

# Charting a sharp rise in anti-LGBTI hate speech across Europe

[Blog](#), [Safety](#), [Annual Review](#), [Bias-motivated Speech](#)

While this week [Switzerland](#) made hate speech illegal against people based on their sexual orientation, in 2019 one of the trends observed in ILGA-Europe's Annual Review is a sharp rise in on-and-offline anti-LGBTI hate speech, often from political leaders, across Europe. As our Executive Director, Evelyne Paradis, recently shared at the [Google Online Safety Summit](#), "LGBTI communities need to know that perpetrators of violent speech will be held responsible".

Our current [Annual Review](#), which was launched at the European Parliament on February 4, identifies trends and developments in the human rights situation of LGBTI people across Europe. One of these trends is a sharp rise in hate speech across the region, often carried out by public figures. One of the cases which received the most media attention was in Poland, where anti-LGBTI rhetoric by the governing Law and Justice (PiS) Party resulted in more than 80 municipal or local governments proclaiming themselves to be "free from LGBTI ideology".

However, while much of the public and political attention was focused on Poland, ILGA-Europe's Annual Review 2020 identifies **growing official hate speech from political and religious leaders in other countries, where anti-LGBTI rhetoric was propagated with impunity**. In most Central Asian countries, including some where LGBT people continue to be criminalised, there are reports of official hate-speech. Here is what we found:

## Albania

In October, MP Kujtim Gjuzi (Conservative Party) publicly [threatened](#) LGBT people on a prime time political show on RTV Ora. The host also made negative statements. Both cases were reported to the Council of Complaints at the Albanian Media Authority, which issued a warning, but did not impose a fine on the channel.

## Andorra

In August, Naira Nahapetyan, a member of Yerevan's Municipal Council boasted online about attacking LGBTI people. Comments on the post incited violence against LGBTI people.

## Azerbaijan

In February, Aynur Sofiyeva, Deputy Chairperson of the State Committee for Family, Women and Children Affairs, [made](#) homophobic remarks at an event, criticising the West for trying to impose same-sex marriage on others.

## Belarus

In July, Dmitry Tsayun, official of the Ministry of Interior, said that LGBT equals pedophilia in an article published on sexual violence against children. The project, whose platform published the article, was supported by UNICEF Belarus. Local civil society urged UNICEF to promptly remove the article, which they did. It is however

still [available](#) on the Ministry's website.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

Following the news that the country's first Pride would be held in September, hate speech became more common, mainly on social media. For instance, MP Samra ?osovi? Hajdarei? publicly [called](#) for the isolation and expulsion of LGBT people from society, and particularly children.

## Bulgaria

Candidates for local elections in Sofia from ultra-nationalist parties, [Dzhambazki](#) (VMRO-BND), Volen [Siderov](#) (Ataka), and Nikolay Drenchev (Vazrajdane), promised to ban [Sofia Pride](#) if elected.

## Cyprus

In August, following international public outcry, the Attorney General called for an investigation of the Bishop of Morfou's statements, that gay men give off a "particular odour" and can be identified by "holy men". The police dropped the case, finding no element of hate speech.

## Czech Republic

A spokesman of the Czech President, Jiří Ov?á?ek, [stated](#) that "the ideologies of 'climatism', LGBT or 'genderism' are totalitarian". Chairman of the Senate, Mr. Kubera, [made](#) similar statements. AntiLGBTI sentiments are one of the key drivers of the new ultra conservative party Trikolora, founded this year.

## Finland

Prior to Helsinki Pride in June, Christian Democratic politician Päivi Räsänen published an open letter criticising the Church for participating in the Pride. Evangelical Lutheran archbishop Tapio Luoma responded by affirming that same-sex couples are warmly welcome at Church events. Following Räsänen's letter, a few hundred people formally left the Church.

## Georgia

In February, an MP of the "Georgian Patriots" tabled an [initiative](#) to eradicate the terms sexual orientation and gender identity from 14 laws. The initiative was not adopted.

## Greece

In January, Panos Kammenos, Minister of National Defense was [sued](#) by the Greek Helsinki Monitor for his homophobic hate speech against MP Georgios Amyras from the centrist party, To Potami. Kammenos's remarks were [both](#) homophobic and sexist. No official apology followed.

## Hungary

On 15 May, Speaker of the Parliament and former President László Kövér (Fidesz) [stated](#) that "morally there is no difference between the behaviour of a paedophile and the behaviour of someone who demands" same-sex marriage and adoption sparking outrage.

## Kosovo

In February, the Prosecution [initiated](#) (ex-officio) a case against an official in the Ministry of Justice for hate speech against LGBTI people. In a comment on social media the official wrote that homosexuals and LGBTI people should be beheaded. The police took him into custody and held him for 48 hours. LGBTI organisations were unable to get further information regarding the case.

## Portugal

In March, Porto's Court of Appeal judge Neto de Moura [condemned](#) same-sex marriage and adoption by same-sex couples. Previously, the Judge passed victim-blaming judgments in domestic violence cases and is now [banned](#) from taking such cases.

## Slovakia

During the presidential elections in March, several parties used homophobic hate speech in their campaigns. Civil society [called on](#) politicians to abstain from hate speech against the community.

## Spain

Following the far-right Vox's debut in the Senate, in February the party [vetoed](#) a motion to tackle homophobia in sports. In its election campaigns in May, Vox vowed to ban Pride marches and compared homosexuality to "bestiality". In the November elections, Vox [came in](#) as the third strongest party.

## Turkey

The Minister of Internal Affairs, Süleyman Soyulu [made](#) several anti-LGBTI statements along 2019. In May, LGBTI+ people were [targeted](#) by hate speech at a symposium organised by Turkish National Human Rights Institution (T?HEK). On 5 July, the Friday khutbah of Presidency of Religious Affairs read in all mosques, [included](#) anti-LGBTI statements.

Commenting on the rise of official anti-LGBTI hate speech, our Executive Director, Evelyne Paradis said: **"The governments of some countries are overtly turning the tide on LGBTI and other minority rights, seeking to replace democracy and diversity with 'traditional values'.** Their voices may be loud, but we know that most EU member states want to see continual progress towards equality for LGBTI people in Europe and beyond.

"The rights and freedom of the LGBTI community are not separate from the rights and freedom of all who live in Europe and Central Asia, and the erosion of those rights is a marker for the erosion of all fundamental human rights."