persons.



[PORTUGAL WEB PAGE](#)
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ROMANIA

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

LGBTQ+ people continue to be affected by economic inequality and are at risk for poverty in Romania. A new Fiscal Code due to be in force in January 2024 will further make it difficult for associations to distribute goods and services to them, as NEETs will have to pay mandatory health insurance for six months should they receive funding from any source.

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

The National Council for Combating Discrimination (CNCD) is investigating a printing house that refused to print leaflets about lesbian rights and another print shop that refused to print a booklet on gender equality.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In July, MP George Simion shared a social media post to say that LGBTQI people are to blame for the weather conditions, which are divine punishment. In July, the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church said that “homosexuality was, is and will remain unnatural”. A number of other political and religious figures made hostile statements this year (see here, here, here).

ACCEPT Association submitted eight petitions to the National Audiovisual Council of Romania (the regulator for the audiovisual sector in Romania) because of the unbalanced representation in the TV debates on LGBTQIA+ issues and for discriminatory and hateful statements, violence or discrimination. The Council sanctioned one of the TV stations with a fine of 20,000 lei (4,020 EURO) and another with a fine of 10,000 lei (2,010 EURO).

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

A queer person was verbally and physically attacked at a gas station in Bucharest.

This year, ACCEPT filed eight criminal complaints for hate crimes - six of them for threats, one for destruction and one because at the end of the Bucharest Pride march, in front of the Pride Park stage, someone threw irritants, caused three people to go to the first aid tent. In addition, 30 people received legal counselling as victims of hate crimes.

ACCEPT is still challenging in court the refusal of the Romanian Police to provide their methodology on recording hate crime cases which should also cover sexual orientation according to the criminal legislation.

DATA COLLECTION

The IPSOS PRIDE 2023 survey found that 51% of Romanians agree that same sex families should enjoy a form of legal recognition and protection.

EDUCATION

In March, the Ministry of Education presented proposals for two new Education Laws, intended to replace the National Education Law. The new laws included obligations to promote diversity, inclusion, and tolerance, and banned discrimination based on sexual orientation. 13 religious groups called for the withdrawal of provisions and a protest against these changes to the Education Laws was organised by NGOs in front of the Government. As a response, over 50 civil society organisations, student unions and hundreds of teachers, parents and students joined a petition to the Ministry of Education to call for inclusion, diversity, and non-discrimination in education. Following the controversy, the majority parliamentary groups deleted the explicit mentions of sexual orientation as a ground, but instead included a reference to the non-discrimination legislation (Government Ordinance 137/2000) and ensuring in this way that sexual orientation is covered.

A report from Campus Pride assessed the level of LGBT visibility and inclusion on Romanian university campuses. It found that at 34% of faculties, homophobic discourse has been used. 81% of trans respondents stated that their university and its staff do not respect their gender identity. However, testimonials showed that there are an increasing number of allies among colleagues and professors, making Romanian students optimistic about the future.

FAMILY

There continues to be no implementation of the Coman judgement, despite the pre-infringement procedure launched by the European Commission in 2020.

In May, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in Buhuceanu and Others v. Romania that Romania's failure to provide legal recognition and protection to same-sex couples is a violation of Art. 8. The case was brought to the Court by 21 families. Romania filed an appeal in August, which the Court rejected. CSOs called the appeal shameful.

In July, the Internal Affairs Ministry published a legislative proposal for the execution of the Coman judgement. In August, the Internal Affairs Ministry organised a public debate inviting only the Christian Office for Rights and

Liberties. At the request of the latter, the Internal Affairs Ministry removed mentions covering civil unions from the proposal.

In September, the government adopted the proposal, which moved onto the parliamentary procedure. The bill no longer requires that a Romanian citizen's spouse's right of residence be conditional upon the transcription of their marriage certificate in the Romanian registry. Civil society highlighted that same-sex spouses will continue to face discrimination, as with this bill, they will be able to reside in the country for a year, but their relationship will not be recognised in Romania - they will not enjoy any of the benefits and rights that heterosexual married couples do.

FOREIGN POLICY

Romania did not join the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

More than 25,000 people joined this year's Bucharest Pride in July, marking the largest march to date. The Pride Festival featured 20 events and spanned over nine days. On the day of the Pride march, a counter-demonstration called March for Normality was held in the capital.

Timișoara Pride was held on 1 July, as part of the national cultural programme of the city, which was the 2023 European Capital of Culture. Around 600 people joined the third Iași Pride march, organised by Rise Out in June. A smaller group of far-right protesters was present again - they chanted hateful slogans and threw water at the participants. Oradea organised its first Pride Week in August, drawing 1,560 people - as well as an anti-Pride gathering in the city centre. The march in Cluj-Napoca was attended by 3,600 people and was not without its controversies. Aside from far right protesters on the side, one of the gendarmes tasked with protecting the march accused a trans participant carrying a trans flag of waving the "paedophile flag".

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In February, two far-right MPs tabled the legislative initiative B68/2023 to ban any visual, audio or video materials about LGBTQ+ people, allegedly for the "protection of minors". Civil society widely condemned the move and asked for the bill to be withdrawn.

HEALTH

Civil society organisations published an online database of LGBTI-friendly doctors.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The case of a Romanian-British trans man, who changed his gender marker and name in the UK but was unable to have this recognised in Romania, was referred to the European Union Court of Justice in March.

PUBLIC OPINION

A representative public opinion poll found that 41% of Romanians support or are neutral about civil partnership, with 48% of young people (18-27) and 59% of those living in Bucharest being in favour of it. 70% of Romanians would accept their child if they came out as gay. It should be noted that awareness about SOGI was very low, with 43% of respondent's stating that they did not know what the term "heterosexual" meant and only 13% were familiar with the term "non-binary". Another notable aspect was that 56% of respondents wanted pride parades to be forbidden.



ROMANIA WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG

RUSSIA

As a result of more restrictive anti-LGBTI and anti-NGO laws adopted in the past two years, it should be noted that access to information about developments in the country has been increasingly difficult. There is no public information available on LGBTI communities and organising. Activists and organisations working for equality are facing increased risks in their safety and freedom, both since the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia, which contributes to making access to information more difficult, and since the outlawing December of the international LGBT movement as 'extremist'.

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

A fitness club in St. Petersburg refused to allow a trans man to use the men's changing room even though he had a male gender marker in his documents. The club's administration cited the new transphobic and homophobic legislation and demanded a certificate of gender reassignment surgery.

ASYLUM

Many LGBTI people, including activists and those working in LGBT* organisations continued leaving Russia this year, particularly since the adoption of the 2022 propaganda law. Several LGBTI organisations continued to provide information on options and support for those who have left. Following the entry into force of the laws banning medical and legal transition (see under Health; and Legal Gender Recognition), civil society launched a petition asking European leaders to ensure smooth asylum procedures for trans people from Russia.

LGBTI people leaving Russia faced difficulties with getting a visa and crossing borders because of visa and entry restrictions for Russian citizens in several countries.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-LGBT hate speech was a severe issue throughout the year, including in the context of the 2022 'propaganda' law (see also under Freedom of Expression; and Participation in Public, Cultural and Political Life). Coming Out published an analysis of the government's continued crackdown and anti-LGBT rhetoric.

Lawmakers continued to refer to LGBT rights and trans rights as Western imports that try to "infiltrate the country". In January 2023, State Duma deputy Adam Delimkhanov (United Russia party) pledged to "destroy LGBT people".

During the debates on the ban on trans healthcare and legal gender recognition, the deputy chair of the Duma, Vladislav

Davankov (New People Party) said the law was "yet another step to protect national interests" from "perversions." The Minister of Justice, Konstantin Chuichenko (Independent) said in May that trans people should receive "forced treatment".

A minor, who received death threats, reported that the police failed to intervene and harassed him instead.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Hate crimes against LGBTI people, including murder, physical violence and extortion were committed again this year (see here, here, here, here, here, here, here, and here). The authorities failed to classify them as anti-LGBTI hate crimes. UCD Dublin published 'A decade of violence: monitoring anti-LGBTQ hate crimes in Russia', documenting over 1000 attacks between 2010-2020.

Coming Out published its 2022 annual report finding unprecedented crackdowns on civil society and human rights and highlighting the impacts of the Russian invasion of Ukraine on Russian LGBT people.

Several people became victims of fake dates again this year. One such victim told Coming Out privately that a group of young men had assaulted him on a fake date and also accused him of paedophilia.

Coming Out filed a case at the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) concerning the failure of the authorities to investigate the death of Yelena Grigoryeva, a well-known LGBT activist who was murdered in St. Petersburg in 2019. The case was rejected. In August 2023, the media reported that Yelena's murderer had been buried with honours in St Petersburg, after dying in the war with Ukraine.

Russia recognised the view of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) as binding for the first time. In 2016, a homophobic attack was committed against two women in St. Petersburg. It was not investigated. CEDAW recognised this as a violation of the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women. Russia paid 30,000 rubles each to the two women, recognising the view of CEDAW.

BODILY INTEGRITY

The law banning trans healthcare provision (see under Health) sets out an exception for some medical interventions on intersex individuals. Interventions related to intersex variations that aim to form sex characteristics of the "other sex"



aren't prohibited if they are authorised by the state medical commission, including in relation to children.

DATA COLLECTION

In just one month of the existence of the new law “On the Prohibition of Gay Propaganda” (from December 2022 to January 2023), Russian authorities blocked about [300 LGBT websites](#).

In 2023, several LGBT initiatives faced blocking of their resources on the Internet, including the Russian LGBT Network, the Guys Plus portal, and Center T.

In September 2023, Russian authorities began to apply ‘[criteria](#)’ by which they would identify “gay propaganda”. The criteria have a very broad interpretation. In September 2023, on the website of Roskomnadzor (a government agency), a [form](#) for reporting sites with “gay propaganda” on the Internet appeared. These requests become grounds for blocking LGBT websites.

EDUCATION

St. Petersburg State University [refused](#) to change a trans man's diploma and give him a new document with a new gender marker.

High school students in Moscow, who made a film about gay-straight conflicts in school, were [detained](#).

The Higher School of Economics [changed](#) its ‘gender studies’ course to “men and women's studies”.

EMPLOYMENT

Several people were fired this year on grounds of ‘propaganda’ (see [here](#) and under Freedom of Expression). The psychologist recruitment service Teplota (‘Warmth’) [rejected](#) a candidate for a job because of her sexual orientation.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In April, Mariana Katsarova was [appointed](#) UN Special Rapporteur on Russia. The mandate, created in 2022, was [extended](#) in October. In September, the Special Rapporteur [reported](#) about the “significant deterioration” in human rights across Russia since the invasion of Ukraine and a “systematic crackdown” on civil society, including through persecution and detention.

The UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

[issued](#) its concluding observations in April, warning about police violence against LGBTQI+ people who face racial discrimination. During the review of the Russian report, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights [asked](#) a number of questions about LGBT rights in Russia, notably about when comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation would be adopted.

In May, Coming Out and Sphere [published](#) a joint report on the situation of the LGBT+ community in Russia, showing that the Russian invasion of Ukraine and mobilisation had a strong negative impact on the psychological state of Russian LGBTQ+ people, their economic situation, and access to medication (mainly gender affirmative hormone therapy and antidepressants). Almost every LGBT respondent has noticed an increase in homophobia and transphobia in the public sphere. One in five respondents (21%) faced threats of physical violence because of their sexual orientation or trans identity in 2022. 15% had experienced domestic violence. 14% have experienced online harassment. LGBTQ+ people encounter diverse violence most frequently in the North Caucasus, the Urals, the Far East, and Siberia. Everyday homophobia and transphobia (discrimination in the workplace/study, conflicts with others, denial of services) are common in the Southern Federal District. Trans persons are the most vulnerable of all respondents. They experience almost all types of violence and discrimination more often than others; war and mobilisation have also affected them more than others.

In November, Russia [underwent](#) its fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The working session of the UPR process [raised](#) the issue of LGBT rights in Russia, with recommendations from many countries stating the need to stop the persecution of LGBT people and LGBT activists.

In December, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe reviewed Russia's implementation of ECHR decisions against Russia on violations of the rights of LGBT people. It [noted](#) deterioration of LGBTI rights in Russia, stressed further the need to change legislation, notably by making discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation a circumstance aggravating a crime, and repealing the “anti-propaganda” laws; to organise awareness-raising activities promoting protection of the human rights of LGBTI persons; to facilitate issuance of the Supreme Court's guidance to the judges and instructions from the relevant executive bodies' to their staff aimed at such protection; and to ensure effective policing and security of the LGBTI public events.



FAMILY

In January, the ECHR [upheld](#) its 2021 ruling on ‘Fedotova and Others v Russia’ reiterating Russia and the Council of Europe’s member states obligation to ensure legal recognition and protection for same-sex couples by putting in place a “specific legal framework”

In June, the Duma [adopted](#) a ban on trans people adopting or fostering children. On the basis of the law, it is also possible to [dissolve](#) a marriage if a spouse had changed their legal gender. Already before the adoption of the law, prosecutors [initiated](#) legal proceedings against married couples, whose marriage was consequently annulled. Attorneys [helped](#) some trans people get married and many families have [remained](#) intact.

FOREIGN POLICY

24 February [marked](#) the one year anniversary of Russian troops [invading](#) Ukraine – the war continues to date. The intensified onslaught on LGBT rights was [tied](#) into the narrative of the invasion this year. The parliament adopted amendments to the law conscription and military duty several times this year (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). Civil society continued providing information to those participating in protests or [objecting](#) to the war and [conscription](#). Trans women have been subject to the draft if they had not changed their legal gender and many were barred from leaving the country. In 2023, the decree prohibiting dismissal from military service continued to be in effect until mobilisation was stopped. [This prevents](#) LGBT people who oppose the war in Ukraine from leaving military service at the risk of being imprisoned.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

Salman Mukayev, who was detained, imprisoned and torture for allegations of being gay, [shared](#) his story in an interview. LGBT people in Chechnya continued to be targeted and subjected to enforced disappearances. Idris Arsamikov, a gay refugee, was [arrested](#) in Moscow in February when returning for his father’s funeral from the Netherlands. Arsamikov had previously been persecuted and tortured in Chechnya. He was returned to Chechnya. His whereabouts are [unknown](#), but civil society [reports](#) he may have been sent to the front.

In September, the European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) in [Lapunov v. Russia](#) that Russia [violated](#) the prohibition of torture and ill-treatment (Art. 3) and non-discrimination (Art. 14) based on sexual orientation, when arresting, detaining, and torturing an openly gay man in Chechnya in 2017. In the same month,

the Court [ruled](#) in [Romanov and Others v. Russia](#) that Russia violated Art. 3, Art. 5, Art. 11 and Art. 14 when the police failed to protect LGBT rights activists from private individuals assaulting them at a peaceful protest in 2013.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Organisers and participants of public events on LGBTI rights continued to face harassment and violence (see under Freedom of Expression).

The police detained several people who protested against the ban on trans healthcare and legal gender recognition (see [here](#)). In June 2023, activist Aleksandr Sinko [went to protest](#) against the adoption of the law banning gender reassignment with a poster reading “Save the right to be myself”. On the same day, he was detained and a report was drawn up on him for “propaganda of non-traditional relations”. The case was reclassified from an article on LGBT propaganda to an article on violation of COVID-19 restrictions. In the end, Sinko was fined just 40,000 roubles (about 40 EURO).

