

# 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.



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