

For good and bad: The trending impacts on LGBTI human rights in Europe and Central Asia

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The most striking finding of ILGA-Europe's Annual Review 2023 is a stark rise in the ferocity of anti-LGBTI hate and violence reported in Europe and Central Asia. But alongside this worrying trend, there are positive developments in areas such as legal gender recognition, public support, intersex human rights and civil society. Here are the key highlights.

At ILGA-Europe we've just published our [Annual Review](#), showcasing the main developments and trends in the human rights Situation for LGBTI people in Europe and Central Asia. Disturbingly, the most striking finding this year is the levels of hate reported in the region. 12 years into this yearly reporting, the present edition finds that anti-LGBTI violence in 2022 was more targeted and extreme than ever in the history of our reporting.

Our Annual Review aims to paint a clear picture of the reality from the ground for our communities. It documents individual cases and events, as well as legislative, social and political advancements and regressions, and new available data. All reporting is based on the work of LGBTI activists in each country featured in these pages, as well as on our own work.

While the review points to the devastating consequences of the instrumentalisation of LGBTI people, mostly for political gain, there have been other developments in the direction of human rights and protection of LGBTI people.

We have not seen this severity of the violence before

For years, ILGA-Europe has been documenting the rise in hate while activists across the region have shown how anti-LGBTI speech, both online and by political and religious leaders, translates into violence harming people.

This phenomenon is across the board in this year's Annual Review. For example, in France, the Ministry of Interior reported a 28% rise in hate crimes between 2020 and 2021. In Switzerland, LGBTI organisations reported a 50% increase between 2020 and 2021. Spain reported a 68% increase in 2021, while in England and Wales transphobic incidents rose by 56%.

There are also more reports than ever before of LGBTI people taking their lives, a clear sign how discrimination, hate speech and harassment are impacting mental health. In Italy, three trans women took their lives. Two of them were teenagers, the third woman was a teacher, who was suspended from school because she had socially transitioned. In Armenia, a young gay couple committed suicide after suffering harassment when a photo of them kissing went viral. These are just a few examples.

Sexual education is increasingly compromised

Education is a growing battleground in the resistance to LGBTI people and rights. In Hungary, as result of [law banning LGBT content](#), teachers reported a fear of bringing sexual orientation, gender identity and other topics to

the classrooms. In the Netherlands, 36 orthodox schools require anti-LGBTI declarations from pupils and parents, and the new Italian Prime Minister, Giorgia Meloni has publicly advocated for a ban on sex education in schools and the exclusion of LGBT people in children's books.

Russia expanded its 'propaganda law' to prohibit positive and neutral information about LGBT people and "gender reassignment" to minors and adults. There was an alarming number of 'propaganda' charges or threats in educational establishments in the country. All in all, progression on sexual education is being challenged.

Public support for LGBTI people is growing

In parallel, the report finds growing support among societies for LGBTI people, also in countries where we might not expect it. For example, most Hungarians don't consider 'homosexual propaganda' an important issue. In Poland, two thirds of the population support marriage equality and 60% support the abolition of anti-LGBT resolutions in the country.

What's more, many politicians across Europe have shown their support throughout 2022. Many reacted with horror to the killings in Oslo and Bratislava and the European Parliament has publicly condemned the violations of LGBTI rights. We need more governments standing strong against hate in the media and online and more progress in advancing laws against hate crimes that protect LGBTI people.

There are more legal gender recognition laws that include self-determination

In the face of enormous backlash on trans people, and a number of forces trying to stop legal gender recognition (LGR), some countries made progress in 2022 and others showed a will to ensure a model of LGR based on self-determination.

Scotland, Finland and Spain were the best examples; by adopting LGR laws that include self-determination, these countries are showing a clear way forward for other governments.

Same-sex partnership is back on the agenda

After stagnating for a number of years, same-sex partnership recognition is on the rise again. Andorra adopted legislation to ensure heterosexual marriage and the recognition of same-sex civil partnerships guarantee the same set of rights. In Latvia, following a Supreme court decision ruling that same-sex couples should be given civil status, same-sex couples were recognised in court cases. Slovenia and Switzerland adopted marriage equality, including positive changes regarding adoption rights. Other countries took steps forward the adoption of laws that recognise same-sex partnerships.

While intersex human rights are rightfully taking a space in the agenda

There is also a growing awareness of intersex human rights across Europe. While Greece adopted a ban on non-vital medical interventions on children, the European Commission conducted surveys and interviews for the first EU study on the lives of intersex people and their parents (expected to be published this summer). The Council of Europe is preparing a Recommendation on intersex human rights while the Chair of European Commission against Racism and Intolerance and PACE General Rapporteur for the rights of LGBTI people shared supportive statements.

Behind every positive development, there are LGBTI activists doing hard work

LGBTI organisations and activists across our region are key to all the advances on LGBTI people's rights and the support to their communities during 2022.

Despite difficult circumstances, more and more Prides are being organised, support for the most vulnerable in the community is provided and work with institutions and policy makers continues advancing LGBTI people rights.

More and more organisations report covering for gaps in service provision, and providing services where the community does not feel safe to access mainstreaming services, for example when it comes to shelter.

The most remarkable support was that of the LGBTI community in Ukraine through LGBTI organisations, as well as the support by activists across Europe for Ukrainian LGBTI refugees.

LGBTI activists are the central players in countries where progress has been made, as we've seen in Spain and Finland, where huge effort went into successfully keeping self-determined legal gender recognition on the right political track, despite fierce opposition.

The [Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTI People in Europe and Central Asia](#) is published every February, as part of our Rainbow Europe package. We thank all those across 54 countries who worked with us to make sure our reporting was accurate.

Find out what's been happening in your country [here](#).