

## &gt;THEMES

## BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

## ALBANIA

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 ([iSIGURTa](#)) 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.

## ANDORRA

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.

## AUSTRIA

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....”

## ARMENIA

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.

## AZERBAIJAN

QueeRadar’s 2022 hate speech monitoring [report](#) found that of the 428 media pieces analysed, 77% were hateful or biased against LGBTIQ+ 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 LGBTIQ+ rights in Azerbaijan, which was [followed](#) by hostile articles,

## >THEMES

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.

### BELARUS

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.

### BELGIUM

(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.

### BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

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

### BULGARIA

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.

## >THEMES

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).

### CYPRUS

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.

### NORTHERN CYPRUS

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 Arıklı 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.

### CROATIA

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

## >THEMES

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.

### CZECHIA

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.

### DENMARK

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](#)).

### ESTONIA

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.

### FINLAND

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.

## >THEMES

### FRANCE

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.

### GEORGIA

(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.

### GERMANY

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

## >THEMES

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.

### GREECE

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.

### HUNGARY

(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.

### ICELAND

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.

### IRELAND

Transphobic speech remained a serious issue. Anti-trans speaker Posie Parker was [met](#) with hundreds of trans

## >THEMES

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.

### ITALY

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.

### KAZAKHSTAN

(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

## >THEMES

nickname. The person believes that this publication was intentionally commissioned.

### KOSOVO

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.

### KYRGYZSTAN

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.

### LATVIA

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).

### LIECHTENSTEIN

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".

### LITHUANIA

Three victims were [identified](#) in the investigation [launched](#)

## >THEMES

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.

### LUXEMBOURG

Hate speech against LGBTQ+ people was on the rise this year, particularly during Luxembourg Pride week, in what civil society views as the instrumentalisation of LGBTQ+ 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 LGBTQ+Cigale, together with Rosa Lëtzebuerg and eight other associations associations, launched a platform statement against right-wing hatred and hostility.

### MALTA

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.

### MOLDOVA

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.

## >THEMES

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.

### MONTENEGRO

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.

### NETHERLANDS

(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.

### NORTH MACEDONIA

Hate speech remained a serious issue and despite countless reports being filed, the authorities [took](#) no

## >THEMES

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.

## NORWAY

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.

## POLAND

(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 Warchoł, said that the TVP2's New Year celebration, which featured the Black Eyed Peas with rainbow armbands, was the "New

## >THEMES

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.

## PORTUGAL

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+.

## ROMANIA

In July, MP George Simion shared a social media post

## >THEMES

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).

### RUSSIA

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.

### SERBIA

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.

### SLOVAKIA

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

## >THEMES

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 Hlas, 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”.

### SLOVENIA

(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”.

### SPAIN

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.

### SWEDEN

(See also under Education; and Freedom of Assembly)

Anti-LGBTQI 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

## >THEMES

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.

### SWITZERLAND

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 Présent'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.

### TURKEY

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

## >THEMES

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-LGBTI+ 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.

### UKRAINE

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.

### UNITED KINGDOM

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

## >THEMES

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.

### UZBEKISTAN

(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.