Clubs and events were also raided (see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). The queer art festival Open Art was [cancelled](#) after warnings from the prosecutor. Other events were also [cancelled](#). QueerFest was [held](#) online again.

COVID-19 [restrictions](#) on holding mass events, including protests and even single [pickets](#), [remained](#) in force this year. Several people who protested this year were detained (see a list [here](#)).

In November, the European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) in favour of LGBT activist Vyacheslav Vereshchagin, who was fined by the court in 2018 for participating in Pride in St. Petersburg.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The authorities continued adding NGOs, groups, websites, media outlets, activists, and journalists to their foreign agent registry (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#), also under Freedom of Expression). According to Coming Out monitoring data, 10 individuals and eight organisations were identified as foreign agents for so-called LGBT propaganda in 2023. In 2022, the European Court of Human Rights [ruled](#) that the foreign agent law violates human rights law, but Russia [made](#) it clear it would not implement the judgement.

In November 2023, the Russian LGBT Network, Mayak, LGBT activists [filed](#) the first complaint against the law on “foreign agents” to the UN Human Rights Committee.



The Ministry of Justice [demanded](#) that the ‘International LGBT Public Movement’ be [recognised](#) as an extremist organisation and its activities banned in Russia. On November 30, in a hearing that took place behind closed doors with no defence present, the Supreme Court ruled that the “international LGBT social movement” is to be added to the country’s list of “extremist” organisations. The Supreme Court decision declared any LGBT activism in Russia [criminal](#). Participation in such activities is punishable by fines or imprisonment. Under Article 282.2 of the Criminal Code, individuals considered to be “organisers” and “participants” may face up to [12 years](#) in prison, and participants of the activities of such organisations may face from two to six years in prison. Symbols of “extremist” organisations (including the rainbow flag) are banned, and display of these symbols may lead to administrative arrest of up to 15 days detention under Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offences. The human rights initiative First Department reported that in January 2024, Russian authorities [opened](#) the first administrative case against an artist for posting a “rainbow flag” on the Internet. Other possible consequences for those who are investigated or prosecuted include having their bank accounts blocked and facing restriction of various rights. In connection with this court decision, public offline activities of LGBT initiatives were stopped, and many LGBT initiatives and LGBT activists relocated abroad. LGBT initiatives continue to work in Russia, hiding it and seeking other, non-public formats for their activities within the country.

On December 1, less than 48 hours after the Supreme Court banned the “international LGBT movement” as “extremist”, security forces raided gay clubs and bars across Moscow, including a nightclub, a male sauna, and a bar that hosted LGBTQ+ parties, under the pretext of a drug raid. Eyewitnesses told journalists that people’s documents were checked and photographed by the security services.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

(See also under Bias-motivated Speech; and Education)

The 2022 [propaganda law](#) had a detrimental impact on the community this year (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)). The law prohibits positive and also neutral information about LGBT people to minors and adults, information about “gender reassignment” and the “promotion of paedophilia”. Individuals can be fined roughly [4,200](#) EURO and organisations [52,000](#) EURO. In March, MP Vitaly Milonov (United Russia) [proposed](#) to create a register of all materials that contain ‘LGBT propaganda’ and previously suggested introducing a special unit to detect such materials.

In April, the Ministry of Justice [approved](#) a set of criteria for “LGBT propaganda, pedophilia and gender reassignment”, which entered into force in September.

The law [was used against](#) several LGBT people and organisations this year (see [here](#), [here](#), and a list [here](#)), including minors. People were fired from their jobs, expelled from school, arrested, and deported (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)). TV channels and streaming platforms were also fined (see [here](#), and [here](#)). Cinema screenings, theatre plays, books and bookstores were also targeted (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)).

There were several attempts again to block LGBTI-themed websites and some faced prosecution for groups on social media/messaging sites or for blogging (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). Search functions started [failing](#) on VKontakte. Channels on messaging apps were also [shut](#) down and dating apps [blocked](#). In May, a (German) man was [deported](#) from Russia for messages sent on a dating app.

HEALTH

In June, the Duma [adopted](#) a [ban](#) on trans-specific healthcare provision by [amending](#) the [Federal Law](#) On the Fundamentals of Protecting the Health of Citizens. President Putin [signed](#) the law in July. The Ministry of Health voiced concern about the law and several protests were held. The Deputy Minister of Health however [asserted](#) that the law did not violate the Constitution.

The ban received significant [attention](#) from [INGOs](#) and human rights bodies. In September, a group of doctors and healthcare specialists [started](#) preparing clinical recommendations on trans healthcare, with input from trans communities, according to the standards of the Ministry of Health. Civil society also shared they would [appeal](#) against the law to the Constitutional Court. Hormonal therapy and surgeries are no longer possible as ‘treatment’ for an F64.0 diagnosis, but hormones and mastectomies could theoretically be accessed in other ways.

Getting a diagnosis is still possible, but until October, no treatment protocol was in place. In October, the government [released](#) a draft order that would allow a [total](#) of five institutions to issue certificates authorising trans-related surgeries. The law set an exception for medical interventions on intersex children (see under Bodily Integrity). A commission consisting of doctors in various fields will be responsible for making each decision. LGBT organisations submitted an appeal to the UN

In response to the appeal, the mandates of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian



Federation, the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, and the Working Group on discrimination against women and girls issued [recommendations](#) to Russia, expressing their concerns and requesting clarification on how the adopted law complies with Russia's international obligations.

Due to the law, an intersex person was [denied](#) cancer-related surgery in September.

Civil society fears that the new 'propaganda law' will make HIV prevention much harder. Russia now [accounts](#) for over half of new infections in Europe and Central Asia.

A [survey](#) by Kilkota found that since the outbreak of the war, trans people continue to face a shortage of hormones and a significant increase in prices.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In January, Russia's oldest human rights group, the Helsinki Group (MHG), was [shut](#) down by a court order. Throughout the year, human rights defenders continued their work but under [difficult circumstances](#) and with the constant [threat](#) of [prosecution](#) and [detention](#).

In 2023, Russian authorities included [227](#) organisations, activists, journalists, politicians and bloggers in the register of "foreign agents."

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In June, the Duma [adopted](#) a ban on legal gender recognition, by [amending](#) the Federal Law On Civil Status Acts. President Putin [signed](#) the law in July. The amendments also allow for marriages to be annulled if a trans person had transitioned.

Civil society [helped](#) hundreds of trans people apply for LGR in the weeks leading up to the ban. A number of trans people were able to change their legal gender as part of court procedures (see [here](#) and [here](#)), as they had started the process before the law entered into force. At the same time, several such applications and requests for updated passports were [denied](#) by the authorities.

Future applications will all be [denied](#). It will still be [possible](#) to change first and last names. After ARSI and the Russian intersex community [advocacy campaign](#), deputies made an [exception](#) for LGR for intersex people after a procedure of approval of medical interventions and verification of an intersex person's

sex characteristics by a state medical commission.

In the ban's aftermath, at least six trans people committed suicide, one of them a minor, as reported to CSOs.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Bisexual writer, Sveta Lukyanova [released](#) her debut novel, *I'm Not Doing Anything Bad*.

PUBLIC OPINION

Public opinion about LGBT has worsened over the past years as anti-LGBT state propaganda has intensified (see [here](#) and [here](#)). 80 percent of respondents to a survey by the independent research group Russian Field [said](#) that the non-heterosexual orientation of a hypothetical candidate for the Russian presidency would rather repulse them.



RUSSIA WEB PAGE
MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG



SAN MARINO

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The parliament marked IDAHOBIT on 17 May. The Equal Opportunities Commission [said](#) on the occasion that important steps for LGBT equality [remain](#) to be taken.

FAMILY

In September, the parliament [voted](#) against cohabiting unmarried couples adopting children.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Long-time [LGBT activist](#) and openly gay politician Paolo Rondelli continued speaking up for LGBTI rights after having been one of two captains regent, San Marino's heads of state (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

The parliament [approved](#) establishing a [symbolic sign](#) about the rights of LGBT people in the [historic centre](#).

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The [decriminalisation](#) of abortion approved in September 2022, started to be applied from February 2023 and more than 20 women requested the assistance of public welfare.



SAN MARINO WEB PAGE
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SERBIA

ASYLUM

Civil society organisations held a series of training events for state institutions on supporting LGBTI+ asylum seekers and refugees.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

In April, the Belgrade City Library cancelled a discussion upon the request of Da se zna, which would have featured gender-critical anti-trans speakers.

The Public Prosecutor's Office filed a request with the Constitutional Court to ban the far-right paramilitary political group Leviathan, which regularly incites hatred against LGBT people, migrants, and the Roma.

In July, Geten filed two complaints to the Ombudsman against the head of the Enough is Enough association and also against Ninoslav Jovanović, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue, for sharing transphobic posts about the trans competitor who won Miss Netherlands. Civil society filed a criminal complaint against Dr. Alek Račić for publicly advocating and inciting hatred towards LGBT+ people in a new book (see under Education).

In August, People's Party MP Ivana Parlić made derogatory remarks about men wearing lipstick. In September, President Vučić made anti-trans comments about gender fluidity and non-binary genders, saying "all that craziness" will not exist in Serbia.

Throughout the year, several other politicians made anti-LGBTI statements (see here) on TV, during parliamentary debates, or on social media.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Hate crimes continued to take place on a regular basis and largely with impunity. Da se zna! shared that close to 90% of victims, who reported an anti-LGBT attack to the authorities, do not have any information about the steps the police took. Between August and March 2023, Da se zna! documented 94 hate crimes .

In late February, a man was stabbed and two others were attacked with a bottle in a park in Belgrade by a group of young men. All three victims were hospitalised. A few days later, a man was assaulted at a club by the security guards. Brankica Jankovic, Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, condemned the attacks and called for an effective police response. The perpetrators are being investigated

and the Prosecutor filed charges. Following the attacks, civil society organisations held a protest with the slogan 'Hate Kills' in March and called on the police to find and sanction the perpetrators and on institutions to protect and support victims. The organisers also demanded an emergency meeting with the Minister of Interior. Riot police were present to protect the participants, but no incidents were recorded.

In June, singer Ema Radujko was harassed, pelted with bottles and kicked off the stage for her support for LGBT+ rights.

Noa Milivojev, an 18-year-old trans woman, was murdered in June. Her body was found three weeks after she disappeared. A vigil was held in her memory, but the memorial site was later vandalised and trans flags were violently removed from it. A protest was organised as part of "Serbia against violence" protest, and an opposition leader holding a trans flag was verbally attacked by two men, who were promptly removed by organisers. CSOs filed a criminal complaint, but the police have not taken action. 29 civil society organisations demanded the harshest sentence - the suspect faces aggravated murder charges. Civil society reiterated its urgent call for effective police protection and sanctions against perpetrators. In its annual hate crime report, Da se zna! documented the highest number of anti-LGBT incidents since 2017.

The Belgrade Pride Info Centre was attacked and vandalised in May and August. This brings the total number of attacks on the Centre to 19 over the past few years. Police have only sanctioned two of the attacks. The rainbow flag outside the Centre was removed several times this year (see here and here for instance).

A sculpture commemorating Serbian queer artist Merlinka was vandalised in October, three days after it was installed.

Two police officers were acquitted despite assaulting a gay man in 2022.

EDUCATION

Da se zna filed a complaint with the Commissioner for the Protection of Equality against the Kragujevac Faculty of Medical Sciences for promoting Alek Račić's new book with harmful anti-LGBT content (see under Bias-motivated speech).

EMPLOYMENT

A conference on Discrimination of LGBTI people on the labour market in Serbia brought together key stakeholders, including the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue.



EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The general situation of LGBT people significantly worsened since the escalation of anti-LGBT attacks and speech targeting the 2022 EuroPride in Belgrade.

The Council to monitor the implementation of Strategy of Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and its related Action Plan, adopted in 2022, was set up this year. It includes three representatives of LGBTIQ organisations. On the occasion of IDAHOBIT, Serbia's Ombudsperson Zoran Pašalić called for sanctions against anti-LGBTI hate crimes and for providing free legal aid to LGBT victims of discrimination and violence. The Ministry for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue called for inclusion and equality. The Democratic Party issued a statement of support.

This year's conference during Belgrade Pride focused on the need for legal protection of trans, intersex and gender-variant communities.

FAMILY

A study released in May by the IDEAS Center for Research and Development of Societies found that 86% of LGBTIQ+ people in Serbia believe that the issue of same-sex partnership is the most important or very important for them. 77% want to get married one day and 51% want to have children.

The draft Law on Same-Sex Partnerships, which was presented in 2021, continued to be stalled. In June, Belgrade Pride submitted a freedom of information request to the government to request an update about the process.

In September, the Green-Left Front tabled a civil partnership bill in parliament.

Also in September, President Aleksandar Vučić said that regardless of the Prime Minister's stance, he would always veto any legislative attempts to provide legal recognition to same-sex couples and defy criticism from the EU. The Commissioner for the Protection of Equality, Brankica Janković, expressed support for legal recognition, but said it cannot be an overnight change. The Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue Tomislav Žigmanov echoed a similar stance saying such decisions required 'consensus'.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Pride Week was held between 4-10 September under the slogan "We're not even close". On the eve of Pride Week, a few dozen far-right protesters gathered in Belgrade "for the defence of family and traditional values" and for a ban on Pride.

The Pride march was held on 9 September and was protected by riot police. This was the biggest march to date and went safely. About 50 ultraconservative protesters and Orthodox priests showed up. The President refused to raise the rainbow flag in the capital, which civil society has asked for. One person was assaulted after the Pride march, after refusing to take off rainbow symbols.

HEALTH

Da Se Zna's study found that only 16% of 91 health centres surveyed provided services to trans people. In February, Geten sent a freedom of information request to the Ministry of Health, inquiring about care provision and the Ministry's plans to implement ICD-11. The Ministry answered that it would, for now, continue using ICD-10. Kolektiv Talas TIRV together with the Ombudsperson initiated intersectoral discussions on the topic of depathologising transgender identities at which it was agreed to initiate the official implementation of ICD-11. No further progress has been reported.

Although the government adopted a new list of medicines covered by insurance which includes female hormones for trans women, the dosage stated is not available on the pharmaceutical market in Europe. Republic insurance fund did not respond positively to the request for available dosage (5mg) to be covered.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In February, Geten published a report based on research between 2019-2021, finding that there was no uniform practice among registry offices about handling LGR requests; that on average 7-10 people apply each year; those working in the registries wish to undergo further training.

The Council formed to monitor the implementation of Strategy of Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and its related Action Plan agreed at its first session that it would consider the preconditions for the drafting of legal gender recognition legislation. The Strategy and Action Plan specifically mention the drafting and adoption of an LGR law.

In September, President Vučić said he would not sign a law that introduces a "third gender".

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

A short film was released celebrating the contributions of lesbians to the LGBT movement in Serbia.



Enough with the silence, a comic book based on an intersex person's life was [published](#) in October. *Vrhunac*, written by Aleksandra Bojanića about a queer young person, was [published](#) this year.

Serbian *Eurovision Song Contest* runner-up contestant, [openly gay performer](#), Luke Black [spoke up](#) for LGBTQ+ rights.

