

ANNUAL REVIEW

OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION
OF LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANS
AND INTERSEX PEOPLE

2019



Annual Review

of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex
People in Latvia covering the period of January to December 2018

Latvia

Bias-motivated violence

In 2018, Mozaika registered a total of 22 hate crimes against LGBT people. Despite calls from civil society, hate crime legislation still does not explicitly mention grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or expression.

Family

On 7 March, the Mandate, Ethics and Submissions Committee of the Saeima (parliament) of Latvia, rejected a petition for introducing partnership legislation open to all couples, including same-sex couples (2 in favour, 5 against, 2 abstentions). This is the second time the Saeima rejected such an initiative. According to Latvian legislation, the Saeima is required to consider any initiative which is signed by 10,000 citizens. The petition was initiated in 2015 by member of the Riga City Council and chairperson of the party "For Latvia's Development" Juris Pūce and the threshold met in December 2017.

On 29 October, the Office of the Ombudsman issued an opinion calling the Ministry of Justice and the Saeima to introduce a framework for the recognition and protection of same-sex families and to review and create a common understanding of the concept and protection of the family in regulatory frameworks.

"The legislator must be able to make decisions that may not enjoy the support of the majority of society, but the adoption of which is necessary to ensure the fundamental rights of different groups within society and the fulfilment of international obligations of the state."

Ombudsman of Latvia

The Ombudsman's opinion recognised that in the 21st century marriage cannot be seen as the only basis for the formation of a family, as families take many different forms, including between partners of the same sex. The Ombudsman identified clear recommendations to the authorities, and indicated a timeframe for responding to him about progress made in implementing them.

Freedom of assembly

Latvia hosted the annual Baltic Pride in Riga on 9 June. The March was attended by 8000 people, making it the largest Baltic Pride event so far. A full 100 days of Pride events preceded the march, including a cultural programme, celebrating diversity and human rights, as well as 100 years of independence of the Baltic states. For the first time, a business, Accenture, and three political parties marched in the Pride, and businesses around Riga celebrated Pride with special window displays.

Health

On 1 October, Latvia introduced its "Test and treat" policy, as a result of which all HIV patients can receive immediate access to antiretroviral treatment, free of charge.

Participation in public, cultural and political life

In the October general elections, for the first time in Latvia's history, openly gay and lesbian politicians Edgars Rinkēvičs ("Jauna Vienotība" party - EPP) and Marija Golubeva ("Attīstībai/Par!" alliance - ALDE), were elected to be MPs, several other openly LGBT candidates ran but were not elected.

"The election of two openly gay and lesbian MPs is definitely a significant development for the LGBTI community which until recently remained mostly invisible in public life. Their election will serve as a strong encouragement and an assurance for LGBTI people to come out. This is also an important signal for the wider society further breaking down the stereotypes and prejudice."

Juris Lavrikovs, LGBTI activist

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT [RAINBOW-EUROPE.ORG](https://rainbow-europe.org)