

Hungary's ban on Pride

On 18 March 2025, a law was adopted in Hungary restricting the freedom of assembly, by connecting it to a previous controversial law from 2021, which prohibited the public portrayal to children of 'divergence from self-identity corresponding to sex at birth, sex change or homosexuality'. Consequently, events such as Pride marches have been prohibited in the country. On 2 April 2025, Parliament will hold a debate on recent legislative changes introduced in Hungary, including this one, and their impact on fundamental rights.

Background

On 15 June 2021, the Hungarian Parliament adopted [Act LXXIX of 2021](#) on 'tougher action against paedophile offenders and amending certain laws to protect children', the 'Propaganda law', which curtailed LGBTI content and especially its availability to minors by introducing Section 6/A into the Child Protection Act. This law is the subject of an infringement procedure at the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), where the case C-769/22 [Commission v Hungary](#) is still pending. In that case, the Commission alleges violations of the [Services](#), [Audiovisual Media Services](#), and [e-Commerce](#) Directives. It is also the first case in which the Commission has brought an infringement solely on the grounds of [Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union](#). The hearing took place on 19 November 2024, with the CJEU sitting as a full court, meaning it considers the case of [exceptional importance](#).

On 18 March 2025, a [law](#) was adopted which required that public events that do not comply with Section 6/A of the Child Protection Act are prohibited, meaning those portraying 'divergence from self-identity corresponding to sex at birth, sex change or homosexuality'. The new law amends the law on misdemeanours and the law on the Right of Assembly, as well as the law on Facial Image Analysis Register that allows the use of facial image analysis to be used in order to fine participants in the event.

Position of the European Court of Human Rights on similar laws

The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) has dealt with similar laws many times, mainly laws adopted by Russia, and concluded that these violate non-discrimination, freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. Just like Hungary, Russia had introduced a 'propaganda law' prohibiting information on LGBTI in the proximity of children. This law was used to prohibit Pride marches, among others. In the [Bayev and Others v Russia](#) case, the ECtHR considered that 'by adopting such [anti-LGBTI propaganda] laws the authorities reinforce stigma and prejudice and encourage homophobia, which is incompatible with the notions of equality, pluralism and tolerance inherent in a democratic society'.

On the banning of Pride events specifically, the ECtHR considered, in the case of [Alekseyev v Russia](#), that 'there is no scientific evidence or sociological data at the Court's disposal suggesting that the mere mention of homosexuality, or open public debate about sexual minorities' social status, would adversely affect children or "vulnerable adults".' On the contrary, the Court considered that 'it is only through fair and public debate that society may address such complex issues'. The Court concluded that the prohibition of the Pride event 'did not correspond to a pressing social need and was thus not necessary in a democratic society', and consequently established a violation of Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR; freedom of assembly and association). Furthermore, the ECtHR considered that 'it has been established ... that the main reason for the ban imposed on the events organised by the applicant was the authorities' disapproval of demonstrations which they considered to promote homosexuality ... In the light of these findings the Court also considers it established that the applicant suffered discrimination on the grounds of his sexual orientation and that of other participants in the proposed events.' Therefore, a violation of Article 14 (non-discrimination) in conjunction with Article 11 ECHR was also established.

The [Macatè v Lithuania](#) case concerned the temporary suspension of a children's fairy tale book depicting same-sex relationships, and its subsequent labelling as harmful to children under the age of 14. In its January 2023 judgment, the ECtHR found a violation of the freedom of expression in this case, considering that 'a legislative ban on "promotion of homosexuality or non-traditional sexual relations" among minors does not



serve to advance the legitimate aims of protection of morals, health or the rights of others'. In that case the Court also noted that every time the law had 'been applied or relied on has concerned information about LGBTI-related issues, such as social advertisements or television broadcasts seeking to foster social acceptance of sexual minorities, information about gay pride events or those events themselves ... and the applicant's book of fairy tales depicting same-sex relationships'. Subsequently, the Court found a violation of Article 10 ECHR (freedom of expression).

In its [Glukhin v Russia](#) judgment of 2023, the ECtHR found that the use of highly intrusive recognition technology, to identify and arrest participants for taking part in peaceful protest actions and for the purpose of pursuing a misdemeanour, was a violation of Article 8.

European Commission positions on Pride event bans

The [EU guidelines to promote and protect the enjoyment of all human rights by LGBTI persons](#), issued by the European External Action Service ([EEAS](#)), see limitations to pride events as a specific indicator in the checklist of the situation regarding LGBTI human rights issues, considering that 'such criminalisation is contrary to international human rights law and is in violation of the human rights of LGBTI persons, including the right to life, privacy, liberty, security and to health, as well as freedom of association, assembly and expression. These fundamental freedoms are also curtailed by legislative initiatives that criminalise public discussion and/or expression of homosexuality, including the prohibition of "pride marches"'. The guidelines consider that the EU should 'also actively oppose other limitations on access to human rights, in particular legislative initiatives limiting the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly'.

Reactions to the newest developments

On 27 March 2025, ambassadors of [22 countries](#) (Australia, Austria, Belgium, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom) expressed deep concern about the new legislation 'that results in restrictions on the right of peaceful assembly and the freedom of expression'. They committed to 'respecting, protecting and fulfilling the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all people, regardless of sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics, and to combating discrimination based on those grounds'. The [European Commission](#) condemned the law as violating the fundamental right to peaceful assembly, along with the AI Act and EU privacy rules. The Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, Hadja Lahbib, [considered](#) that 'the right to gather peacefully is a fundamental right to be championed across the European Union. We stand with the LGBTQI community - in Hungary & in all Member States.' The [UN Human Rights spokesperson](#) said that they 'are deeply concerned at legislation passed this week in Hungary that results in arbitrary and discriminatory restrictions on the rights of LGBTIQ+ individuals to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and privacy, including when advocating for their human rights in events such as Pride parades'. Furthermore, UN Human Rights Chief Volker Türk called on the Hungarian authorities 'to repeal this law and other legislation that discriminates against LGBTIQ+ individuals'.

In a [letter](#) to the Hungarian National Assembly, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, Michael O'Flaherty, asked it 'to initiate a reconsideration of the recently adopted amendment to the law on the right to assembly' with reference to the case law mentioned above.

Position of the European Parliament

Parliament has consistently condemned 'anti-LGBTI propaganda laws'. It first did so concerning the law introduced in Russia in [2013](#), stating that it was 'deeply concerned at the negative consequences of the adoption of a federal law on 'homosexual propaganda', which could increase discrimination and violence against LGBTI individuals'.

In March 2021, vis-à-vis Hungary, Parliament declared the EU an [LGBTIQ Freedom Zone](#), and in a July [2021 resolution](#) it condemned the 2021 law in the strongest possible terms. Parliament considered that the law constituted 'a clear breach of the EU's values, principles and law ... [and] recall[ed] that the Law will introduce into different Hungarian acts provisions that violate fundamental rights under the Charter and the Treaties and EU internal market legislation (the AVMSD [(Audiovisual Media Services Directive)] and the e-Commerce directive)' as well as a violation of the established EU *acquis*.