

LGBTQI+ History Month: The Struggle for Equality Continues

Article by Green European Journal

February 1, 2022

February marks LGBTQI+ history month, a fitting moment to reflect on the state on the struggle of sexual minorities for liberation and equal rights. If there seems to be increasing consensus around acceptance and inclusion across European society as a whole, recent developments in some countries present a more worrying picture.

Social justice campaigners are acutely aware that progress, whether in the form of legal victories or longer-term cultural shifts, is often followed by a backlash. This is illustrated by events in Estonia where progress in the fight for LGBTQI+ rights seems to have stalled and even faces the threat of being rolled back.

The scapegoating of minorities is hardly a new tactic in the populist playbook, and it is one that Viktor Orbán and his ruling party have had no shame in deploying, as they demonstrated last year with a cynical attempt to attack the rights of sexual minorities in Hungary. In Romania, a referendum in 2018 was instrumentalised by conservative and far-right groups seeking to present the rights of sexual minorities as a threat to society. Right across Europe, similar “culture wars” – usually not about culture but basic rights – are becoming enflamed by those who seek to create divisions along political, social, or religious lines. It is a stark reminder of the damage that can be done when individuals and groups seek to stir up tensions in pursuit of their agenda.

History has shown that once a moral panic takes hold, it is difficult to quell, and the social fabric is not easily repaired. Yet there is a steadfast and growing movement in resistance to the attacks on LGBTQI+ rights and protections. Activists and campaigners adopting an intersectional approach are working to foster solidarity by connecting the struggles and repairing divisions. They are leading the way in showing the courage and integrity that is essential to keep moving towards greater social justice, in the face of efforts to push these issues back into the shadows.

This reading list takes stock of some of the key shifts in social perceptions of LGBTQI+ rights as well as identifying some of the battlegrounds around Europe where the struggle for equality continues.

Articles in this focus

07.23.2021

[Opportunism Not Ideology: Fidesz’s Campaign Against Sexual Minorities](#)

By [Kata Benedek](#)

A new discriminatory law against LGBTQI+ people fits well into the long-running political strategy of Fidesz.

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By [Claire Gilder](#), [Dinah Bons](#), [Dounia Jari](#), [Jennifer Kwao](#)

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[A Cliffhanger for LGBT+ Rights in Estonia](#)

By [Mattias Turovski](#), [Züleyxa Izmailova](#)

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[Fighting the Backlash: Feminist & LGBTQI+ Futures](#)

By [Ana Maria Ciobanu](#), [Anaïs Van Ertvelde](#), [Ángela Rodríguez Martínez](#), [Annabelle Dawson](#), [Catriona Graham](#), [Gwendoline Lefebvre](#), [Ivana Živković](#), [Jelena Tešija](#), [Laura Gallagher](#), [Louka Jule Goetzke](#), [Lyle Muns](#), [Réka Kinga Papp](#)

Annabelle Dawson gathers 10 voices looking forward to a Europe in 2049 where the gendered structures of power and violence have crumbled in the face of feminism, awareness and equality.

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Published February 1, 2022

Article in English

Published in the *Green European Journal*

Downloaded from <https://www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu/lgbtqi-history-month-the-struggle-for-equality-continues/>

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