



Annual Review

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

Croatia

Asylum

In March, a same-sex couple from a South Asian country managed to get asylum in Croatia, with Zagreb Pride's support. The couple's application was initially rejected due to inadequate support by their legal representative and translator.

Bias-motivated speech

'My Rainbow Family', a picture book aimed at preschool children of same-sex couples, drew negative reaction from anti-LGBTI equality groups (see also **Education**). A [petition](#), saying the material would manipulate children, gathered 17,000 signatures. On 4 February, an effigy of the book was set on fire at a carnival near Split. Minister for Education Blaženka Divjak (independent) and Children's Ombudsperson Helenca Pirnat Dragičević both condemned the incident.

The State Attorney's Office and the judiciary are still slow and inefficient in resolving cases of bias motivated speech. This year, one person was found guilty of incitement, after posting hateful comments on Zagreb Pride's Facebook page.

Bias-motivated violence

On 12 June, Croatia became the 31 st state to ratify the Istanbul Convention, which entered into force on 1 October. Following a cabinet meeting in March, where government ministers unanimously supported the ratification, protests were organised by conservative and nationalistic groups calling the treaty a threat to "traditional values". The government adopted an interpretative declaration upon ratification, clarifying that the convention would not change the constitutional definition of marriage or oblige Croatia to "introduce gender ideology".

Bodily integrity

Civil society is increasingly advocating the need for legal protection of intersex persons, but so far there have been no developments regarding legislation. There is one publicly out intersex activist working on awareness raising and advocacy.

Education

In January, rainbow families NGO Dugine Obitelji launched "[My Rainbow Family](#)", the first children's book in Croatia that features

same-sex parents. 500 copies were freely available to the public, and several kindergartens, schools and libraries ordered a copy. The initial print was sold out in less than a month, and a crowdfunding campaign was organised, with schools, libraries, teachers and academics reserving their copies.

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb found in its research among 312 high school students that the Croatia educational system does not provide sufficient and adequate information about sexual orientation, affecting growing levels of discrimination.

Family

The trend of excluding same-sex life partners from newly adopted laws and regulations, continued in 2018, going against the 2014 [Life Partnership Act](#), which ensures equal treatment. Recent examples include the Real Estate Tax Act, the Law on the Rights of the Croatian Homeland War Veterans, and most recently the [Foster Care Act](#). The new Foster Care Act, adopted on 7 December, excludes formal and informal life partners from being able to foster children. This is in direct violation of the Life Partnership Act, which grants equal rights to same-sex life partners regarding fostering. Zagreb Pride and others are preparing a lawsuit against the state.

Freedom of assembly

Zagreb Pride continued facing obstacles when trying to organise the Pride March. This year, the City of Zagreb tried to block the event, unlawfully imposing a fee on the organisation. After Zagreb Pride complained, the City withdrew their claim, and the March was [successfully](#) held on 9 June.

Health

Research conducted among 410 LGB people by the Department of Psychology, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at the University of Zagreb, affirmed that hiding one's sexual orientation negatively impacts life satisfaction and mental health, causing anxiety, depression and stress.

Trans healthcare remains unregulated. Civil society continued to record cases of inconsistent practice, e.g. some trans people having to pay for services that insurance covered for others.

Legal gender recognition

On 23 May, the Minister of Education issued official instructions to all educational institutions, obliging them to re-issue certificates and diplomas after name changes or legal gender changes.

Police and law enforcement

The Victims' Rights Directive (2012/29/EU) entered into force on 1 October, ensuring that hate crime victims receive special protection measures during criminal proceedings. The transposition of the Directive in the Criminal Procedure Act only applies to criminal offenses. Given that police routinely process anti-LGBTQI crimes as misdemeanour, LGBTQI victims do not qualify for support services or special protection measures.

In September, Zagreb Pride continued holding trainings for the police, on recognising hate crimes and treating victims with dignity and respect.

Public opinion

A poll, conducted between August - September on behalf of the "Call It Hate" partnership (to be published next year), recording 1000 answers, found that women and people with higher levels of education had more positive attitudes towards LGBT people. Alarming, when it comes to age, young people aged 18-24 were the least supportive of LGBT people.

Sexual and reproductive rights

The third annual "Walk for Life" (anti-abortion) march took place on the 19 May in Zagreb, Rijeka and Split. Several feminist counter-protesters were arrested in Zagreb and Rijeka during the rallies.

In 2017, the Constitutional Court gave the government two years to regulate abortion. In November, a Working Group was formed, mostly bringing together representatives known for their opposition to sexual and reproductive rights. LGBTI and women's rights organisations are concerned that the drafting process will not be transparent and a more restrictive law will be adopted.

Social security and social protection

In February, a person whose same-sex life partner was severely ill was denied "temporary incapacity leave", despite the right being

guaranteed by the Life Partnership Act. The category "temporary incapacity to work" had not been modified in the electronic healthcare system, to include life partners. Ivan Zidarević, human rights activists, contacted the Croatian Health Insurance Fund and the Ombudsperson for Gender Equality. In October, the Fund issued a directive to all competent services to act according to the Life Partnership Act that regulates benefits, obligations and legal rights regarding healthcare and health insurance. The Fund also updated guidelines on their website to include life partners.

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