Rainbow Ignite opened the first LGBTIQ+ archive in the Balkan region and the exhibition “Arkadija - Where we were”: about Serbian LGBTI heritage and cultural history was [held](#) in September in Belgrade.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

In 2022, President Aleksandar Vučić [announced](#) that medically assisted reproduction will be available from December onwards. It is [available](#) to all women, and it has been reported that lesbian couples have had good experiences of the process this year.



SERBIA WEB PAGE
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SLOVAKIA

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Following a hate crime terrorist attack that shook the community in 2022 (see under Bias-motivated Violence), venues continued to post rainbow stickers on their doors to signal safe spaces for LGBTI+ people.

ASYLUM

LGBTI+ and particularly trans asylum seekers from Ukraine faced serious challenges in access to gender-affirming healthcare and NGOs recommend they go to Czechia or other European countries within their reach to the West instead (see under Health).

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-LGBTI+ and particularly anti-trans hate speech, including by politicians, continued to be increasingly common. In January, Inakost released the findings of its comprehensive study with 1,600 LGBTI+ people surveyed in 2022. The study found that 58% had experienced verbal harassment, including threats and cyberbullying.

Politicians continued to use anti-LGBTI+ and anti-trans rhetoric, including to divert attention from political developments and challenges and to gain conservative votes. In January, Minister of Finance Igor Matovič wrote: “Turning 12-year-old girls into men? That’s sick. Remade men competing in women’s sports? That’s sick”. Following a protest in May (see under Freedom of Assembly), Matovič wrote about “LGBTIQXYZ+” people, adding “nowhere have I met so many primitive, arrogant, vulgar and bad people together as among these transgender activists” and that, “We must protect our children from these ‘people’”.

Ahead of the September elections, pro-Russian and anti-LGBTI+ rhetoric was very common. The far-right neo-Nazi ĽSNS party’s billboards, for instance, promised “We will protect Slovakia from LGBTI+ and gender”. Over 10,000 people signed a petition demanding that the billboard company remove them. Civil society filed a criminal complaint with the General Prosecutor and the National Criminal Agency (NAKA) launched an investigation, which was still ongoing after the elections. There is no known outcome to the investigation.

Smer, which later won the elections, also used anti-trans and homophobic campaign videos, featuring party leader Robert Fico saying “while the progressive Misho (Michal) decides whether he is a boy, a girl or a helicopter today, for us gender ideology in schools is unacceptable and marriage is a unique

union between a man and a woman.” In October, incoming PM Fico said trans people were not natural or normal. On 12 October, the European Parliament’s Party of European Socialists (PES) suspended the membership of Smer and ĽSNS, coalition partners, for “the clear divergence from the values of the PES family”, including on LGBTI+ rights.

In September, Chairman of the Christian-Democratic KDH Milan Majerský said LGBTI+ is a “plague” that can “destroy the society” and the “nation”. Majerský apologised, but several criminal complaints were filed against him. In October, SNS MP Rudolf Huliak made anti-LGBTI+ statements, which the NAKA started investigating.

A year after the deadly anti-LGBTI+ terrorist attack (see below), the police started investigating stickers that were posted in the capital this autumn and calling for the murder of “faggots”.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Presented in January, Inakost’s study found that 13% of respondents had been physically or sexually assaulted and 23% had experienced domestic violence. 80% are afraid in public places.

12 October marked the one year anniversary of the deadly anti-LGBTI+ terrorist attack in the capital. Commemorations were held to remember the two queer people murdered. President Zuzana Čaputová expressed her solidarity again. A report about the attack concluded that the killer did not act alone and the manifesto he shared, and which he said would hopefully inspire other attacks, was most likely co-written by others.

CSOs and the community feel betrayed and disappointed that instead of proactively protecting the community, politicians have continued their anti-LGBTI+ backlash. Over 100 civil society organisations and 33,000 individuals have signed the Ide nám o život /Our lives are at stake call, launched in 2022, demanding sanctions against hate speech by politicians, prevention and prosecution in hate crimes, support for safe spaces and support services, and other key actions. Since the attack, several bars and other venues that host LGBTI+ events have installed security cameras and hired security staff.

EDUCATION

Inakost’s survey found that 86% had heard anti-LGBTI+ comments in school and 37% had been personally targeted by negative comments or behaviour from their classmates. In April, OĽANO tabled an amendment to the Education Act



which would [introduce](#) a parental veto on sex education in schools. The amendment was rejected.

Smer [promised](#) in its election campaign that it would seek to ban the discussion of LGBTI+ topics in schools.

The student association of Faculty of Philosophy at Comenius University, Light* [held](#) the second annual LGBTI+ festival in March.

In November, MPs of the former OĽANO (now “Slovakia”) party [submitted a bill to parliament](#) identical to the amendment to the Education Act rejected in April, which would introduce a parental veto on sex education in schools. The first reading of the bill should take place in early 2024.

EMPLOYMENT

On IDAHOBIT, 25 large companies [called for](#) the improvement of the rights and living conditions of LGBTI+ people in the country.

A poll from the Profesia job search website [found](#) that LGBTI+ employees are the least accepted at work compared to, for instance, ethnic minorities, foreigners, people with disabilities, and others.

The LGBTI+ Business Forum 2023 [took place](#) in June, bringing together companies, organisations, representatives of the European Labor Agency (ELA) and the European Commission.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

ECRI’s [report](#) on Slovakia, published in March, highlighted that the government is still to adopt an action plan to prevent and combat intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI+ persons. Yet, this year [marked](#) a wave of anti-LGBT bills being submitted to the parliament, both by government and opposition MPs, which the community has seen as alarming in the aftermath of the 2022 anti-LGBT terrorist attack (see above). Several sources reported that LGBTI+ and particularly trans people are considering moving abroad (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

In June, a number of Lutheran pastors formally [asked](#) the Church’s leadership to support LGBTI+ people in the congregation. The letter was signed by pastors and other people from various Lutheran congregations in Slovakia. The Church leadership has discussed the petition at the Religious Committee and plan to continue discussions at the Synod. Formally, the Church leadership is bound to consider such petitions and meet with petitioners.

FAMILY

Despite the new government’s 2020 [promise](#) to adopt legislation on inheritance and property rights for cohabiting and same-sex couples, [little progress](#) took place this year. Inakost’s study found that 77% of gays and lesbians [think](#) that the most pressing issue for the LGBTI+Q community is the lack of legal recognition of same-sex partnerships. The Progressive Slovakia party, which received the second most votes, [included](#) marriage equality in its election [campaign](#). The President [continued](#) to support introducing registered partnerships. The Ombudsperson [expressed](#) support for recognising marriage or civil partnership concluded abroad.

In January, Minister of Justice Viliam Karas [proposed](#) that same-sex partners receive a ‘confidant’ status, which would allow them to visit or get medical information of their partner, for instance, if hospitalised. Civil society [expressed](#) deep disappointment with the proposal, and continued to lobby for the [adoption](#) of the Life Partnership Act and equal adoption rights for same-sex couples. The initiative was [criticised](#) by the Ombudsman and was eventually [withdrawn](#) by Minister of Justice, Jana Dubovcová in May.

In March, a parliamentary committee [adopted](#) a resolution which would recognise parental rights obtained abroad, but [reversed](#) its decision shortly after.

In May, over 30 MPs [turned](#) to the Constitutional Court [asking it](#) to call on the parliament to provide legal recognition for same-sex couples. There have been no further updates. In the autumn, Smer [shared](#) they might seek a constitutional ban on adoptions by same-sex parents.

In October, the first-instance Žilina Regional Court [established](#) in the case of a married Slovak-Argentinian gay couple that denying permanent residence to same-sex spouses of Slovak citizens is discriminatory

The Constitutional Court [heard](#) a case concerning the recognition of same-sex marriages formed abroad. The case passed its preliminary hearing and is ongoing.

FOREIGN POLICY

Slovakia [did not join](#) the European Commission’s infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBTI+ legislation.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Activists [held](#) a demonstration outside the parliament in May

against the proposed ban on legal gender recognition (see below). Minister of Finance Igor Matovič (see under Bias-motivated Speech) called the event “propaganda” and got into a physical fight with the participants, filmed them, verbally harassed them, and tried to take their signs away. Other MPs also joined him.

The Bratislava Pride march was held on 22 July and was not open to political parties given the upcoming elections. The festival’s slogan was ‘Proud and indestructible’. This year, the patrons of Pride included the Culture and Justice Ministers, Silvia Hroncová and Jana Dubovcová. No violent incidents were recorded, but the ultra-conservative and anti-LGBTI+ March for Family was again held at the same time.

Three allies and family members of LGBTI+ people organised the first ever Pride march in the town of Bardejov. Pride marches took place again in Košice and Banská Bystrica. Košice Pride faced opposition from counter-protesters during the march. About 30+ extremists from the neo-fascist Kotleba party attempted to disrupt the march, threw plastic bottles and yelled hate speech at attendees of the Pride.

Despite preparations and consultations with the local state police in Košice before Pride, a counter-protest took the police by surprise. Due to safety measures the police changed the route of the march. Organisers of Košice Pride felt that this was unnecessary backing down to extremists given that Košice Pride had been officially scheduled months earlier, and instead the police should have rerouted the counter protesters.

HEALTH

The crackdown on trans healthcare services intensified this year. In late 2022, doctors and other medical professionals published a joint statement addressed to the government, calling for a halt to all trans healthcare provision. The statement, which now has over 400 signatures, has been widely condemned by human rights organisations. ECRI’s report on Slovakia welcomed the Professional guidelines to unify medical procedures for issuing medical opinions on gender reassignment (see under Legal Gender Recognition), which was adopted but then suspended in 2022, and called for its implementation. Civil society continued demanding the same.

In January, the neo-nazi People’s Party Our Slovakia proposed a law that would criminalise doctors who provide trans healthcare services.

In this climate, trans people have no access to healthcare and

many self-medicate or travel abroad. Some reported abuse by medical professionals, including verbal harassment and other forms of humiliation.

The counselling centre for LGBTI+ people in Poradna shared that in the current climate of anti-trans rhetoric and regression in legal gender recognition and trans healthcare provision, many trans people contemplate suicide or leaving the country. Another counselling centre for LGBTI+ people Prizma Košice also warned that a ban on legal gender recognition (see below) would have catastrophic mental health ramifications.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Following the 2022 terrorist attack at Tepláreň, Inakost raised over 80,000 euro this year for a community centre for LGBTI+ people, which is set to open in 2024.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The Progressive Slovakia party, which received the second most votes, included legal gender recognition (LGR) based on self-determination in its campaign programme. ECRI’s report on Slovakia called on the government to proceed with the implementation of the Professional guidelines to unify medical procedures for issuing medical opinions on gender reassignment (see under Health), which abolishes the sterility requirement but was suspended due to anti-trans pressure in 2022.

Although in April the guidelines had been finally approved by the outgoing Minister of Health Lengvarský, issues with implementation remained throughout 2023. Several state registries refused requests of trans people for legal gender change, arguing that the guidelines were not valid. Several state registries across the country conditioned legal gender change with medical proof of end to reproductive ability (castration/sterilisation), in direct violation of the Law on Birth Number stipulating conditions for legal gender change. The law does not specify which medical procedures an individual should undergo. The only condition in the law is a doctor certificate proving that medical transition has been completed.

In March, the parliament passed in the first reading a bill that would de facto ban LGR entirely. The bill was tabled by conservative MPs in February and sets out that LGR would only be available to those who can submit a genetic test proving that their ‘sex’ was “incorrectly determined” by doctors at birth. It also establishes that gendered birth numbers could not be changed, which would ‘out’ trans people, who change their name. The move, which was criticised by the Ombudsperson,



[received](#) wide media attention, including internationally, and was criticised by the [Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights](#), Amnesty International, [LGBTI+ organisations](#) and MEPs called for its immediate withdrawal (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)). Several demonstrations were held outside Slovakian embassies across Europe (see [here](#) for instance). Although the proposed bill had not managed to enter second reading in time for the last parliament session in June before elections in September, an identical bill was [submitted to the new parliament in November](#) by the same MPs from former OĽANO (now “Slovakia”) party, who are members of Christian Union.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

A young Roma queer person, Vojtěch Klinec [released](#) a song about his experiences growing up as part of two minorities.

In October, a Czech and Slovak produced film, [Úsvit](#), the story of an intersex person, premiered in theatres across Slovakia and Czechia. A trans non-professional actor, cast as an intersex character, was [awarded Best Actor Award](#) at Thessaloniki International Film Festival in Greece.

PUBLIC OPINION

A study by the Slovak Academy of Sciences found that Slovaks [consider](#) LGBTI+ people to be the second most discriminated group, following the Roma.

In August, a poll by the TV channel JOJ 24 [found](#) that 40% of Slovaks support introducing registered partnership.



[SLOVAKIA WEB PAGE](#)
[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG)

SLOVENIA

ASYLUM

Civil society continued supporting LGBT people fleeing Ukraine. The opening of the Pride Festival addressed the lack of adequate protection awarded to LGBTIQ+ asylum seekers in Slovenia.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

(see also under Bias-motivated Violence; and Freedom of Assembly)

Legebitra documented 17 cases of bias-motivated speech in 2023.

TransAkcija documented 25 cases of direct bias-motivated speech in 2023. TransAkcija reported an additional 17 cases of direct bias-motivated speech where the persons reporting were witnesses to the event, and 27 cases where the reported bias-motivated speech was in the media or other public messaging.

The day before the Pride march, the Slovenian Democratic Youth (SDM) party launched the ‘Two Sexes, One Truth’ campaign which states that there are “only men and women” and strongly opposes the legal gender recognition (LGR) law reform. The SDM’s press statement alleges that LGBT+ communities prioritise “the indoctrination of children based on gender theory” and equates this with “psychological abuse”. The statement also reads that defying the gender binary “harms society as a whole”.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

(See also under Freedom of Assembly)

Several hate crimes were recorded again this year, but victims remain reluctant to report incidents to the authorities. Legebitra documented a total of nine hate crimes and three cases of vandalism this year.

As of 27 November, TransAkcija documented 77 cases of reporting of direct transphobic violence or discrimination by a victim of violence, and an additional 47 cases where the person reporting the violence was a witness to the attack.

Several people were assaulted and organisers and venues were targeted before, during, and after the Ljubljana Pride march on 17 June and the Maribor Pride march on 16 September (see more under Freedom of Assembly).

Pride organisers expressed serious concern that at the

Ljubljana march, the police failed to intervene in any of the attacks, failed to identify, detain, or stop the perpetrators, and discouraged the victims from reporting, saying such attacks are “just the way it is” on the day of Pride. Several civil society organisations condemned the police’s lack of action, called for hate crimes to be recorded, investigated, and perpetrators held to account, and demanding firmer responses from the Prime Minister and the Minister of Interior, the former taking three days to react and the latter not making any statements. A few days after Pride, LGBTIQ+ organisations held a press conference about the attacks, warning about the increase in hate. Several passersby made anti-LGBT remarks.

In early July, the Commission for Petitions, Human Rights and Equal Opportunities convened an emergency meeting on homophobic and transphobic violence, concluding that the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities should prepare and adopt the National Strategy for LGBTIQ+ people.

In late July, the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities held a meeting with LGBTIQ+ organisations on how to best respond to the increase in anti-LGBT hate crimes. The Ministry also discussed the National Strategy for LGBTIQ+ people as part of this effort (see more under Equality and Non-discrimination).

