

France

ACCESS TO ADEQUATE FOOD

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically impacted the LGBTI community, and particularly trans people, many of whom lost their income. Civil society distributed food to those most in need. Local sex worker advocacy organisation, STRASS launched a fundraiser for the same purpose. The Minister of Equality failed to put in place similar initiatives.

ASYLUM

Several police raids were carried out against asylum seekers this year, followed by harsh criticism by civil society.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH

On 18 June, the Constitutional Council struck down the “Avia law” - France’s new hate speech law, which compelled online platforms to take down hateful content within 24 hours. The Council argued that the law’s limitations on freedom of expression were not necessary, appropriate, and proportionate, as prescribed by law (see under **Freedom of expression**).

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE

In March, the perpetrator in a 2017 rape case was sentenced to 15 years in prison and a 50.000 euro fine. The court did not take into account the lesbophobic nature of the assault, despite the fact that the victim recalled the rapist justifying his actions because she is a lesbian.

SOS Homophobie’s annual report revealed that the number of hate crimes against LGBTI people has again increased, for the fourth consecutive year. The organisation recorded a 26% increase between 2018 and 2019.

Several same-sex couples were verbally harassed and threatened this year (see here and here). In one case, a couple’s neighbours said that “homosexuals are the first to contract COVID-19”.

BODILY INTEGRITY

The most recent draft law on bioethics (see under **Family and Sexual and reproductive rights**) fails to ban intersex genital mutilation.

Following the establishment of a special investigative committee last year, the draft law on banning conversion therapy was finalised in June. The process has been stalled since.

EDUCATION

Two young trans people committed suicide due to school bullying this year, Doona in Montpellier on 23 September and Avril / Luna in Lille on 16 December. For the past four years, SOS Homophobie has reported a steady rise in discrimination and bullying, which LGBT students experience in schools.

EMPLOYMENT

Local organisation Autre Cercle found in a new study that one in four LGBT people have experienced discrimination or violence at work, and one in ten were physically or sexually assaulted.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Following its pledge last year, the Ministry of Equality published the National Action Plan for LGBT+ equality and against hate and discrimination (2020-2023) in October. The Plan sets out a great number of goals, but civil society remained concerned about its potential in implementation and evaluation, without an adequate budget in place. NGOs also warned that a number of issues are excluded from the Plan, particularly those affecting trans and intersex persons.

FAMILY

On 31 July, the National Assembly adopted the second version of the draft law on bioethics. Regrettably, the law does not recognise both parents of children born of surrogacy abroad, with the non-biological parent having to go through adoption. Surrogacy in France remains banned.

On 16 September, the Court of Cassation ruled against a trans woman’s right to be recognised as the mother of her child. The child was conceived after the woman had changed her legal gender to female. France does not allow for automatic parenthood recognition in two-mother constellations, forcing these parents to adopt their own children.

FOREIGN POLICY

The town of Saint-Jean-de-Braye broke ties with its Polish twin city Tuchów, which declared itself an “LGBT-free zone”. Towns in Germany, Ireland, and the Netherlands did the same with their twin cities.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY

A spontaneous Pride march brought together a few thousand people in Paris on 4 July, with many marching under the slogans “our pride is political” and “Black Lives Matter”. Some highlighted

the precarious situation of trans people during the pandemic.

“The danger of rolling back our fundamental rights is very present and the epidemic has revealed multiple factors of exclusion, discrimination and violence” - Giovanna Rincon, Director of Acceptess-T to the [AFP](#).

Police brutality reached alarming rates this year (see under **Asylum**), [causing](#) mass protests in response.

FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

In May, LGBT activists [reported](#) that due to the Avia law, their social media accounts were disabled when they used the word “pédé” [English: queer/fag, reclaimed] (see more under **Bias-motivated speech**). Several LGBT organisations [criticised](#) the law last year for violating freedom of expression.

HEALTH

The Ministry of Health [reduced](#) the abstinence period for men who sex with men (MSM) and want to donate blood, from one year to four months. The first proposal sought to abolish the deferral period altogether, but was not adopted. Civil society had urged the Ministry to abolish the ban entirely, refocusing on ‘risky behavior’ instead. The Ministry sees the reduction as the first step.

Local trans groups expressed concern over the French Society of Trans Care and Study (SOFECT) changing its name to FPATH this year, falsely suggesting ties to WPATH and EPATH. FPATH is considered extremely damaging by the community for their outdated approach to trans healthcare that is not compliant with human rights standards. Trans advocates fear that the new name will give incentive to the government to work with FPATH - Espace Santé Trans shared an [open letter](#) on the matter.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Local trans organisation Espace Santé Trans documented a stark increase in the number of people reaching out for mental health counseling since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, including alarming rates of psychological and financial issues reported.

SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

On 24 January, the Senate [decided](#) that only women diagnosed with infertility would be eligible for cost coverage for assisted reproduction, excluding single women and same-sex lesbian couples. Extending the coverage was one of President Macron’s

campaign issues in 2017. The decision was preceded by thousands [protesting](#) for equal access to ART to all. Activists [disrupted](#) a number of conservative events on the topic, with one debate [cancelled](#) in Versailles. In May, lawmakers [postponed](#) dealing with the issue. Due to the immense pressure on lawmakers, the Senate presented an amended draft law on 3 August, [affirming](#) that ART cost coverage will be extended to single women and same-sex female couples. The draft however only covers “women”, erasing everyone else with the capacity to bear a child.

The Senate’s version was rejected by the House. To come up with consensus, a newly set up parliamentary commission will have to prepare a new draft.

SOCIAL SECURITY AND SOCIAL PROTECTION

The founder and treasurer of an organisation of LGBT+ elders were [accused](#) of exploiting a senior gay men with dementia, and taking over his finances. The investigation is ongoing.



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