



CYPRUS

ASYLUM

Civil society continued to advocate for the acceptance of asylum seekers who are fleeing criminalisation for being LGBTI in their home countries. Accept - LGBTI Cyprus held meetings with the Ombudswoman, who has remained silent on the issue.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

A man disrupted an event celebrating rainbow families in September and distributed pamphlets saying “Yes to the Traditional Family” and “No to the Abnormal New Order”.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In April, the Ombudswoman highlighted that police officers should undergo training on LGBTI+ topics so that the police can better respond to hate crimes.

In September, a gay couple was thrown out of a bar in Limassol for kissing each other.

In September, Accept - LGBTI Cyprus’ board members were attacked while setting up for a Pride event at a dog park in Nicosia. The perpetrator pushed one activist, knocked down their banner and called LGBTI people “abnormal” and a “threat” to children playing in the park.

BODILY INTEGRITY

Deutsche Welle reported about the more than 100 anonymous testimonies that LGBTQ+ persons shared with Accept - LGBTI Cyprus about having been forced to undergo so-called ‘conversion therapies’, including in the form of exorcism by priests. Civil society, the media, and MPs responded by advocating for a ban on the harmful practice. In March, the Parliamentary Committee on Legal Affairs held a hearing where testimonies were shared about the intrusive practices and the trauma they have caused. The Cyprus Psychiatric Association also condemned so-called ‘conversion therapies’.

EDUCATION

The government made no tangible progress on creating programmes to tackle anti-LGBTI bullying, despite the 2021 death of a student. Bullying cases

were reported again this year to NGOs.

Accept - LGBTI Cyprus met with the Minister of Education, the Ombudswoman, the Commissioner for Children’s Rights, and members of the board of the Pancyprrian Greek Teachers Organisation (P.O.E.D.), to demand the nationwide implementation of the ‘Code of Conduct Against Prejudice in Schools’ and the ‘Guide to Handling and Recording of Incidents of Prejudice’. Accept also called for the inclusion of SOGI issues in the curriculum and training for teachers and school staff.

In July, the Education Minister issued a written response to a query from MP George Koukoumas, saying that while the implementation of the Ministry’s anti-prejudice policy is mandatory, only 31 of 480 schools in the Republic of Cyprus have done so.

EMPLOYMENT

Events continued to be held this year to address LGBTIQI+ rights in the workplace.

FAMILY

Family rights remained a paramount concern for civil society this year, but no developments took place despite civil society’s continued advocacy.

A priest baptised the twin children of an American-Greek gay couple in Athens in July. The Holy Synod of Greece’s Orthodox Church sent a letter of protest to the priest, arguing that the move went against the Church’s values.

In July, Accept - LGBTI Cyprus met with rainbow families to discuss their problems. Later in September, Cyprus Pride was focused on rainbow families.

FOREIGN POLICY

In February, Cyprus and the UK signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the Protection and Promotion of the rights of LGBTI+ people in Europe and the Commonwealth.

In March, during a meeting in Rome, Cyprus was voted vice-chair in the Council of Europe’s newly formed Working Group on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics (GT-ADI-SOGI) of the Steering Committee on Anti-

Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI). Cyprus continued its role as co-chair of the European Governmental LGBTI+ Focal Points Network (EFPN) with the UK and, later, also with Iceland. The 29th EFPN Roundtable was held in Limassol on 12 May and was attended by several state and civil society representatives from across Europe.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

On 18 June, two Pride marches were held in Nicosia under the motto 'United by Pride', bringing together people from across the island.

Cyprus Pride 2022 was held in September in Nicosia and attended by 4,000 people. For the first time, the event was financially supported by several companies.

Accept - LGBTI Cyprus, Queer Collective Cy, and Queer Cyprus Association participated in the first rainbow festival of the University of Cyprus on 21 September.

HEALTH

The Parliamentary Legal Committee discussed a proposal tabled by the AKEL party in March, June and November, to ban so-called LGBTQI+ 'conversion therapies'. The proposal, welcomed by all parties apart from extreme-right ELAM, criminalised the procedure by anyone, including health professionals and priests. It is now expected to be voted in early 2023.

A Pancyprrian report on the impact of COVID-19 on LGBTI+ people found that 55% of the respondents felt their life quality got worse, and 67% said their mental and emotional state deteriorated. One in ten was targeted by verbal abuse at home.

