

# Statement on LGBTQI+ Rights in Europe

Brussels, June 22nd 2021

In this year's Pride month, we are deeply saddened by the results of the 2021 annual report from the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association (ILGA) - Europe and the tragic news that have come across international media outlets regarding various hate crimes towards LGBTQI+ people all across Europe.

According to ILGA Europe, the European Union scores a mere 48% achievement rate in LGBTQI+ rights, scoring 10% more than the overall European Score, with Malta, Belgium, Luxembourg, Portugal and Norway scoring the highest from 94% to 67%.<sup>1, 2</sup> Which means that from all of the LGBTQI+ related rights, the EU as a whole guarantees less than half of them.

The COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences have highlighted most of the gaps in terms of the issues faced by LGBTQI+ people and what they come across in their own homes. For those who do not feel welcome at home, spending more time at home with family members that do not respect nor support who you truly are, being forced as a student to go back from the safe space of your university's city to your own home, in an hostile environment where you cannot be free to express yourself, and being isolated from others, has deeply contributed to a sense of isolation and insecurity, that negatively influenced the mental health of our LGBTQI+ population.<sup>1, 3</sup>

LGBTQI+ organisations have had to skew their work towards provision of basic necessities like food and shelter.<sup>1</sup>

There has also been a substantial rise in hate speech, both from official sources, in the media and online. The trend of politicians verbally attacking LGBTQI+ people has grown sizeably and spread in countries including Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czechia, Estonia, Finland, Hungary, Italy, Kosovo, Latvia, Moldova, North Macedonia, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, and Turkey.<sup>1</sup>

Hate speech remains an unsolved issue, with many European countries not having a law that protects LGBTQI+ people from these attacks.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Annual review of the human rights situation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people in Europe and central Asia. (2021). ILGA-Europe. Available from: [Annual-Review-Full-2021.pdf](https://www.rainbow-europe.org/Annual-Review-Full-2021.pdf) ([rainbow-europe.org](https://www.rainbow-europe.org))

<sup>2</sup> Rainbow Europe Map. (2021). ILGA-Europe. Available from: [Rainbow Europe](https://www.rainbow-europe.org) ([rainbow-europe.org](https://www.rainbow-europe.org))

<sup>3</sup> Implications of COVID-19 for LGBTQ Youth Mental Health and Suicide Prevention. (2020). The Trevor Project. Available from: [Implications-of-COVID-19-for-LGBTQ-Youth-Mental-Health-and-Suicide-Prevention.pdf](https://www.thetrevorproject.org/Implications-of-COVID-19-for-LGBTQ-Youth-Mental-Health-and-Suicide-Prevention.pdf) ([thetrevorproject.org](https://www.thetrevorproject.org))

Attacks on freedom of assembly continue to be a growing trend. Demonstrators were detained in Azerbaijan; a brutal crackdown was enforced in Belarus for months, including arrests, detention, violence, and torture of LGBTQI+ people; some events were attacked or disturbed by extremists in Bulgaria; police brutality against protestors increased in France; anti-LGBT rallies were rampant in Poland, while activists were arrested.<sup>1</sup>

Overall, a crackdown on democracy and civil societies made the headlines in 2020 with instances in Poland and Hungary being some of the most concerning in the European Union.<sup>1</sup>

The Hungarian government has excluded same-sex marriages from the constitution, limited gay adoptions and legal recognition of transgender people, and often depicted homosexuality as an aberration.<sup>1,4,5</sup>

Poland's local authorities have declared "LGBT Free zones" in recent years.<sup>6</sup> Poland also plans to close a loophole that allowed same-sex couples to adopt.<sup>6</sup>

The Polish government announced its proposal for the adoption ban just hours before the European Parliament's declaration in support of LGBTQI+ rights, further taking Poland back in time in terms of human rights that have been under heavy threat in the last couple of years.<sup>6</sup>

Same-sex relationships are not legally recognised in Poland, and the country prohibits same-sex couples from adopting children together.<sup>6</sup>

In response to this "LGBT free zones" and blatant disrespect for LGBTQI+ rights, the European Union declared itself as a "LGBT Freedom zone" in March 2021.<sup>6</sup>

The resolution declares that "LGBTIQ persons everywhere in the EU should enjoy the freedom to live and publicly show their sexual orientation and gender identity without fear of intolerance, discrimination or persecution".<sup>6,7</sup>

It also states that "authorities at all levels of governance across the EU should protect and promote equality and the fundamental rights of all, including LGBTIQ persons".