The government adopted an amendment to the Penal Code which would increase sanctions on hate crimes based on the victim’s sexual orientation and a number of other non-GIGESC grounds.

EDUCATION

One of the leading right wing media websites posted an article about a child who came out as trans. The article named the school, quoted the principal, and shared other potentially identifying information, which was a violation of the child’s right to privacy and protection from media. The parents are now in a legal battle regarding this situation.

EMPLOYMENT

A pedagogy student, who was doing a two-week internship at a primary school in Maribor, became a target of transphobic harassment and hate speech in April, with parents calling for her dismissal because of her trans identity. The media widely reported on the case. Civil society organisations and the primary school stood in support of the teacher. She, however, did not finish her internship.



EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In October, State Secretary at the Ministry of Labour, Dan Juvan (MDDSZ) [committed](#) to the preparation and publication of the country's first National Strategy for the Equality of LGBTIQ+ Persons and to engage in extensive consultations with civil society. The move follows up on the call of the Parliamentary Commission for Petitions, Human Rights, and Equal Opportunities in 2022 that the Ministry of Labour, Family, Social Affairs, and Equal Opportunities should prepare and adopt a strategy. The strategy is expected in 2024.

FAMILY

The [amendments](#) of the Family Code, which introduced marriage equality and equal adoption rights in 2022, [entered](#) into force on 1 February. Slovenia is now the first country in the former socialist bloc that has marriage equality in place. Several politicians and Slovenia's President welcomed this important milestone (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). Marriage equality was introduced thanks to the Constitutional Court's [ruling](#) in July 2022.

345 couples in a registered partnership [transformed](#) their legal status to marriage before the 31 July deadline.

FOREIGN POLICY

Slovenia [joined](#) the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The nine-day Ljubljana Pride Festival kicked off on 9 June and the Pride march was [held](#) on 17 June. This year's motto was 'More Communities, One Goal'. The march [gathered](#) approximately 3500 people. The Minister of Labour, Family, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities joined the event and also [published](#) a supportive statement. Minister for a Solidary Future [Simon Maljevac](#), the first [openly gay](#) minister, was also present. For the first time, Slovenia's President [held](#) a speech at the march.

On the eve of Pride, a man [threw](#) a bottle and broke the window of a bar that displayed a rainbow flag, and which is [owned](#) by a prominent LGBTIQ+ rights activist. Several Pride participants were attacked before, during and after the march (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). Some were [attacked](#) with eggs while marching, which was filmed and gathered countless hate comments online, including death threats. Some counter-demonstrators [chanted](#) anti-LGBT slogans, including "there are only two genders".

A young woman [carrying](#) a rainbow flag was [assaulted](#) at a bar. Several rainbow flags were [burnt](#) around the city, which the perpetrators [filmed](#) and shared on social media. Human rights organisations and venues hosting events were also [targeted](#) (see also under Bias-motivated Violence). The Pride organisers shared that such incidents had not happened for years and advised participants to take off Pride-related accessories before and after Pride events. The [Prime Minister](#), the [Speaker of Parliament](#), and the [Ombudsperson](#) condemned the violence.

The Pride march in Maribor, held on 20 September with the motto 'From Laws to Society', was also [attacked](#). Counter-protesters were chanting anti-LGBT slogans, [assaulted](#) several people, including a well-known LGBTIQ+ activist who was taken to hospital. After the march, several others were [attacked](#), verbally harassed, and eggs were thrown at them.

The Minister for a Solidary Future, Minister of Culture, the President, the Ombudsperson, Maribor's mayor, civil society and others condemned the attacks (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)).

HEALTH

The Ombudsperson [established](#) that a lesbian woman was discriminated against by her gynaecologist, who refused to give her medically assisted reproduction care after an IVF treatment abroad. The doctor filed a conscientious objection claim with Slovenia's Medical Association, but the Association did not support the claim.

The interdisciplinary group on trans healthcare, set up by the Ministry of Health and the University Psychiatric Clinic Ljubljana in 2020, met once this year. Communication with civil society improved this year.

In 2022, the National Institute of Public Health stated that they support the implementation of ICD-11, but no changes have taken place since.

Accessing medications became more difficult this year and this has impacted Nebido access as well - hormones need to be picked up at GP's practices, instead of simply at pharmacies.

One of the two endocrinologists working at the University Clinic Centre in Ljubljana left, leading to longer delays for trans persons initially accessing hormones in the country.



LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

(See also under Bias-motivated Speech)

On the day of the Pride march on 17 June, 18 civil society organisations held a press conference and launched an online petition calling on the Minister of Interior to amend Article 37 of the Rulebook on the Enforcement of the Civil Registry Act and delete the sentence that requires trans people to acquire a certificate from a “medical professional” and proving that they had “changed sex”. As of November, 2,700 people signed the petition. With the removal of the passage, Slovenia would join 11 other European countries that provide LGR on the basis of self-determination and in a simple administrative procedure. The working group on LGR finalised its analysis of the legal situation back in 2022, but the Ministry of Interior has stalled the process since.

This year again, the Ombudsperson’s annual report called for a reform to ensure legal gender recognition procedures are based on self-determination.

In June, the Slovenian Democratic Youth (SDM) party launched the ‘Two Sexes, One Truth’ campaign, opposing legal gender recognition law reform and non-binary identities (see more under Bias-motivated Speech).

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In July Legebitra, Parada ponosa, ŠKUC and the DIH met with the General Deputy Director of the Police, who pledged to introduce special police information points during the next Pride parade, which will be positioned around Ljubljana and Maribor and will enable LGBTIQ+ persons or anyone who has been subjected to homophobic and/or transphobic violence, to submit a report on the spot with appropriate professional support. He also committed to reviewing existing training curricula, to ensure police are educated on topics regarding different minorities. It was agreed that it is necessary to include LGBTIQ+ organisations and their knowledge in the implementation of police training.

PUBLIC OPINION

Legebitra carried out a public opinion research on the acceptance of rainbow families in Slovenia. The results showed that there is 45% support for rainbow families in Slovenia, 36% have a negative attitude towards rainbow families and 19% are undecided.



[SLOVENIA WEB PAGE](#)
[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](http://WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG)



SPAIN

ASYLUM

The Ministry of Interior [shared](#) that approximately 10% of all asylum applicants are LGBTI+, but the acceptance rate of their claims [dropped](#) from 16% to 10% between 2020 and 2021, as reported by KifKif.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Hate speech against LGBT people continued to be a serious issue (see cases [here](#) and [here](#)) and anti-trans rhetoric continued to gain more ground. Based on 7-8% of the overall population being LGBTI, 29% claimed to have suffered harassment, 27% suffered discrimination, and 8% verbal or physical attacks.

A study by a private consultancy [showed](#) that online hate grew 130% between 2019 and 2022. Another study by the Lambda collective found that most anti-LGBTI+ hate speech online [targets](#) trans people.

Hate speech from politicians also remained common (see [here](#) and [here](#)). Vox and the Popular Party (PP) continued to [threaten](#) the challenge the new trans law. Stickers were [posted](#) against the trans law in Tarragona, calling it homophobic. The Madrid College of Physicians [called](#) the law “barbaric”.

Because of divided opinions on trans rights and sex work, cities including Madrid, Santiago de Compostela and Gijon staged [opposing](#) Women’s Day marches.

Several perpetrators of anti-LGBTI+ hate speech were convicted this year (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)). 13 organisations including NGOs and trade unions signed a [Social Pact against hate speech](#) calling for a national agreement protecting minorities from hate speech in the public sphere.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

The Ministry of Interior [documented](#) 459 anti-LGBT hate crimes in 2022 (2021: 466), the second most common type after racist attacks. Another survey from the LGTBI+ State Federation showed that [8,6%](#) of LGBTI+ people have suffered aggression in the last five years. NGOs [continued](#) the awareness-raising campaign to ‘[Stop the Hate](#)’.

Coruña’s Observatory against LGBTI-phobia [published](#) its fifth annual report, [finding](#) a 17% decrease in cases in 2022 compared to 2021. The Observatory against Homophobia of Catalonia also documented fewer anti-LGBTI hate crimes in

the same period, but those were [more violent](#) than before. It also [found](#) a significant [increase](#) this year, 18% in the first half of 2023. Barcelona announced that it would [provide](#) free legal advice to victims of anti-LGBTI+ violence. The Non-Discrimination Office of Valencia is [putting](#) in place a hate crime documentation system.

Countless hate crimes took place again this year, all across Spain (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)), including cases of [family violence](#) where parents mistreated their children for their SOGI. A trans woman was [murdered](#) in Barcelona in February.

A memorial for a popular trans icon was yet again [vandalised](#) in May in Madrid and rainbow flags were [torn](#) down again.

Several perpetrators of anti-LGBT hate crimes, including murder and sexual violence, were convicted this year (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

BODILY INTEGRITY

Citing procedural reasons, in January Madrid’s government [closed](#) the second case against Elena Lorenzo for running her ‘Road to Heterosexuality’ course, i.e. a form of so-called ‘conversion practice’.

The [LGBTI law](#), which [includes](#) a ban on so-called ‘conversion practices’ and non-consensual surgeries performed on intersex children under the age of 12, was [adopted](#) in February.

EDUCATION

A 12-year-old trans boy [committed](#) suicide in Barcelona in February due to transphobic bullying in school. A 15-year-old trans girl [committed](#) suicide in Mallorca in June, in what could have been the consequence of transphobic bullying in school.

COGAM’s [study](#) found that 35% of students in Madrid have prejudices towards LGBTI classmates (2019: 15%). 7% of LGBT and 17% of trans students [suffered](#) insults. 42% of students would [prefer](#) if their partner was not bisexual.

Asturias [amended](#) its [protocol](#) against bullying to include sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds.

The new Family Law, adopted in March, [does not include](#) a ban on ‘parental veto’, which would have allowed parents to prevent their children from participating in school workshops that include content that goes against their beliefs or morals.



EMPLOYMENT

FELGTBI+'s study [found](#) that only one in ten LGBTI+ people were out to their superiors at work. 75% of LGBTI+ people believe they have less professional opportunities, [according](#) to a large study by a national trade union.

An employee was [fired](#) for subjecting a colleague to homophobic harassment.

A gay farmer [went](#) on hunger strike and [walked](#) over 100km for a meeting with the region's Minister of Agriculture after he was [denied](#) using the public pastures in his village and was targeted by homophobic slurs.

The new LGTBI law [sets out](#) that companies with over 50 workers will have to have LGTBI equality plans within a year.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

FELGTBI+'s study [found](#) that more than half of respondents hid their identity from their family. The Basque Youth Observatory [found](#) that 14% of LGBT youth (15-29) felt discriminated against on the basis of SOGI. 70% of LGBTI+ people and 82% of trans people in Palma have been [discriminated](#) against.

Valencia [adopted](#) its first Municipal Plan for Sexual and Gender Diversity (2023-2027), which among other things, envisions gender-neutral bathrooms and changing rooms. Castilla-La Mancha [introduced](#) the Comprehensive Care Service for LGTBI people in March.

In July, the Canary Islands agreed to [set up](#) a Consultative Committee for Social Equality and Non-Discrimination based on gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, to implement the regional LGTBI law adopted in 2021.

In November, Madrid [proposed regional amendments](#) to curtail the rights of its LGTBI population especially trans people, including allowing conversion practices for trans people. 30 organisations organised a protest that [gathered](#) 15,000 participants, according to organisers.

FAMILY

The LGTBI law, adopted in February, [allows](#) same-gender female couples to both be automatically recognised as parents, without having to be married and go through adoption.

The new Family Law, adopted in March, [recognises](#) and protects diverse family forms.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

An estimated record number of 1.5 million people (2022: 600,000) [joined](#) this year's Madrid Pride demonstration, which took place a few weeks before the general elections and with the motto '[For our rights, for our lives: with Pride](#)'.

Thousands joined [Madrid's Critical Pride](#) in late June to [speak](#) up against the far-right.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Legal rows over the display of rainbow flags [continued](#) this year. Vox council members requested that the flags be removed from public buildings in several regions (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). The Superior Court of Justice of Castilla y León [ruled](#) the flag should not be removed from the regional parliament's building or the [city council](#) of Valladolid. Madrid's Superior Court of Justice [ruled](#) against the flag.

Vox and ultra-conservative religious groups continued to wage a cultural war on LGBTI+-themed works, including plays, books, exhibitions and films (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

In A Coruña, ruled by the left party PSOE, the city council [has not flown the rainbow flag](#) in the last four years, despite this being requested every year by LGTBI+ organisations.

HEALTH

Spain [introduced](#) period- and abortion-related sick leave.

Vox [re-stated](#) its stance against minors' access to trans-specific healthcare. Madrid [announced](#) it would require an expert opinion from a psychologist before providing hormones to trans minors 16 and over.

The Balearic Islands [adopted](#) Spain's first healthcare protocol for intersex people. The newly elected regional conservative government has not established a timeline for its implementation.

The HIV Unit of the Hospital Clínic of Barcelona [spoke](#) about the vulnerability of trans migrants and sex workers to HIV. According to the Clínic, 87% of the trans population with HIV that the Clínic serves are Latin American women and 88% are sex workers.

Reporting [shared](#) that the University of Navarra Clínic (Opus Dei) classifies 'transsexuality' and 'homosexuality' as "disorder" or "deviation."



LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In February, the Senate adopted the federal gender recognition law (the LGTBI law) which was given voted for in the Lower House in December 2022. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and other UN experts, and the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe praised the progressive legislation. The law, which entered into force on 1 March, sets out self-determination for those 16 or over, parental consent for those 14-15, and court authorisation for those aged 12-13. All applicants will however have to register their application, wait for up to three months, and then re-affirm their desire for LGR.

LGR will be accessible for asylum seekers and residents who come from countries where LGR is not available.

Non-binary recognition is not included. Nevertheless, the Superior Court of Justice of Andalusia ruled in May that the gender identity of a non-binary person, Andrea Speck, must be recognised in the European Citizenship Register of the Ministry of the Interior. Speck has German nationality and has had 'divers' as a gender marker in their German documents since 2019. Civil society welcomed the law, but are concerned about the remaining gaps for minors and non-binary people.

The media shared stories of the first trans people to change their legal gender on the basis of the new trans law.

Vox maintained its position against the trans law submitting an appeal to the Constitutional Court in May, claiming that the law was an "assault by gender ideology" that harmed minors (see more under Equality and Non-discrimination). The PP announced in April that they would do the same, presenting their appeal in June.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

In June, trans activist Sandra Rodríguez Salas resigned as PSOE councillor in Granada due to "latent transphobia" in the party. Carla Antonelli, who left PSOE for Más Madrid, became the first trans senator in July. Municipal candidate Pilar Lima in Valencia was targeted by ableist and lesbophobic speech. A gay candidate in the municipal elections, Óscar Balcones, reported homophobic threats and hate messages.

Under Spain's new Sports Law, discrimination against LGBTI people in sports is prohibited. In May, however, the Spanish Basketball Federation refused to allow a trans player to participate in the second league. Valencia hosted a running

race, which featured a non-binary category for the first time. A goalie in the fourth football division came out with an affectionate kiss after a successful game. A famous flamenco singer also came out.

