

Bulgaria



LGBTI activists in Bulgaria had a busy 2017, as they celebrated a mix of positive milestones and frustration.

Activists successfully organised the first ever LGBT+ festival in the city of Varna, running for six days. However, not all LGBTI events ran smoothly, as the organisers of Sofia Pride can attest. The 10th edition of Pride in the capital was complicated by the fact that ultranationalist opponents were also granted permission for a protest of their own, one hour before Pride was due to start, entitled 'Let's clear Sofia of trash'.

The Supreme Court of Cassation handed down a decision that also contained a mix of good and bad news for trans activists. The judgment stated that so-called 'reassignment surgery' was not necessary but that people requesting a legal change of gender do have to undergo hormone therapy. This was a frustrating moment, as a legal gender recognition framework free from abusive requirements had been called for by LGBTI NGOs and included as a recommendation in last year's Annual Review.

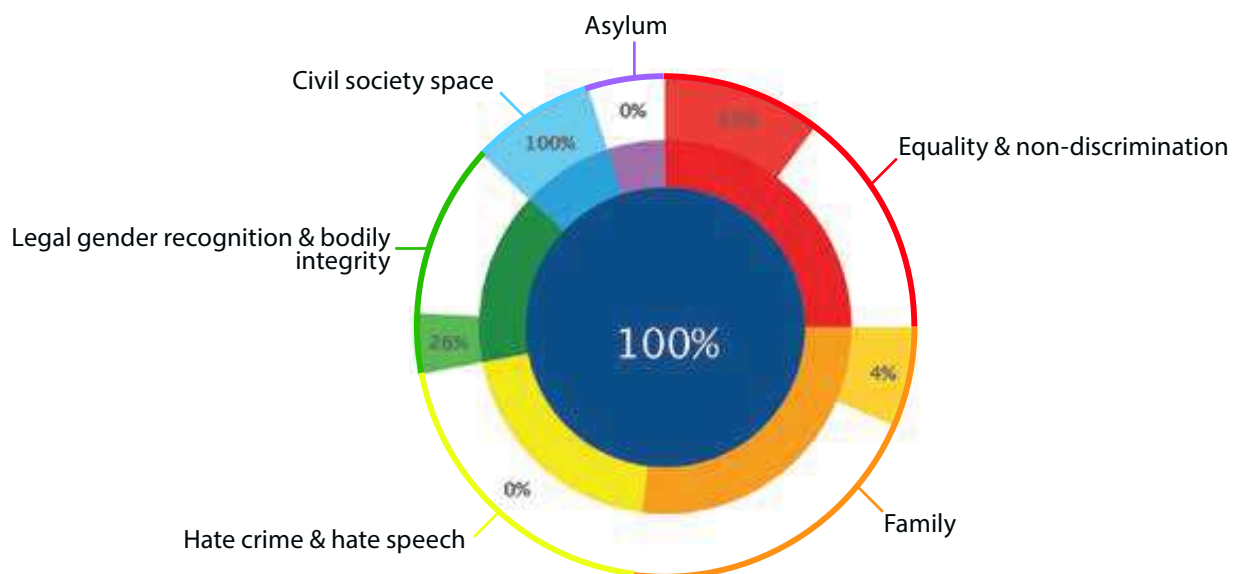
Support from political figures also varied widely – one MP was condemned and ridiculed in equal measure for suggesting that MPs should reveal their sexual orientation in case it was a conflict of interest, while Sofia's mayor met with LGBTI activists to discuss sexual health initiatives on World AIDS Day.

There were several moments of encouraging visibility, as intersex activist Pol Naidenov received a human rights award from the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, the first offline trans and intersex-led support meetings took place and the first LGBTI workplace inclusion manual was published.

And, as the year came to a close, activists watched with interest to see how human rights and equality issues would be approached as Bulgaria prepared to take over the rotating six-month Council presidency.

All Rainbow Europe information is available online at www.rainbow-europe.org

Legal and policy situation in **Bulgaria** as of 31 December 2017



In order to improve the legal and policy situation of LGBTI people, ILGA-Europe recommend:

- Adopting legal measures to recognise and protect same-sex couples, such as registered partnership and/or cohabitation.
- Introducing hate crime laws and policies that explicitly cover all bias-motivated crimes based on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics.
- Developing a fair, transparent legal framework for legal gender recognition, based on a process of self-determination, free from abusive requirements (such as sterilisation, GID/medical diagnosis, or surgical/medical intervention).