The resolution was supported by 492 Members of the European Parliament, while another 141 voted against it and 46 abstained.<sup>6,7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Hungary bans same-sex couples from adopting children. (December 15th 2020). BBC News. Available from: [Hungary bans same-sex couples from adopting children - BBC News](#)

<sup>5</sup> Hungary questions Germany's democratic standards in LGBT row. (April 8th 2021). Reuters. Available from: [Hungary questions Germany's democratic standards in LGBT row | Reuters](#)

<sup>6</sup> EU declared 'LGBT freedom zone' in response to Poland's 'LGBT-free zones'. (March 11th 2021). BBC News. Available from: [EU declared 'LGBT freedom zone' in response to Poland's 'LGBT-free zones' - BBC News](#)

<sup>7</sup> Parliament declares the European Union an "LGBTIQ Freedom Zone". (March 11th 2021). European Parliament News. Available from: [Parliament declares the European Union an "LGBTIQ Freedom Zone" | News | European Parliament \(europa.eu\)](#)

While progress in the EU was made towards LGBTQI+ equality over the past years, discrimination against LGBTQI+ people persists with 43% feeling discriminated against.<sup>8</sup> In response to that, the European Commission presented the first-ever EU Strategy for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTQI+) equality.<sup>8</sup>

Despite these efforts, on the 28th of April 2021, Normunds Kindzulis, a medical assistant and gay Latvian man, only 29 years old, was murdered at his doorstep. He was set on fire for loving another human being, thus representing the existing and prevalent hate towards the LGBTQI+ community. Before his brutal murder in Tukums, he had been receiving death threats that forced him to move from the city of Riga to the place where he would perish, victim of a hate crime.<sup>9</sup>

Even with the European Union taking a stance towards the defence of LGBTQI+ people, progress being made and resolutions taking place, numerous hate crimes and rising hate speech even amongst politicians continue. There are still many countries in the European Union that do not represent the union values of freedom for all and that fight against the progress and evolution of our union, keeping it from being a true LGBTQI+ freedom zone, as can be seen in ILGA Europe's report and all across the news.

We as European medical students express our deep condolences for all the victims of hate crimes and our profound concern towards the lack of LGBTQI+ protection laws, as well as the growing anti-LBTQI+ movements in Europe. We must continue to raise awareness and voice our concerns towards the blatant violations of human rights. There is still much to do and we cannot rest until all humans are free to live their lives as who they truly are, without fearing for their lives.

EMSA Europe stands with the European Union Freedom zone statement and with every LGBTQI+ person. We call upon the European Union and Members of Parliament to do everything within their power to make the European Union a truly freedom zone for all, where no one fears being who they are and everyone is free to embrace who they are without fearing for their bodily integrity.

  
Alexandra Archodoulakis

EMSA Vice President of External Affairs  
2020/2021

  
Oğul Kaplan

EMSA Secretary General  
2020/2021

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<sup>8</sup> Union of Equality: The Commission presents its first-ever strategy on LGBTIQ equality in the EU. (November 12th 2020). European Commission. Available from: [First-ever strategy on LGBTIQ equality in the EU \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/justice/strategy-on-lgbtiq-equality_en)

<sup>9</sup> Gay Latvian man dies after 'homophobic attack', campaigners say. (April 30th 2021). Euronews. Available from: [Gay Latvian man dies after 'homophobic attack'. campaigners say | Euronews](https://www.euronews.com/en/2021/04/30/gay-latvian-man-dies-after-homophobic-attack-campaigners-say)