A production of the opera, Tosca in Seville received homophobic backlash for featuring a same-sex scene.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

Upon the request of Spain's Ombudsperson, the authorities shared that as of April this year, 79 trans people were held in prisons, but did not clarify what determined which gendered facilities they were placed in. Since 2006, Penitentiary Institutions allow trans convicts to be accommodated in prison according to their gender.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

The new abortion law, which allows people over 16 to interrupt their pregnancy without parental permission, entered into force on 1 March. The law also establishes the right to abortion at state clinics and provides for free contraceptives and the morning-after pill at state clinics. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk, praised the progressive law. A clinic specialising in supporting trans people with fertility care opened in Valencia.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Catalonia published a guide for all child and adolescent social service providers to incorporate LGBTI+ perspectives in their work and a guide for those working with seniors.



[SPAIN WEB PAGE](#)
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SWEDEN

ASYLUM

In August, RFSL released a new [report](#), based on 1,360 decisions and judgments in LGBTI asylum cases between 2020-2023, which [found](#) that 96% of the decisions led to rejection; that LGBTI applicants rarely receive an individual examination; that the ‘discretion requirement’ and [stereotypical](#) requirements are both still applied; and that applicants are [deported](#) to home countries that criminalise LGBTI people, including with the death penalty. RFSL reminds that LGBTIQI refugees remain a priority group in the governing coalition’s [agreement](#), which also sets out a review of the asylum process to improve procedures for LGBTIQI applicants. In response to the report, the government [promised](#) to investigate the issues outlined.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

(See also under Education; and Freedom of Assembly)

Anti-LGBTIQI statements remained common this year, of which many originated from right wing populist politicians from the governments cooperation party Sweden Democrats (SD). In Eskilstuna SD [called](#) Pride a “radical political organisation” in April and requested the municipality to stop funding the event in order to “protect children from sexual influences”. In September, SD MP Björn Söder [said](#) that Stockholm Pride was not suitable for children and young people. MPs of SD [said](#) in parliament that drag story events violated the best interest of the child. In an interview, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson rebuked Söder’s statement.

Mockery and hate against trans children and their parents have become the norm, with parents and trans groups [urging](#) decision makers to take action. In September, the public service TV channel SVT launched the series “[The Trans War](#)”, which featured anti-trans rhetoric and misinformation. Civil society organisations issued several statements in response (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). At least 100 complaints were [sent](#) to the Review Board asking for the removal of the series. In April, a teenager in Gothenburg [said](#) they would “cut the throats of homosexuals” in response to the Pride flag at a local library.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

A group of young Pride participants were verbally [harassed](#) on their way to Helsingborg Pride in July. The city reported the case to the police.

In February, the police [issued](#) a warning that several people

were lured on fake dates on a gay dating app, and were then robbed and assaulted.

Neo-nazis [tried](#) to block a touring drag show musical for children in Jönköping, but the event was held without disturbance.

Children’s right organisation ECPAT’s report [Consent is KEY](#) [found](#) that LGBTQIA+ children are more likely to suffer sexual violence than their peers and are five times more likely to ‘sell sex’.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In July, Court of Appeals Councilor Maria Hölcke presented her [report](#) concluding that there was no need to ban so-called ‘conversion attempts’ and that the current penalties were sufficient. In 2022, the Swedish Agency for Youth and Civil Society Affairs, [released](#) its report [finding](#) that conversion attempts are very much present in Sweden and particularly impact trans youth.

A pastor, who was dismissed for inviting people to so-called ‘conversion practices is [suing](#) the Pentecostal Church for firing him.

EDUCATION

In September, several media outlets [spread](#) false rumours that preschoolers are taught sex education. Sweden Democrats (SD) [continued](#) to speak against sex education and norm-critical education in hostile ways.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

As part of the Swedish Presidency of the EU, Sweden and the European Commission [hosted](#) the High Level Conference on LGBTIQ Equality in the EU in April. Following the end of the Presidency, civil society [urged](#) the government to continue working on gender equality, LGBTIQI rights, and sexual and reproductive rights.

In July, the Minister for Equality Paulina Brandberg [announced](#) that the state would provide 4.6 million SEK to municipalities and regions to increase knowledge about the situation of LGBTIQI people and to promote digital meeting places.

1.4 million SEK will go to the Gender Equality Agency (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten) for a survey with LGBTIQI people who are exposed to partnership violence.



During Stockholm Pride in August, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson raised the flag at the PM's official residence. RFSL welcomed the move but asked for a more effective response to hate speech in parliament instead. Prime Minister Kristersson also, during Stockholm Pride, hosted a Pride cocktail party, which was the first time a Swedish Prime Minister hosted a rainbow event at his residence.

FAMILY

RFSL continued to lobby for law reform that protects all families. Since 2022, the presumption of parenthood is automatic for all couples who are married and have a child in Sweden, regardless of gender. The law includes two exceptions where parenthood can be later invalidated - in the case of home insemination or assisted reproduction that was conducted abroad and with an unknown donor.

FOREIGN POLICY

Sweden joined the European Commission's infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.

As one of the final steps of the Swedish Presidency of the EU, the EU Justice Affairs Council adopted conclusions on the protection of LGBTI communities in Europe.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

A camp for trans children, organised by Transsamans and RFSL Ungdom was cancelled in June due to threats.

HEALTH

In February, Transsamans opened the first national helpline for trans youth.

Ahead of Women's Day, RFSL Stockholm released a report about LBQ women's access to healthcare. The majority of 812 participants reported having good contact with healthcare, but many avoid seeking care. For instance, almost a third said they do not go to a gynaecologist.

Following from the 2021 decision, the National Board for Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) classified gender-affirming care as so-called "national specialised healthcare". In March the Board announced that as of January 1, 2024, there will be six clinics, with three main ones in Stockholm, Alingsås, and Linköping, which cooperate with satellite clinics in Uppsala, Umeå and Malmö/Lund.

In June, the Agency for the Assessment of Health Technology

and Social Services (SBU) released a study to conclude that few people regret transitioning or detransition. The rate of between 0-4% is based mostly on literature from outside Sweden.

In September, the largest clinic in Sweden that provides care for trans minors issued an internal guidance telling care providers not to refer minors under the age of 11 to their clinic. The decision was made a few days after SVT's documentary premiered (see under Bias-motivated Speech). At the time, 74 of the 368 patients were under 11, which means that a significant rate of trans minors would be left without care.

The National Board of Health and Welfare investigated whether the guidelines for adults with gender dysphoria should be updated to better fit the national specialised health care system.

In October, Sweden Democrats (SD) in the parliament proposed to raise the age limit for trans healthcare to 25.

The government said they would commission the National Board of Health and Welfare to plan individual risk assessment for men who have sex with men (MSM) from 2024, instead of a blanket rule. The current blood donation rule sets out a six-month deferral period for MSM.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The youth organisation RFSL Ungdom turned 20 this year.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

(See under Equality and Non-discrimination)

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The legal gender recognition (LGR) reform continued to be stalled this year. In September, the Moderates (M) and Liberals (L), both government parties, shared that they were going to table a new bill in parliament, as a way of circumventing the deadlock in the government coalition, which would require an expert opinion from a doctor or psychologist and would make LGR available for those aged 16-17 if they have parental consent. The bill has high probability of becoming law. Civil society continued to lobby for a model based solely on self-determination (see here, here, here, here, here, and here). 50 organisations are currently supporting this call and a demonstration was held in September by LGBTQI activists calling for LGR based on self-determination. Sweden is currently the only Nordic country that does not have such a model in place.



PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

The play *Ulla & Zarah*, by Elisabeth Ohlson premiered in August. The play is about the relationship between the, during the 1930's and 1940's, between the celebrated Swedish singers, Ulla Billquist and Zarah Leander.



SWEDEN WEB PAGE
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SWITZERLAND

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

A lesbian couple was denied service and asked to leave a bar in Baden. The couple filed a complaint.

Unlike Bern and Lucerne, Zurich decided not to introduce gender-neutral bathrooms in restaurants.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Several hate speech cases were recorded this year (see [here](#), [here](#),). In some cases, civil society turned to the Ombudsperson.

In March, several organisations, trans minors and adults, and their loved ones published a joint statement to condemn the RTS Temps Present's report on "detransitioning", which featured harmful, incorrect, and biased information about trans people.

The Valais Media Library received several anti-LGBT letters in response to a drag story hour event they hosted. Another drag story event in Zürich received threats upfront but was supported by 300 persons, including politicians, and went smoothly.

The Federal Democratic Union (EDU) ran a provocative anti-Pride campaign in the summer with posters saying "Father, Mother, Child. For life. #PRIDE".

In October, the Vaud cantonal court sentenced far-right extremist Alain Soral to 60 days in prison without parole for discrimination and incitement to homophobic hatred. Soral said that he would appeal the sentence.

The Federal Chancellery published new language guidelines for the Federal administration. Non-binary inclusive language is prohibited; in French and Italian a male-only language is promoted as being inclusive of all gender identities.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Anti-LGBT attacks continued to be an issue (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)), and several rainbow flags were set on fire (see [here](#) and [here](#)). The centre for queer young people in Chur was attacked and vandalised several times this year, sparking fear in the community.

The perpetrator in a homophobic assault in 2022 was sentenced to 80 days in prison.

The tribunal of Martigny fined one perpetrator of verbal and physical homophobic violence, citing physical injury, discrimination and hate speech, and another one who spread online hate messages in relation to the first perpetrator's attack. Together, the two had to pay additional 2,500 CHF (2,630 EURO) to the victims for reparation.

The annual joint report by TGNS, LOS, and Pink Cross documented 134 cases of violence and discrimination against LGBTQ people in 2022, the highest number to date. Almost a third of the victims were trans people and among them most were non-binary.

Under the new sexual criminal law, enacted in June, the gender and sex of perpetrators and victims in a case of rape will no longer be relevant.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In December, the Council of States supported a motion asking for ethical medical guidelines on the diagnosis and treatment of children born with variations of sex development. The guidelines shall be developed by the Swiss Academy of Medical Sciences, in consultation with intersex organisations and implement the National Advisory Commission on Biomedical Ethics opinion, published in 2012. In return, a motion to ban irreversible medical interventions on intersex children was withdrawn.

In August, the Legal Affairs Committee of the Council of States positioned itself in favour of a federal ban on so-called 'conversion practices' but postponed the decision on a motion until a report on the subject will be published. The National Council supported the demand for a federal ban in 2022, a motion that the Council of States would have to vote on as well. This vote is pending until after the publication of the report. In the canton of Fribourg, a motion to ban conversion measures was handed in. The parliaments in the Cantons of Jura and Zurich voted on motions to ban so-called 'conversion practices'. The Valais cantonal government started a public consultation on such a ban. The parliaments of the cantons of Geneva and Vaud discussed a ban; the parliament of the canton of Neuchâtel approved a law proposal to ban conversion measures.

EDUCATION

In June, the Federal Court ruled that the firing of a teacher, who refused to address a trans student by the name and gender he determined for himself, was legitimate.



In June, the National Council dismissed attempts to prohibit universities using gender-neutral language.

In the Canton of Ticino, several students changed the cover of their annual calendar, which showed a peace flag, because it could be mistaken for the rainbow flag.

A school in Zurich canton had to cancel their Gender Day event due to serious threats.

The local council in Chur voted against an LGBTIQ-themed day at city schools in March.

In September, the grand council of the Canton Valais supported the demand for a better inclusion of trans and non-binary pupils in public schools.

EMPLOYMENT

A total of 75 businesses now have the LGBTI label, 22 of which received it this year.

The National Council agreed with a motion to ban discrimination in employment based on sexual orientation and gender identity in the Equality Act. Gender identity is already a protected ground. The Council of State will have to vote on the motion as well.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Following several parliamentary requests, the Federal Department of Home Affairs concluded in January that LGBTI rights should be dealt with by the Federal Office for Gender Equality (FOGE) from 2024 onwards. Currently, LGBTI rights are covered by various federal offices, but on an ad hoc basis. The change will ensure more consistent focus. FOGE will hire two new staff members and will work in consultation with cantons, communes, civil society, and other stakeholders. (see more under Bias-motivated Speech)

The Canton of Geneva set into force a new law on equality and the fight against discrimination based on sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, and intersex. The Basel-Stadt parliament revision of the canton's equality act to explicitly include SOGIGESC was delayed this year, after discussions in the parliament and a heated, primarily anti-trans discussion amongst the public. The draft sets out that gender is determined by several factors, including sex characteristics and each person's self-identification. The draft was criticised by some.

The canton of Basel Landschaft decided that its Office for Equal Opportunities will cover LGBTIQ rights in the future, but without additional budget allocation.

Switzerland's National Human Rights Institution was founded in May.

Geneva, Zurich and Bern published updated material about the rights of LGBTI people.

The European Court of Human Rights ruled in Semenya v. Switzerland that intersex athlete Caster Semenya's rights to privacy and effective remedy were violated when the International Association of Athletics Federations banned her from competing when she refused to undergo hormone treatment. The Court also found that there was a violation of the prohibition of discrimination, establishing that sex characteristics are a protected ground in the Convention. The case was referred to the grand chamber, upon request from Switzerland.

Zurich inaugurated a cemetery section for LGBTIQ people; all 'spots' were reserved within a few months.

In December, the National Council supported the prohibition of hate speech and discrimination in the access to goods and services on the basis of sex / gender. The parliamentary initiative also needs the support of the council of states.

FAMILY

The Federal Statistical Office shared in March that a total of 749 same-sex couples got married in 2022, and 2,234 couples converted their registered partnership to marriage. Switzerland introduced marriage equality in 2022.

Geneva introduced additional parental leave in June, without discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and including where a child was adopted.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

The police surrounded an unauthorised Women's Day protest in Basel on 8 March and fired rubber bullets at the participants. Amnesty International called for a thorough investigation into the police's actions.

Several Pride events were held throughout the country. This year's Pride in Geneva was held without sponsorship from major brands. Zurich Pride was the largest to date, gathering 55,000 people (2022: 40,000).



St. Gallen held its first Pride march this year – several people were filmed by the Swiss People's Party's youth section and ridiculed online.

The Bern Pride march was attended by 10,000 people, but many expressed concern that the police “intensively” filmed the entire march as a ‘preventive’ measure. The march coincided with Eurogames (see under Participation in Public, Cultural and Political Life).

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Four MPs in Valais tried to ban drag story events; the motion was rejected by a clear majority of the parliament. The Federal Council concluded that libraries are free to organise their own activities and that the story events were fully in line with their mandate.

HEALTH

In May, the National Council unanimously decided to abolish discrimination based on sexual orientation in blood donation. The new rule focuses on individual risky behaviour and entered into force in November.

New Swiss recommendations for gender-affirming health-care focused on physical care and psychiatric care, based on ICD-11 and the WPATH Standards of Care Version 8, have been published.

In December, the Bern Grand Council supported a motion to limit irreversible medical transition to adults (by 76 to 75 votes and one abstention) and to strengthen the support for trans youth. Members of the National Council handed in a demand that guidelines on diagnostics and treatments of youth under 25 with gender dysphoria shall be developed, and another to “protect” at least minors from gender reassignment surgery.

In November, the Federal Council published the next national programme “Stop HIV, hepatitis B and C viruses and sexually transmitted infections” including trans persons as key-population for the first time.

HOUSING

Queer and trans people occupied a house in Basel that has been standing empty for 10 years, in part to draw attention to the housing crisis.

