# Is Europe going 'all Russian' on gay rights?



A newly released report by ILGA-Europe, an influential non-governmental organisation comprising over 500 associations throughout Europe and Asia, has raised significant concerns regarding the erosion of rights for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans, and Intersex (LGBTI) individuals across the continents. The report, titled “Annual Analysis of the Human Rights Situation of LGBTI People in Europe and Central Asia,” underscores a troubling trend whereby governments are allegedly adopting strategies reminiscent of those employed by Russia to undermine civil liberties.

ILGA-Europe's findings indicate that legislation targeting LGBTQ+ communities is increasingly being enacted as part of broader efforts to restrict freedoms such as expression, association, and the conduct of fair elections. The organisation states, "governments are feeding anti-LGBTI sentiment to promote laws that restrict freedom of expression, association, and fair elections." This suggests a concerted approach whereby the persecution of LGBTQ+ individuals is framed as a protective measure for traditional values, while in practice these laws serve to stifle dissent and limit the activism of non-governmental organisations.

Notably, the report highlights the implementation of ‘foreign agent laws’ that require NGOs to register as such, a tactic intended to delegitimise their operations and restrict their funding streams. ILGA-Europe criticises these measures for disproportionately impacting LGBTQ+ organisations, noting their recent adoption in countries like Bulgaria, Georgia, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, and Montenegro.

Additionally, the report outlines the rising tide of ‘LGBTI propaganda laws’ aimed at criminalising the visibility of LGBTI individuals and curtailing free speech. ILGA-Europe asserts that these legislative efforts have led to a direct threat to civil society, particularly in the education sector, where there has been a notable restriction or outright exclusion of LGBTI topics from school curricula in nations including Bulgaria, Hungary, and Slovakia.

Moreover, the report warns of an alarming increase in hate speech against LGBTI individuals, which has been particularly normalised within public discourse by figures in political and religious spheres. This disturbing trend has correlated with a spike in violence, as hate crimes reported across the region have reached unprecedented levels.

Healthcare access for transgender individuals is also under scrutiny, as ILGA-Europe notes that several countries, including the United Kingdom and various Eastern European nations, are creating barriers that restrict access to essential medical services. The organisation states, “Andorra, Georgia, Hungary, Ireland, Moldova, Romania, Russia, and the United Kingdom have created new barriers to healthcare,” highlighting the precarious situation for transgender minors in particular.

Specific countries such as Russia, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkey are noted for intensifying their persecution of LGBTQ+ populations, while some European nations like Austria and Belgium face criticisms for denying asylum applications based on what might be considered "arbitrary assessments" of individuals' identities.

Portugal has not escaped scrutiny either. The report mentions accusations against the organisation Habeas Corpus for distributing a list labelled "Heavily Funded LGBTIA+ Terrorists with Portuguese Tax Money," aimed ostensibly at activists and their supporters. Additionally, data from law enforcement agencies in Portugal indicates a concerning increase in hate crimes reported, specifically showing a 38% rise with a total of 347 incidents recorded in 2023 compared to the previous year.

The situation has intensified debates around terminology and representation, as evidenced by recent controversies involving the General Directorate of Health in Portugal, which faced backlash for using the phrasing "people who menstruate" in a health questionnaire. This sparked further discussions on the recognition and rights of LGBTI individuals within health and societal frameworks.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/eu-enlargement-review-2023/> - This URL supports ILGA-Europe's involvement in assessing LGBTI rights in various countries, highlighting challenges such as legislative gaps and the erosion of civil liberties. It also underscores the importance of implementing existing policies to protect LGBTI individuals.
* <https://www.ilga-europe.org/files/uploads/2023/10/ILGA-Europe-Activity-Report-2023.pdf> - This report details ILGA-Europe's activities and efforts to advance LGBTI rights, including advocating for legal gender recognition and combating violence against LGBTI individuals. It highlights the organisation's engagement with European institutions to push for better legislation.
* <https://www.ilga-europe.org/report/rainbow-europe-2023/> - The Rainbow Europe Map and Index ranks countries based on their legal and policy practices for LGBTI individuals, showing advancements in some areas despite rising polarisation and anti-LGBTI attacks. It highlights gains in legal gender recognition and bans on intersex genital mutilation.
* <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source provides the original article discussing ILGA-Europe's report on the erosion of LGBTI rights across Europe and Central Asia, detailing legislative threats and rising violence.