



LITHUANIA

ASYLUM

LGL received over 40 inquiries from LGBTIQ migrants and/or asylum seekers regarding poor housing conditions, lack of medical care, and anti-LGBTQI bias and/or harassment from authorities and peers alike. Applications from LGBTIQ asylum seekers were seemingly rejected *en masse*. In December, the head of the Migration department said LGBTI asylum seekers will be “tolerated” in their home countries as long as they hide their identities. Politicians called the increase in migration flow an “illegal migrant crisis” and “hybrid war”.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Anti-LGBT speech by political and religious leaders remained a serious issue this year.

On 10 January, Lithuanian MEP Viktor Uspaskich (Labour Party) posted a video calling LGBT people “perverts” and “fags” and saying that LGBT marches “must not be tolerated”. The European Parliament’s liberal Renew Europe Group, of which Uspaskich is a member, immediately questioned the hateful post. Uspaskich apologised but was eventually expelled from the Renew Europe Group. In February, Uspaskich’s Labour Party also quit the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE).

In February, a petition collected over 350,000 signatures to have openly gay MP, Tomas Vytautas Raskevičius (Liberty Party) removed from his position as chairman of the parliament’s Human Rights Committee, due to his past LGBTQ+ rights activism. In May, a UK-based Lithuanian programmer shared that he faked most of the signatures with a code, to sabotage the petition. Raskevičius received hundreds of threats, including of violence and death. In March, the Minister of Economy turned to the Prosecutor’s Office, who announced an investigation into threats, particularly a call to shoot Raskevičius.

MP and member of the parliamentary Human Rights Committee, Andrius Navickas called LGL “fundamentalists” when discussing a potential conference on same-sex family rights to take place in the parliament. LGL decided to co-host the conference with the Ministry of Justice instead.

In March, the Commission of Ethics and Procedures decided that MP Valdemaras Valkiūnas’s comments alleging that “LGBTI” is a “criminal organisation” were compliant with the principle of respect towards state and the individual.

In March, a well-known priest and author, Algirdas Toliatas urged his followers to oppose same-sex partnerships and the Istanbul Convention. Other political and religious leaders also condemned the ratification. In March, Christian religious leaders issued a statement on the issue.

In April, MP Petras Gražulis was filmed dancing and singing to a song known for its homophobic lyrics.

The hate speech and hate crime working group, established by the Ministry of Interior in 2020, met in May, but no concrete outcomes have resulted yet.

Around 10,000 people joined the Great Family Defence March on 15 May, against “aggressive genderist propaganda” and plans to ratify the Istanbul Convention. The demonstration, held a few days before the parliamentary vote on the Partnership Bill (see under **Family**), was organised by the Movement of Families, and supported by politicians, priests, and public figures. It featured a pre-recorded message from President Gitanas Nausėda who said that a family is between a man and a woman and that he will protect this concept. Media reporting suggests that a number of other pro-Russia and anti-state actors were also behind the demonstration.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In March, rainbow graffiti in an underground passage in Vilnius was painted over with the colours of the national flag.

In April, LGL received an anonymous threat depicting in detail a clear intention to murder LGL staff. Pre-trial investigation was initiated but was soon suspended indefinitely as the perpetrator could not be identified.

On 31 May, a day before Pride month, a rainbow crossing was painted over and destroyed in Vilnius. The police launched an investigation.

EMPLOYMENT

LGL provided IT courses for young LGBT people this year to help those with long-term unemployment find a job.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Lawyer and head of the Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights, Birute Sabatauskaitė was appointed with a



strong majority as Lithuania's new equal opportunities ombudsperson. Sabatauskaitė has expertise in gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights.

In May, Vytautas Mizaras, known for his support for the LGBTQ community, was appointed by parliament as a new Constitutional Court judge.

The revision of the Law of Equal Treatment continued to be stalled this year.

FAMILY

In May, the parliament failed to adopt the Partnership Bill, tabled by the governing coalition, during its first hearing. As only half of MPs present need to vote in favour, the results were promising – 63 in favour, 58 against and seven abstentions. 15 ambassadors to Lithuania urged the parliament to adopt the bill. The bill covers inheritance, joint ownership, and a number of other benefits, but does not discuss adoption rights. While the Prime Minister supported the bill, the President vowed not to sign the bill as long as it interferes with the constitutional concepts of “marriage” and “family”.

On 29 September, the first ever high-level conference on same-sex family rights recognition was organised by LGL, the Ministry of Justice, and partners from five EU Member States.

In October, Rasa Račienė, a concerned mother of an LGBT person, petitioned President Nausėda to support LGBT people in the country. Nausėda invited her for a meeting and later announced that he will discuss the Partnership Bill only after the positive outcome of the first hearing in parliament.

FOREIGN POLICY

Lithuania refused to join the 17 EU Member States who jointly condemned Hungary's new propaganda law. The President condemned the European Commission's scrutiny over Hungary.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In June, the Kaunas municipality refused to grant a permit for the city's first Pride march planned for 4 September. On 2 August, the court ruled in favour of the organisers. Kaunas Pride was attended by 2000 people, but several

counter-demonstrations and attacks took place. Civil society assesses the police's work as generally good – they arrested 22 people and launched pre-trial investigations in five cases.

Civil society continued preparing for Baltic Pride 2022, which Vilnius will host.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In light of this year's developments in Hungary, many remained concerned about Lithuania's Law on the Protection of Minors against the Detrimental Effect of Public Information, which has been in place for a decade and has had a chilling effect on the LGBTQ community. The ECtHR's judgement in the case Macatė v. Lithuania on this law is expected in 2022.

HEALTH

A year after launching the first ever emotional support platform for LGBTQ+ children and teens, LGL highlighted that they have received countless distressed calls about feeling isolated, unsupported, or having suicidal thoughts. LGL highlighted the particularly difficult situation of trans youth. LGL welcomed that parents also contact the platform.

On 29 December, the Ministry of Health lifted the four-month deferral period for men who have sex with men and want to donate blood.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

On 31 December, the Ministry of Justice issued a decree eliminating the court procedure element of name change, but retaining the mandatory psychiatric diagnosis requirement.

Trans people continued to be able to access LGR through a judicial procedure, without surgery or sterilisation. Eleven cases were ongoing in 2021.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

In April, artist Erikas Malisauskas turned 400 threats against MP Tomas Vytautas Raskevičius (see under *Bias-motivated speech*) into an art piece called ‘Hate Speech Cloud’, and raised over 5,000 euro for LGBT rights work.



PUBLIC OPINION

News site LRT's poll found that a third of Lithuanians support legal recognition for same-sex couples.

In May, a poll launched by the President found that almost half are against the Istanbul Convention.



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