INTERSECTIONALITY

In its annual report, the National Commission on the Prevention of Torture suggests to accommodate incarcerated trans persons according to their gender identity.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

The Federal Statistical Office shared in March that a total of 1171 people changed their legal gender in 2022. The new procedure, which consists of a simple declaration based on self-determination, became available on 1 January 2022. In practice, access continues to be difficult for many asylum seekers and refugees. In October, a short evaluation of the new procedure was published showing that there is no systemic risk of misuse. Following the Federal Council's refusal in December 2022 to recognise non-binary identities, the National Council's Commission on Legal Affairs held a hearing on the issue. Following the hearing in April, the National Council voted in September to request the Federal Council to submit a report on possible measures to improve the situation of non-binary people.

In June, the Federal Court ruled that Switzerland does not have to recognise non-binary gender markers that some acquired abroad but emphasised that the current situation is problematic.

On the occasion of her first 100 days in office, Federal Counselor Elisabeth Baume-Schneider emphasised her will to, together with the community, improve the situation for non-binary persons.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

(See also under Equality and Non-discrimination)

The Swiss army announced in January it would carry out a thorough investigation to map anti-LGBT and sexist discrimination and violence within its ranks. In February, an army official was fined for homophobic insults against a gay soldier during and after their service together.

In January, the Zurich cantonal council voted against mandatory training on anti-LGBTI aggression for police officers, prosecutors and court employees.

Bern hosted Europe's largest LGBTQI sports event Eurogames in July. Over 2,300 participants registered for 20 sports.



Since September, the city of Zürich, together with TGNS and trans activists, reserves a swimming pool once a week for the trans community.

An opera about trans pioneer Lili Elbe premiered in St. Gallen in October.



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TAJIKISTAN

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Living costs, including goods such as food, medication, or transport have increased significantly, making life difficult also for members of the LGBT community. The cost of flight tickets also went up, which made it difficult for many LGBT people to leave.

Every year, prices for goods and services increase, which worsens the life of LGBT people in the country. In particular this applies to those representatives of the LGBT community who do not have a regular income or have returned from migration from Russia and do not have a regular income in the country

ASYLUM

Due to stigma and discrimination in society and family, as well as many cases of violations by law enforcement agencies, such as extortion, cases of blackmail, etc., many representatives of the LGBT community are forced to seek asylum in European countries. There are more than five cases where representatives of LGBT communities received asylum in European countries.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Civil society reports that violence against LGBTQI+ people continues to be carried out on a daily basis. ECOM's annual Report on Violations of LGBT People's Rights in Tajikistan in 2022 [documents](#) 22 cases. ECOM shared that other organisations documented over 70 cases.

While the Tajik authorities continue to [deny](#) that the community faces harassment or persecution, the police [arrested](#) ten men in Dushanbe in February based on allegations of the Ministry of Internal Affairs that they infected over 80 people with HIV.

LGBT people are persecuted by law enforcement agencies because of their HIV status. Law enforcement authorities use Article 125 of the Criminal Code (intentional transmission of HIV) to extort and search for other representatives of the LGBT community in the country. More than 20 LGBT people were detained and tested for HIV against their will. Under pressure from law enforcement officials, LGBT people were forced to out other people from the LGBT community. Some of them were convicted under this article and are serving time.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In 2023 many LGBT people were charged with "Illegal production and circulation of pornographic materials or

objects" (Article 241 of the Criminal Code) after police detained them and found photos and videos on their phones that were deemed to be [pornographic](#). Typically, police took the phones by force, without a court sanction, after threatening the detainees with reprisals.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

LGBT bloggers living abroad were targeted by intimidation and threats online. Their families back home were also harassed by police.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Activists continued to report being pressured, harassed, and detained by the authorities, often under false charges. In July, UN human rights experts [issued](#) a joint statement condemning the treatment of human rights defenders in the country. In late 2022, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders [visited](#) Tajikistan - her report has not been published yet.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

At least two trans men and one trans woman were able to change their documents this year, through a court procedure. Civil society highlighted that there is no transparent procedure for LGR.

*Some of the information about Tajikistan was shared with ILGA-Europe by activists who for safety reasons need to stay anonymous.



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TURKEY

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Following the February 6 earthquakes, LGBTI+ people in the disaster area experienced increased levels of discrimination and barriers to accessing humanitarian aid, including food and sanitation as well as financial, psychological, and housing support. See here and here.

A report on ‘The Situation of LGBTI+ People After the Earthquake’ found widespread discrimination and need for support even months after the disaster.

ASYLUM

LGBTQ+ Syrian refugees faced exclusion, discrimination and harassment in the aftermath of the February earthquake, which killed thousands and left millions displaced.

In June, the Iranian LGBTI+ refugee and activist Elyas Torabibaeskendari was detained at the Istanbul Pride march and threatened with deportation. Family members and human rights organisations held a press conference urging his release, citing violations of international agreements. He was released a month later.

A report about a Portuguese man targeted as gay, arrested on the day of Istanbul Pride and detained for 20 days revealed the condition of repatriation centres in Turkey.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Throughout the year, countless politicians made hateful statements. Religious leaders also continued to spread anti-LGBTI hate. President Erdogan was again one of the most vocal speakers against LGBTI people (see here, here, here, here), and particularly during the campaign leading up to the elections in May. Banning LGBTI+ organisations and the protection of traditional family values were key elements of campaigning this year. Two parties, the New Welfare Party and HÜDA-PAR entered into parliament for the first time, both representing extremist, anti-LGBTI and anti-gender views. Civil society reports that even the opposition alliance has been hesitant to advocate for LGBTI+ rights. Ahead of the elections, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights called on Turkey to stop its unprecedented hateful rhetoric against LGBTI people.

In the commission discussing the proposed amendment to Article 41 of the Constitution from “The protection of family and children’s rights” to “The protection of family, conjugal union and children’s rights”, officials and politicians made hateful, discriminatory speeches. Pro-government media outlets continued speaking about

LGBTI+ people with hate. Especially after the general elections, the term “LGBT terror” was frequently used in the media (here, here, here, here) close to the government. Yeni Akit Newspaper, known for its anti-LGBTI+ views, frequently targeted bar associations working on LGBTI+ rights. There were news articles that defined being LGBTI+ as sick, including opinions from ‘experts’.

In its country report on Turkey, the European Commission highlighted anti-LGBTIQ hate speech as a serious issue and noted its increase since the February earthquake.

Kaos GL’s survey found that 89% of LGBTI respondents had been targeted by digital violence.

Hateful backlash and the spread of harmful misinformation was launched after a research article on gender incongruence in adolescents was published. Civil society stood in support of the researchers.

In September, the anti-LGBTI+ Great Family March was held in Istanbul with the slogan “LGBT Propaganda should be banned for our children, our family, and humanity”. RTÜK approved the march’s ad called ‘Say No to LGBT Propaganda’, which was then publicised on national TV as a ‘public service announcement’ (PSA). Kaos GL filed a complaint against the Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) for the alleged PSA, but the Prosecutor dropped the charges saying the spots were to “protect the institution of family”. Ten activists, who protested against the so-called ‘PSA’ were detained in Izmir.

SPoD reported that applications to its LGBTI+ Helpline on SOGI-based discrimination and violence increased by 42% in the first month following the first anti-LGBT+ demonstration and by 240% compared to the same period of the previous year.

Kaos GL and other LGBTI+ associations organised a broadcast on YouTube on the day of Great Family March, with the participation of many journalists, academics, celebrities, activists, and politicians.

An academic with records of discriminatory discourse against LGBTI+ people was appointed to the High Board of Religious Affairs of the Presidency of Religious Affairs.

In September, Turkish State Railways (TCDD) filed a criminal complaint against a pro-LGBTI+ advertisement from Kaos GL, which was shot in Istanbul’s commuter rail Marmaray. Kaos GL withdrew the video due to the wide targeting and death threats.



SPoD and its LGBTI+ Rights Protocol, which is signed by the candidates during the election period, was targeted by one of the Big Family Alliance members.

In September, the so-called Grand Family Platform held a demonstration in Istanbul on the anniversary of their first anti-LGBTI+ protest and petitioned the parliament to shut down LGBTI+ associations.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Kaos GL's annual monitoring report found that 2022 again was characterised by widespread police violence, torture and ill-treatment, and unlawful detention, particularly at demonstrations. At least 571 LGBTI+ activists were detained in one year. At the same time, the police failed to protect LGBTI+ people from hate crimes and most attacks remained without sanctions. 2022 was also a year where the government made relentless efforts to eliminate LGBTI+ people and topics from the public sphere, through bans and censorship.

A trans woman was murdered in her home in Ankara in August. A trans woman was found dead in Kocaeli in November.

Countless hate crimes were documented throughout the year. On 5 January 2023, in the early hours of the morning in the Alsancak district of Izmir, trans woman Ecem Seçkin was murdered with a hate motive.

In İzmir Alsancak, trans woman Melis Yağmur Hanzade was attacked by a group wandering the streets, calling for the observance of the Islamic faith. There is no information that the perpetrators were caught.

A group attacked a trans woman waiting at a bus stop with a fire extinguisher. Those arrested said they did it 'as a joke'. (here)

Reactionary and anti-LGBTI+ groups tried to attack a breakfast organised by the LGBTI+ Rights Commission of the Izmir Bar Association as part of Pride Week activities. The group raised the takbir and used insulting and threatening words against the lawyers. The police did not intervene against the group (see here, here).

In June, 154 journalists and press workers published a joint statement 'We do not want to write any more news about violence and prohibition against LGBTI+ people!'

A number of court cases, focusing on anti-LGBTI+ attacks or murder, continued to be pending or deliberately stalled this

year (see here, here, here, here, here) - some for over 15 years.

BODILY INTEGRITY

In some hospitals in big cities, doctors have gradually reduced or stopped performing non-consensual surgical interventions, but civil society reports that in provincial hospitals, surgeries continue at the same pace.

Inter Solidarity, the country's only intersex organisation, continued to develop relationships with medical professionals and advocate within the medical community on the protection of bodily integrity. The organisation held two workshops with medical students and doctors in 2023.

Inter Solidarity was included in the Ankara Medical Chamber LGBTI+ working group.

In December 2022, Nationalist Movement Party Vice President Feti Yıldız announced that the party would "submit a bill to the Grand National Assembly of Turkey that prohibits gender transition except for medical necessity." Throughout 2023, intersex and trans activists mobilised against the bill and the Nationalist Movement Party claimed it could not submit the bill to the parliament.

EDUCATION

In September, the Ministry of Education announced introducing a new optional course on 'The Family in Turkish Society' to combat "LGBT values".

EMPLOYMENT

The Supreme Court ruled in July that the firing of trans doctor Larin Kayataş for "undermining morals" in 2021 was unlawful and that she needs to be re-hired.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The government dropped a number of planned constitutional amendments after the earthquake in February. These planned to introduce a constitutional ban on marriage equality and could have paved the way to ban LGBTI+ associations. Civil society remains concerned that the initiatives will be tabled again.

Kaos GL and the May 17 Association released the "LGBTI+'s Access to Justice" report, finding inadequate mechanisms, difficulty finding LGBTI+-friendly lawyers, and high costs.

FAMILY

In his victory speech in May, President Erdogan promised to protect the institution of the ‘family’, which many fear means a continued and increased crackdown on LGBTI+ rights and organisations. In October for instance, Erdogan called LGBTI+ people one of the greatest threat to ‘family’.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

Civil society reports that the use of torture and ill-treatment by the police was more widespread this year than ever before, albeit the number of detentions decreased.

The police, for instance, assaulted and detained a Portuguese tourist on the day of Istanbul Pride and held him in deplorable detention conditions for 20 days. Police assaulted a trans woman in Ankara and used excessive force at events all year long.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Türkiye continued to severely violate the right to freedom of assembly in the country this year, with systemic bans, violent attacks on demonstrations, mass detention, and violence. Throughout the months of June, activists organised several Pride events and marches in Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Eskişehir, among others, some of which were successfully held. The police arrested 15 students for peacefully demonstrating at METU. A week later, the police blocked Istanbul Trans Pride March, used violence against the participants, and detained ten participants. The police did not grant a permit for the Istanbul Pride march on 25 June, installed roadblocks on the route, and suspended metro service near Taksim square. The organisers held an unannounced protest about 1 km from Taksim. The police detained over 100 participants in Istanbul and at least 50 in Izmir, where Pride was held on the same day.

Overall, the police backlash led to the detention of 241 people during Pride month, including four children, seven lawyers, five foreigners, journalists, and activists.

Several of the Pride marches were targeted not only by extremist religious and nationalist groups, but also by political parties. The Patriotic Party and its youth branch, Turkish Youth Union (TGB), targeted an LGBTI+ Pride Month event scheduled to take place at the Ankara Bar Association. A group of ten people gathered before a gender equality panel and insulted those attending. The police did not intervene, and the event went ahead despite the provocation.

Throughout the year, LGBTI+ picnics, concerts and film screenings were also banned and obstructed by police (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)).

LGBTI+ people joined Newroz celebrations in Diyarbakır with rainbow flags, but were attacked.

Several Women’s Day events were held on 8 March in Ankara, İstanbul, İzmir, Bursa, Diyarbakır, Mersin, Eskişehir, Antalya, Gaziantep, Aydın, and Balıkesir. In some cities, police tried to ban and prevent the marches. 28 people including LGBTI+ activists were detained in Istanbul and released on the same night. and the police used excessive force against the participants.

The court case against 12 activists who participated in Pride at Boğaziçi University in 2021 continued this year and ended with an acquittal in January. The case against Ankara Pride participants also continued. Court proceedings against Tarlaşa Community Centre, a women’s and children’s rights organisation that planned an LGBTI+ event, continued this year.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The political rhetoric during this year’s elections targeted LGBTI+ associations and included calls for their closure. The Platform for Unity in Idea and Struggle submitted a petition to the Turkish Grand National Assembly with 150,000 signatures, calling for the closure of LGBTI+ organisations.

Hacettepe University closed the LGBTI+ student club, which had official status.

83 lawyers established an LGBTI+ Rights Commission in the Adana Bar Association.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

President Erdogan announced new measures to curb Turkey’s media content, saying reprisals are needed to protect Turkish culture and children.

The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) fined several streaming platforms this year because of LGBTI+ characters (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

Journalist Semra Çelebi was acquitted for posting a rainbow flag on her social media during the 2020 Pride march.

In Dugan v. Turkey, the ECtHR found a violation of Art 5.1, right



to liberty, when the police took a trans woman sex worker to a police station to identify her and eventually fined her for disruption of traffic, as this is usually done on the spot.

HEALTH

In August 2023, some doctors and mental [health professionals from Istanbul University](#) were targeted by Islamist media for providing gender-affirming medical care to underage trans people, claiming that this constituted child abuse. State authorities did not challenge this targeting. In response, all medical faculties offering gender affirming medical care suspended or restricted their services for a period of time.

Following the February 6 earthquakes, LGBTI+ people in the disaster area [experienced](#) problems in access to healthcare services, especially hormone replacement and antiretroviral therapies (see [here](#)).

HOUSING

LGBTI+ people continued to be unlawfully evicted from their homes. The economic crisis has increased poverty in Turkey and adversely among LGBTI+ people and LGBTI+ refugees.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

In May, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights [called](#) on Turkey to cease pressure on human rights defenders, NGOs, journalists and lawyers.