Monkeypox was labelled as a 'gay disease' in the media, which the Ministry of Health and civil society condemned as highly stigmatising and factually wrong. Following this, in August, the Ministry of Health met with all LGBTQI+ and HIV support groups to discuss the previously issued protocol and correct communication procedures.

The blood bank published its new eligibility criteria in April, changing the 12-month abstinence period and

allowing gay men to donate if they had a "controlled" sex life the past six months. The restriction caused a public uproar, particularly as the Ministry of Health published an urgent plea for donations shortly before. The discriminatory restriction was removed a few days later.

Accept LGBTI Cyprus continued lobbying for safe and quality healthcare access for LGBTI+ people.

Trans people continued facing difficulties in their access to hormonal therapy. Some also shared that their endocrinologists were unwilling to help adjust their dosage, and they were struggling with depression as a consequence.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

As part of Cyprus's engagement in the voluntary reporting on the implementation of the Council of Europe (CoE) Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5, a national report on legal gender recognition was published in January (see Council of Europe chapter for more details on the regional process of which this was a part).

In September, the Minister of Justice announced that the legal gender recognition bill was approved by the Council of Ministers and submitted to the House of Representatives for discussion and voting. The bill establishes a model based on self-determination for those over 18. Those aged 16-17 would have to undergo a more complex process, which involves parental consent, a court decision and the approval of a committee to confirm that the child understands the consequences of their request. LGR would remain inaccessible to those under 16. The Parliamentary Legal Committee held the first reading of the bill in November and was presented by the Minister of Justice.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

Civil society held several public and cultural events this year, including exhibitions, discussions, and seminars for LGBTI people to strengthen the community. June and September saw Pride marches in Nicosia, as well as other events and seminars.

The third Queer Wave film festival took place between 25 November and 4 December.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

In April, a two-day LGBTQI+ training session took place at the Cyprus Central Prison for newly recruited prison guards.

Following complaints about anti-LGBTI harassment by police, the Ombudswoman called for mandatory training for all police officers.

In October, two LGBTQI+ training sessions took place at the Cyprus Police Academy, for new recruits and existing police officers.

NORTHERN CYPRUS

**Areas not under the effective control of the Republic of Cyprus.*

ACCESS TO GOODS AND SERVICES

A trans woman experienced transphobic harassment at a hair salon.

ASYLUM

Queer Cyprus Association (QCA) and the Refugee Rights Association successfully challenged the deportation of an LGBTI+ asylum seeker living with HIV.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

Online 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. Other instances took place at the Family Workshop organised by the Presidency in February. The police have failed to take any meaningful action. QCA sued the police department for lack of effective investigation.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

Several people reported harassment and violence to QCA, including a gay man who was subjected to psychological violence by a family member and victims who were blackmailed over sexually explicit videos. The latter case was referred to the police and the suspect is under investigation.

DATA COLLECTION

The Human Rights Platform, launched by QCA in 2021, continued monitoring the situation of LGBTI+ people in the northern part of Cyprus.

EDUCATION

QCA launched a project to monitor human rights violations in education, map the attitudes of teachers and school staff, analyse the curriculum, and organise events.

EMPLOYMENT

In May, QCA held an event on the situation of LGBTI+ people in the workplace.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

In May, QCA held a Pride march on the occasion of IDAHOBIT, focusing on the theme of diverse family forms this year.

On 18 June, two Pride marches were held in Nicosia under the motto 'United by Pride', bringing together people from all across the island.

HEALTH

QCA reported that several LGBTI+ migrants reached out for information about living with HIV in the northern part of Cyprus, but others were deported before they were able to get support.

INTERSECTIONALITY

On 10 October, QCA organised a thematic discussion on intersectionality.

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION

QCA continued advocating for legal gender recognition based on self-determination.

PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

QCA visited organisations and local bodies working in the field of education and health and held meetings. A short film about homophobia and patriarchy on the island, 'The Hunt' premiered in IDAHOBIT in Nicosia.

POLICE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT

QCA and the Human Rights Platform monitored the situation of trans women in prisons this year, finding that trans women who have not undergone LGR are routinely held in solitary confinement and lack access to gender-affirming healthcare. The monitors also highlighted that detainees had very little access to quality food, fresh air, and hygienic conditions in their cells. In an important ruling in December, the Nicosia High Court affirmed that keeping trans detainees in solitary for their own protection was unacceptable.

A number of trans people who asked to be exempted from military service received a report stating they were suitable to join the army and had to leave the country as a consequence.

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