Some activists [received](#) death threats. The 17 May Association provided well-being support to 65 LGBTI+ rights defenders.

Following the [earthquake](#) in February, most LGBTI+ groups suspended their usual work and focused on relief work and addressing discrimination in the provision of aid and support, which was common. A report on 'The Situation of LGBTI+ People After the Earthquake' [found](#) widespread discrimination and need for support, even months after the disaster.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

LGBTI+ activists including trans activist Esmeray Özadikti [ran](#) as a candidate for the Turkish Workers' Party (TİP).

A total of 58 candidates from CHP, TİP, and the Green Left Party signed the LGBTI+ Rights Charter prepared by SPoD, which was open for signatures by parliamentary candidates from all political parties. Eleven candidates who signed the LGBTI+ Rights Charter were elected: one MP from CHP, three from TİP, and seven from the Green Left Party.

Pop singer Gülşen [was given a suspended sentence](#) of ten months in prison for mocking religious schools and served five days in prison and 15 under house arrest. She has frequently been targeted by pro-government media for her support of LGBTI+ people and for using the rainbow flag at concerts.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In its country report on Turkey, the European Commission [highlighted](#) violence against LGBTI+ incarcerated people. Despite petitions, the authorities have [failed](#) to relocate a trans woman prisoner to a women's prison.

PUBLIC OPINION

A study found that 30% of society [supports](#) legal recognition for different sexual orientations.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

A Sexual and Reproductive Health Consultancy Centre [opened](#) in Kadıköy.



[TURKEY WEB PAGE](#)
[MORE INFORMATION ON WWW.ILGA-EUROPE.ORG](#)



TURKMENISTAN

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

The complex and difficult social and economic situation continued, having a dire impact, including on LGBT people. The country is in serious crisis – people are struggling with food shortages, rising prices and hunger. In some areas, residents have had no access to food rations for months, and then received flour infested by insects. Unemployment also remained critical.

ASYLUM

The government's control over people trying to leave the country continued to grow. The waiting time to apply for an international passport is currently a year and the provision of appointments was suspended in October. Turkey detained and deported many back to Turkmenistan, including human rights defenders, and some of them have reportedly gone missing since. Thousands of Turkmen migrants left Turkey for Russia this year.

Civil society also reported that visas in general have been close to impossible to get and that even visa holders risk being stopped at the border.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

The UN Human Rights Committee reviewed Turkmenistan in March. During the interactive dialogue, the government alleged that Kasymberdi Garayev, a gay man who civil society considers to have disappeared after he was persecuted, is living with his parents in their home residence. Despite the official statement, Garaev's location has not been confirmed by other sources.

The law continues to allow for arrest, intimidation, extortion, blackmail, violence and torture against LGBT people and particularly against gay men. Most cases remain undocumented, but mass raids on gay people are routinely carried out. Officials continue to fabricate cases to detain LGBT and human rights activists, extort money, and to abuse and imprison gay men. Police routinely go through the phones of gay men and interrogate people on their contact lists.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Most social media sites continue to be blocked and TV channels are censored.

HEALTH

HIV transmission remains criminalised, and there continues to

be no data about people living with HIV/AIDS in the country. Activists report that medical staff have negative attitudes and little knowledge of people living with HIV. The government maintains that HIV, STIs, and COVID-19 do not exist in the country, which causes suffering among those affected.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The authorities continue to detain critics of the government, who express or, even hint at dissent. Several activists were detained again this year, or disappeared, due to their political opinion or LGBT identity.

*Some of the information about Turkmenistan was shared with ILGA-Europe by activists who for safety reasons need to stay anonymous.



TURKMENISTAN WEB PAGE
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UKRAINE

The developments reported in this chapter are to be understood in the context of the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. We acknowledge that war disrupts the regular functioning of governments, public authorities and broader society. It therefore impacts how advances in terms of new legislation, public policies and other equality measures can be made. This said, it does not negate the obligation from Ukrainian authorities to ensure that the human rights of LGBTI people are fully respected and protected, which is what ILGA-Europe continues to monitor.

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Ukrzaliznytsya, the state railway company, stated that if they introduced separate compartments for women, trans women would also be included. They did not explain how that would be regulated.

Several businesses put up rainbow symbols for Pride month.

ASYLUM

As of November, over six million people are living outside Ukraine as a consequence of the war. Trans people continued reporting harassment and discrimination when trying to cross the border. Many people who had fled the war, returned to Ukraine this year.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

2023 is the first year that the law on media prohibits bias-motivated speech inciting discrimination on the grounds of SOGI, following the adoption of the law in late 2022. Hate speech was less common this year than before. For instance, media coverage of the debate on registered partnerships was mostly positive or neutral, with only religious conservative sites being hostile.

Churches and religious associations continued to oppose LGBTI rights equality. For instance, they invited local councils to join a campaign against bill no. 9103 (see under Family). A number of local councils, for instance Kovel, Ivano-Frankivsk and Lutsk, sent appeals to the government to not adopt the bill. The initiative was supported by the “All Together” anti-LGBT movement. The All-Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organisations maintained their anti-LGBTI stance. In March, they appealed to the chairperson of the parliament and in June published a statement on the inadmissibility of bill no. 9103. Several church leaders also made hostile statements about the bill.

In February, the Supreme Court sided with lower instance courts and ruled that the Kyiv Patriarchate’s statements blaming same-sex marriages for the COVID-19 pandemic were an expression of subjective opinion.

The Sunny Bunny international queer film festival received several arson threats.

A number of military members continued making anti-LGBTI statements, for instance saying that the number of LGBTI people in the military is made up or that LGBTI soldiers have anti-Ukraine values.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Anti-LGBTI hate crimes continued to be a serious issue this year. Nash Svit documented eight homophobic/transphobic attacks throughout the year. In July, the prominent Ukrainian designer Kostya Omelya was the victim of a homophobic attack in Kyiv. A trans soldier from the Ukrainian armed forces was attacked while on leave in Kyiv.

Bullying and harassment also remained an issue in the armed forces. Hate crimes remained common in the occupied territories as well, where LGBTI people reported cases of extortion, torture, kidnapping, harassment, imprisonment, and violence, including sexual violence at the hands of Russian soldiers.

The Lutsk Community Centre for the LGBTI community, run by Insight, was broken into in June. The suspect is facing charges.

In May, the Committee on Law Enforcement recommended that the parliament adopt bill no. 5488, which would criminalise hate crimes committed on the grounds of, inter alia, sexual orientation and gender identity. The bill was first introduced in 2021 and was one of the measures in Ukraine’s Human Rights Strategy and Action Plan (2021–2023), but the adoption process had been stalled since. By September the bill was prepared for consideration in parliament. Nash Svit documented more than 27 hate crimes in the first six months of 2023.

In November for the first time in Ukraine, an anti LGBTI hate crime offender was punished under Article 161 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine: “Violation of the equality of citizens depending on their race, nationality, religious beliefs, disability and other grounds”, regarding grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. This judgement pertained to the assault on a trans soldier in Lviv in August 2023.

In November the Podilskyi Court of Kyiv passed a judgement regarding a homophobic attack that took place at the end of May. For the first time the Court applied Article 67 of the Criminal Code in relation to a [homophobic crime](#), which includes gender as an aggravating circumstance. The offenders were sentenced to imprisonment for two years.

EMPLOYMENT

In May, the parliament [amended](#) the law on advertising making it unlawful to make demands in job ads relating to sexual orientation, among other grounds. An IT company [made](#) headlines for including “non-involvement in the LGBTI movement” in a job advert, but following backlash, they deleted the section.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

The war has resulted in a boost to codifying LGBTI equality in Ukraine, with several politicians echoing that supporting LGBTI rights is a stance against Russia (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). The war has also [shifted](#) public attitudes towards gender equality.

Two draft bills on anti-discrimination legislation were [discussed](#) this year. Bill no. 0931 aims to protect LGBTI people from physical and psychological violence, insults, neglect, and hate speech. Bill no. 6325-1 D would amend certain legislative acts to combat direct or indirect discrimination and intolerance, including against people on the basis of SOGI.

During Pride month, the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs [changed](#) their social media profile photos to [feature](#) rainbow symbols. The Holos party [did](#) the same. Nash Svit’s [annual report](#) documented 105 cases of discrimination and violence against LGBTI people in 2022, a decrease compared to the previous two years.

FAMILY

In March, Ombudsperson Dmytro Lubinets’s annual report [highlighted](#) that the lack of legal recognition for same-sex couples has become an “acute” issue. In the context of the war, the Ombudsperson highlighted that same-sex couples do not have mutual rights and obligations, in terms of jointly acquired property, inheritance, guardianship, social guarantees provided to family members, the possibility of accompanying a partner’s minor child abroad, the right to decide on the possibility and scope of medical interventions or the possibility of burying a person, etc.

In March, 18 MPs [tabled a bill](#) (nr. 9103) on the institution of registered partnerships in parliament. The bill would make registered partnerships available to all couples regardless of gender and would endow the same rights as in marriage, with the exception of adoption. The bill was [approved](#) by a number of parliamentary committees. The Ministry of Justice stated that it will not push an alternative bill and will support bill 9103 with some amendments.

The Ministry of Defense has [not supported](#) efforts to recognise partnerships, [saying](#) the number of LGBTI soldiers cannot be confirmed. In autumn, after the appointment of a new minister and the subsequent team reshuffle, the Ministry [changed](#) its stance and started supporting the law.

In May, a march “for family values” was held in protest against bill no. 9103, but [received](#) widespread criticism online for attacking LGBTI people and Ukraine’s European integration.

In June, the European Court of Human Rights ruled in [Maymulakhin and Markiv v. Ukraine](#) that the government violated the applicants’ right to privacy, in conjunction with non-discrimination, when failing to provide any legal recognition to them as a couple in 2014. The Court welcomed that Ukraine plans to introduce civil partnership, but noted that this was already included in the 2019 Human Rights Action Plan and has not been implemented. The Court also took into consideration the increase in support for legal recognition in the country (see Public Opinion) and Ukraine’s bid to join the EU.

FOREIGN POLICY

24 February marked one year since Russian troops [invaded](#) Ukraine - the war continues to date. The war has greatly [increased](#) the visibility of LGBTI people, with some estimates [saying](#) between 2-7% of the army is from the community.

A year after Ukraine [received](#) EU candidate status, the European Commission’s report [welcomed](#) the advances to date and encouraged Ukraine to maintain progress, including on family rights and combating hate speech.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

Pride month in June [received](#) unprecedented support across from [businesses](#) and companies.

Kyiv Pride was [hosted](#) by the city of Liverpool, where the *Eurovision Song Contest* was held after Ukraine won in 2022. Over 20,000 [joined](#) the march, which used the motto “The war

is not over”. Several smaller delegations of Kyiv Pride joined Pride marches across Europe and beyond.

The fifth KharkivPride, at the beginning of September, was the only LGBTI Pride event held inside the country, with the theme “We Unite for Victory.” The event aimed to increase LGBTI engagement in Ukraine’s ongoing challenges by sharing community knowledge, contacts, and resources. The highlight was the Kharkiv Pride march, a 30-minute [art intervention](#) involving nearly 100 participants, symbolising the community’s growing visibility and resilience.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In February, the parliament [rejected](#) a bill that would have banned “propaganda of homosexuality and transgenderism”. A number of similar bills are also being [discussed](#).

The parliament also [dismissed](#) a resolution that would have withdrawn state support for the production of a film, *My Young Prince*.

HEALTH

Having been stalled because of the war, the implementation of ICD-11 was reactivated by the Ministry of Health. It is still in the initial stages, and has not yet reached the point where the development of the new clinical protocols, including trans health care, can be started.

Due to the war, trans and intersex people continued experiencing serious difficulties accessing trans and intersex-specific health care. The availability of hormones fluctuated and while some friendly healthcare professionals left the country, others were identified by the community.. Several LGBT and trans organisations are providing hormones as part of their general humanitarian aid.

The draft law on HIV prevention and protection of people living with HIV, developed in cooperation with the Ministry of Health and following WHO guidelines, is being [prepared](#) for consideration in parliament. The draft no longer considers unintentional HIV transmission a criminal offence and lowers penalties for knowingly transmitting HIV.

HOUSING

Activists continued organising shelters and humanitarian aid for LGBTI people, their families, and allies, for instance for those fleeing the eastern and southern parts of the country.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Some organisations had to evacuate and became displaced.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

(See under Equality and Non-discrimination)

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

A number of LGBT soldiers [continued](#) reporting harassment and bullying (see under Bias-motivated speech and violence), including during recruitment.

PUBLIC OPINION

(See also under Equality and Non-discrimination)

A number of public opinion studies were [published](#) this year, showing that public attitudes towards same-sex partnerships are relatively open. For instance, two studies [found](#) that about a third support same-sex partnerships and one in five are neutral; another study [found](#) that more than half of the population are supportive. KIIS’s survey also found that two-thirds of the respondents [thought](#) LGBT people should have the same rights as everyone else.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Insight continued training social workers on working with LGBTI people during wartimes.



[UKRAINE WEB PAGE](#)
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UNITED KINGDOM

ASYLUM

The [Illegal Migration Act](#) was [adopted](#) in July. Lawmakers vowed it would not be used to expel LGBTQ+ asylum seekers to their home or a third country, but civil society is [concerned](#) that it [will](#) do just that.

In September, Home Secretary Suella Braverman [said](#) asylum seekers “pretend to be gay” to receive status and that facing discrimination because of being a woman or LGBTQ+ person is no grounds to get protection. A protest was [held](#) in London and over 200 human rights groups [signed](#) a joint letter to PM Rishi Sunak, demanding that the UK government respect and protect women and LGBTQ+ people. UNHCR [warned](#) the UK should not restrict its asylum definition.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-LGBT hate speech remained common (see [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). Following his [visit to the UK](#), the UN Independent Expert on SOGI (IE SOGI) [expressed](#) deep concern about the growing toxic and hostile environment that LGBT and particularly trans people face in the UK, attributing much of the hate to politicians and the media. In this environment, the UK’s Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) continued to fail trans people this year (see under Equality and Non-discrimination).

Politicians also continued the crackdown on trans rights (see [here](#)), including in connection with the Scottish Gender Recognition Act (see under Legal Gender Recognition, see [here](#) and [here](#)) and the [definition](#) of ‘sex’ in equality legislation. PM Rishi Sunak and others [made](#) transphobic [comments](#) at the Conservative Party conference in October. Earlier in June, a leaked video also [showed](#) him mocking trans people.

In July, [Mermaids](#) [lost](#) its [appeal](#) against the Charity Commission approving the registration of the anti-trans ‘LGB Alliance’ as a public charity.

There were several incidents of hate speech at football games (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#)). From January on, the Football Association [could take](#) disciplinary action against clubs if their supporters chanted homophobic slogans. In February, the Manchester United Supporters Trust (MUST) [said](#) the team’s new leadership should respect the rights of LGBTQ+ fans.

A former Belfast councillor, Jolene Bunting, who compared a drag queen to a wolf in make-up, lost her [appeal](#) against being fined for breaking a court order barring her from harassing the performer. Seven police officers were [dismissed](#) from Humberside Police following a series of sexist, homophobic and racist WhatsApp group exchanges.

A gender-critical (anti-trans) campaigner [won](#) a £100,000 (117,000 EURO) lawsuit after she was fired for tweeting her views.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

A rainbow crossing in Derry was [vandalised](#) in August, in what the mayor [called](#) an attack against the entire city.

The UK Home Office’s annual hate crime statistics [highlighted](#) that homophobic hate crimes decreased by 6% in England and Wales the past year, the first fall in numbers since 2013. Transphobic hate crimes increased by 11%, [marking](#) the highest number of anti-trans crimes (4732) since 2012. The report attributes the rise in transphobic hate crimes in part to anti-trans media reporting and discussion about trans issues by politicians.

In October however, Galop’s 2022 Hate Crime Report [highlighted](#) that over the past year there was a 65% increase in LGBT+ victims of hate crime reaching out for support. Galop also noted that while a 11% increase sounds small, anti-trans attacks have nearly doubled since 2020/21; that victims do not have access to adequate support; and that the police are failing in holding perpetrators to account.

The new Scottish [hate crime law](#), which covers LGBTI people as protected groups and strengthens protections was given a provisional [commencement](#) date of April 1, 2024. The Crown Office (COPFS) published its annual [Hate Crime in Scotland](#) report in June, finding that the number of homophobic hate crimes increased by 2% and transphobic crimes had decreased since last year (from 86 to 55) but still remain the second highest since 2010.

In Northern Ireland, the annual police report [shared](#) that homophobic incidents and crimes fell; transphobic incidents increased but crimes fell the past 12 months.

Several young trans people committed suicide this year (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

BODILY INTEGRITY

Despite [years](#) of civil society [advocacy](#) and [government promises](#), the process of banning so-called ‘conversion practices’ continued to be [stalled](#) this year in most of the UK. In [January](#) and [June](#), PM Sunak vowed that the bill would be back to parliament and cover both sexual orientation and gender identity, but with an exception for ‘consenting’ adults. The EHRC also [called](#) for a ban in October, but a group of Tory MPs



[urged](#) Sunak to drop the ban. The topic was then [missing](#) from the newly crowned King's speech in November. In November, a bipartisan bill on the ban [made it](#) to the House of Lords, but this is not the government's initiative.

The process has been delayed in Scotland also. As part of the mandatory legal process, the Scottish Government will consult publicly on the details of a bill, most likely in January 2024. The [process](#) in Northern Ireland is also [stalled](#) until the Executive is restored.

DATA COLLECTION

The results of the 2021 census in England and Wales (not including Scotland and Northern Ireland) were [released](#) in January, [showing](#) that 1.5% of the population identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual; 0.5% identified with a gender different from their sex assigned at birth; 165,000 people identified as queer, pansexual, asexual, or other.

EDUCATION

Civil society expressed [grave concern](#) about the government's planned trans guidance for schools in England, which could forcibly out trans, non-binary and gender nonconforming students to their parents, place a blanket ban on social transitioning, and allow single-sex schools to refuse trans children (see [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), [here](#), and [here](#)). The government [did not consult](#) LGBT+ groups about the guidance.

Due to [delays](#) in the guidance, NHS England [took it upon itself](#) to say students [should not](#) be allowed to socially transition, i.e. change names, pronouns, or decide which bathroom to use, without parents' knowledge and [consent](#).

A primary school in Glasgow [became](#) the first to introduce a comprehensive education curriculum that covers LGBT issues, history and culture, based on the [toolkit](#) provided by the government. Scotland is currently [consulting on new sex education guidance](#), which is separate from LGBT inclusive education in the broader curriculum.

The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission [found](#) that many schools currently teach students that 'homosexuality' is wrong, shaming and stigmatising young people.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

In April, the EHRC [recommended](#) that the Equality Act be changed to define 'sex' as 'biological sex'. The position is in line with PM Sunak's 2022 [statements](#). The Scotland and Wales

Committees of the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) firmly [condemned](#) the recommendations, saying they would have a detrimental impact on trans people. In May, over 30 LGBTQ+ organisations [sent](#) a joint letter to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) about the harm that the EHRC has been causing to trans people. In 2022, GANHRI [recommended](#) that the EHRC increase efforts to protect trans people and consult with LGBTQ+ groups.

In November, another ruling in Scotland [affirmed](#) that trans women who have legally transitioned are included in the definition of 'women'. Wales is set to [update](#) its Gender Quotas Bill with a trans-inclusive definition for women.

A leaked government guidance for the UK's 500,000 civil servants [made](#) headlines in July because it would mandate the protection of pro-trans and anti-trans beliefs on an equal footing and ban trans people who had not changed their legal gender from using the bathroom matching their identity. Both trans and cis civil servants [responded](#) with alarm.

In Scotland, a civil servant who argued that his employer's diversity and inclusion policies are an ideological imposition, [lost](#) his court case. The policies covered race, sexual orientation and gender identity.

The Post Office [removed](#) gendered titles from its forms this year.

The Stonewall report, *Ace in the UK* [found](#) that asexual people face discrimination and harassment in work and healthcare and many hide their identity.

In November, the Scottish Government published its [Non-binary Equality Action Plan](#), a comprehensive plan to improve the lives of non-binary people.

In February, the Welsh Government published an [LGBTQ+ Action Plan](#), which includes banning conversion practices, investing in hate crime prevention, providing trans guidance for schools and local authorities, and supporting the family lives of LGBTQ+ people. An [LGBTQ+ Action Plan tracker](#) was published, so that anyone in Wales can monitor updates and progress against each action and activity in the Plan.

FAMILY

The *Queer Parent*, a book to help LGBTQ+ families was [published](#) this year, following the successful podcast *Some Families*.



FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN, OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

As of June, women who had been persecuted for homosexuality could also [apply](#) for the Disregards and Pardons Scheme.

The LGBT Veterans Independent Review, about the experiences of LGBTQ+ soldiers before the ban on their participation in the military was lifted in 2000, was [submitted](#) to parliament in May. Over 20,000 soldiers were [fired or jailed](#). In July, PM Rishi Sunak [issued](#) an apology to LGBTQ+ veterans for past abuse, violence, imprisonment, bullying and harassment they endured.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

A trans-themed poster was [removed](#) from the V&A children's museum before its opening.

HEALTH

In May, NHS England [announced](#) that their plans to decentralise trans healthcare, [close down](#) and [replace](#) Tavistock with regional centres, would only materialise in 2024. Previously, the plan was to put the new system in place by spring of 2023. In the meantime, only those already in the system would [receive](#) care - no first appointments will be given out.

Following the consultation in 2022, in June the NHS England [published](#) an interim [guidance](#) on trans healthcare provision for minors. The NHS [maintains](#) its [stance](#) that minors, and only a [limited number](#) of them, should only be able to access hormone blockers if they participate in long-term [research](#). The NHS [set up](#) a national Children and Young People's Gender Dysphoria Research Oversight Board for this purpose.

Waiting times for a first trans healthcare appointment remained extremely long. Four trans people, including two minors, sued the NHS over this, but [lost](#) in their case in July.

In October, the health secretary [announced](#) that trans women would be banned from female NHS wards in England, despite a [complete lack](#) of evidence of any issues.

The Scottish Government continued work on improving trans healthcare over 2022-2024. Work this year included developing national standards for gender identity services, and a knowledge and skills framework for health care providers working with trans people. Despite some important progress, waiting times continue to be extremely long, and there has been less progress on service redesign than hoped for.

In November, Scotland [launched](#) its updated Sexual Health and Blood Borne Viruses Action Plan, including new opt-out HIV testing pilots in A&Es.

INTERSECTIONALITY

A report about older LGBT+ people was [published](#) in a news outlet. A TV [report](#) on abuse of LGBT+ people in care homes was broadcast.

Ajamu's *Patron Saint of Darkrooms* exhibition, celebrating black queer bodies and pleasure activism, was [shown](#) in London.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

In December 2022, the Scottish parliament [adopted](#) amendments to the Gender Recognition Act to allow recognition by self-declaration, and to reduce the minimum age from 18 to 16. The move was widely welcomed by civil society, the [United Nations](#), and the [Council of Europe](#). In January this year, the UK's Prime Minister [decided](#) to use an order under [Section 35](#) of the Scotland Act for the first time ever to [block](#) the implementation of the law. The Scottish Government has [challenged](#) the order in court, [arguing](#) it is unlawful and irrational.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Instead of a blanket ban, Swim England [introduced](#) an 'open' category for trans/non-binary athletes; trans people can compete in amateur and recreational races on the basis of self-ID. UK Athletics also [seeks](#) a similar 'open' category, which while would allow trans women to compete, would [ban](#) them from the women's category. British Rowing [did](#) the same after a membership vote. Several others adopted similar bans this year.

TRUK United FC [made headlines](#) as the first trans-masculine football team in the world.

Mermaids' Young People and Sport report [found](#) that over a half of trans youth felt their gender identity impacted their participation in sport; over a half were worried about exclusion; 63% said exclusion from sport had [worsened](#) their mental health.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

A number of police commissioners and constables [apologised](#) to the LGBTQ+ community for past homophobic persecution (see [here](#) and [here](#)).



PUBLIC OPINION

A study by the Policy Institute at King's College London and Ipsos UK [found](#) that only 1% of the population thinks trans issues would be a deciding factor in the 2024 elections.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

Scotland is consulting on legislation for Safe Access Zones (buffer zones) around abortion providers to prevent harassment and a [Bill](#) to this effect is in its first stage at the Scottish Parliament.



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UZBEKISTAN

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

Due to the ongoing war against Ukraine, the economic situation continued to deteriorate this year. The price of food, supplied from Russia, Ukraine, and the EU, significantly increased.

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

Samarkand was the 2023 World Tourism Capital and also hosted the 25th General Assembly of the UN World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) this year. On these occasions, the Business and Human Rights Resource Centre surveyed 17 hotels in June. Four of them answered, with one avoiding questions about LGBT guests, two not having any measures in place to ensure non-discrimination based on sexual orientation, and one saying they would not rent rooms to a gay couple.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH AND VIOLENCE

(See also under Freedom from Torture, Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment)

Article 120 of the Criminal Code, which criminalises consensual same-sex conduct, continued to serve as justification for anti-LGBT violence and impunity. Due to criminalisation, LGBT people cannot report violence to the authorities, who are the most common perpetrators of anti-LGBT violence.

In Geneva on November 8, Uzbekistan reported in the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review, during which the Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Abdulhakov Yahedjon, stated that during 2023, 27 people were convicted under Article 120.

ECOM's annual Report on Violations of LGBT People's Rights in Uzbekistan in 2022 documents 120 cases of rights violations that targeted people based on their SOGI or their association with LGBT people; HIV status; engagement in sex work. ECOM highlighted that most anti-LGBT violence was perpetrated by law enforcement, followed by relatives and neighbours. In some cases, organised hate groups carried out attacks.

Local LGBTI individuals report that the police routinely extort money from them, confiscate their phones, and use them to transfer money from bank accounts or steal personal data. It is common that the police threaten to extend detention periods or to imprison people, should they want to complain.

In May, blogger Miraziz Bazarov, who had previously been detained under house arrest for criticising government policies

and advocating for decriminalisation, was taken to the Tashkent police department.

In August, the Ministry of Interior proposed a new law that would mandate the police to carry out mandatory STI and HIV testing as part of police raids, if those target "dangerous groups" or those with close contact.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

An article shared the experiences of several LGBT people from the community, regarding exclusion, discrimination, and violence.

FAMILY

Article 76 of The Constitution of Uzbekistan, adopted on April 30, 2023, states that marriage is based on the traditional family values of the people of Uzbekistan, free consent and equality of those entering into marriage. Article 2 of the Family Code of Uzbekistan specifies a marital union as that of between a man and a woman, thus depriving LGBTI people from the right to officially register same-sex marriage.

FREEDOM FROM TORTURE, CRUEL, INHUMAN OR DEGRADING TREATMENT

State actors continued to threaten, intimidate, psychologically and physically torture, and detain LGBT people. The 2022 US State Department Report on Human Rights Practices Uzbekistan, published in March, documented cases of forced anal exams, so-called 'conversion practices', mandatory HIV testing, and other abuses targeting the community.

During his country visit in March, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk encouraged Uzbekistan to repeal Article 120 of the Criminal Code, which criminalises consensual same-sex conduct between men with up to three years in prison, and Article 113, which criminalises the transmission of HIV and is used to persecute LGBT people. Those detained and charged under Article 120 continued to be subjected to mandatory HIV tests.

Three young LGBT people shared their experiences this year after having been convicted to one to two-and-a-half years in prison under Article 120. These included torture, including solitary confinement, forced anal examination, electric shock, rape, beating, forced HIV testing, extortion, blackmail, theft of personal property and money, humiliation, verbal abuse, and inhumane conditions.

In March, on an official visit to Uzbekistan, High Commissioner for Human Rights, Volker Türk noted human rights violations in Uzbekistan and called on the government to refer to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to create conditions under which human life would be free from suffering and fear.

On October 4, the European Parliament published a resolution on Uzbekistan, condemning the fact that consensual same-sex sexual relations between men are still criminalised, and expressing deep concern about the prevalence of intimidation, harassment, violence and stigma against LGBTIQ people in the country.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION

The proposal at the end of 2022 from the Information and Mass Communications Agency to amend the Information Code, which would ban “the use of mass media for the purposes of [...] propaganda of unnatural relations between same-sex persons” was not adopted this year, and sent for revision.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Human rights defenders continued to be prosecuted under the 2022 law, which criminalises “insult and slander” against Uzbek leaders, prohibits “disrespect for society, the state, state symbols (national and universal values)”, and labels demonstrations as being “in violation of the established order.”

In May, Nezir Sinani, an LGBTQI activist from Kosovo, who was attending a European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) meeting in Samarkand, was harassed and surveilled by police who confiscated rainbow-coloured bags he had with him. Sinani urged the EBRD and other international financial institutions that support Uzbekistan, to condemn such actions and call for decriminalisation.

In May, a fashion show in Tashkent caused widespread discussion because a male model wore a skirt, as a result of which the designer was taken to law enforcement agencies and forced to write an explanatory note that she was not engaged in LGBT+ propaganda.

In June, a video featuring doctors urging the government to ban men ‘impersonating’ women, went viral on social media. “Uzbek travesty divas” are impersonators, entertainers, and parodists, who are part of Uzbek culture and perform at weddings, birthdays, and other important celebrations.

HEALTH

Accessing medication, which was previously supplied by Ukraine or Russia, became very difficult and prices significantly increased.

Medical staff at AIDS centres continue to report patients to the authorities after finding out their sexual orientation. There are reports suggesting that staff manipulate LGBT people to disclose their SOGI, deceiving them that “HIV treatment for LGBT people is different from the one prescribed for heterosexual people.”

A testimony of a gay man serving a sentence under Art. 120 shared that patients with end-stage AIDS were not given any palliative treatment and left to die alone.

ECOM conducted a study of motivation and barriers for voluntary testing of gay men, trans persons and men who have sex with men (MSM) for HIV infection in the city of Tashkent. It was found that Article 120 is the main barrier that stops these groups voluntarily testing for HIV. The study will be posted on the ECOM website in 2024.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

The police continued to be the main perpetrators of anti-LGBT violence, including through extortion.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

Civil society reported that there are few organisations that provide social assistance and support to LGBT.

*Some of the information about Uzbekistan was shared with ILGA-Europe by LGBT individuals who for safety reasons need to stay anonymous.



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