

Belarus intensifies criminalisation of LGBTI people under its new “propaganda” law

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On 15 April 2026, Alexander Lukashenko signed the law “On Amendments to the Codes on Administrative Responsibility,” introducing liability for so-called “propaganda” of “homosexual relationships, gender transition, childlessness, and paedophilia.” The law will take effect two months after its official publication.

TGEU condemns this systematic and dehumanising persecution of LGBTI people and calls for the repeal of all amendments and related legal provisions targeting LGBTI persons.

About TGEU

TGEU (Trans Europe and Central Asia) is a trans-led NGO working for the rights and well-being of trans people since 2005. TGEU is an umbrella organisation representing over 250 member organisations in over 50 countries across Europe and Central Asia.

2026 propaganda in the Code of Administrative Offences

The Code of Administrative Offences, submitted to Parliament by the Council of Ministers in 2025, introduces Article 19.16¹, which establishes administrative liability for:

“Dissemination of information aimed at shaping citizens’ perceptions of the attractiveness of homosexual relations, gender transition, or childlessness, or at recognising paedophilia as acceptable.”

The same penalties apply to all listed categories.

Sanctions under Article 19.16

The law introduces administrative penalties for individuals and legal entities:

- Individuals and legal entities: fines ranging from 20 to 150 base units (approximately €260 – €2,000)

Where “propaganda” is accessible to minors, penalties are increased:

- Individuals: fines of 20–30 base units (€260 – €400), community service, or administrative arrest
- Individual entrepreneurs: 100–150 base units (€1,400 – €2,000)
- Legal entities: 150–200 base units (€2,000 – €2,700)

Legal ambiguity and risk of arbitrary enforcement

The concept of “propaganda” is vaguely defined and lacks objective, verifiable criteria. This creates legal uncertainty and enables broad discretionary interpretation and enforcement by authorities.

As a result, the provision may be applied to virtually any form of public expression, including:

- Expert analysis and commentary
- Human rights and advocacy work
- Educational materials
- Artistic expression
- Private statements and publications

Stigmatisation and criminalisation of LGBTI identities

¹ <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3941&p0=2025035020>

The law explicitly places homosexual relationships, love, trans identity and gender transition in the same category as paedophilia, a criminal offence involving sexual exploitation and violence against children.

This legal framing contributes to the systematic dehumanisation of LGBTI people, reinforcing narratives that portray LGBTI persons as dangerous, undesirable and socially illegitimate. It institutionalises stigma and legitimises exclusion, invisibility and censorship.

The law also creates grounds for arbitrary and discriminatory enforcement of Article 19.16 against LGBTI persons, perceived LGBTI individuals, allies and potentially their relatives and associates.

A pattern of escalating criminalisation

This is not an isolated measure. Belarus has repeatedly adopted or amended legislation that conflates LGBTI identities and practices with criminal or socially harmful behaviour.

2024 – Expansion of “pornography” definition

The Ministry of Culture amended its regulation² on “erotic materials,” expanding the definition of “non-traditional sexual relations and sexual behaviour” to include “homosexuality, lesbian love, bisexual relations, polyamory and transsexualism”, alongside criminal categories such as paedophilia, zoophilia and necrophilia. Under Belarusian law, such content may be treated as pornography.

2025 – Amendments to child protection legislation

The Law on the Rights of the Child introduced³ recognition of “propaganda of homosexual relations, gender transition, paedophilia and childlessness” as harmful to children.

These developments reflect broader regional trends in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. In particular, Russia’s “anti-propaganda” legislation and designation of the so-called “international LGBT movement” as an extremist organisation have served as a key reference point and source of model legislation used to restrict LGBTI rights and civic space.

At the same time, Belarusian authorities have actively promoted anti-LGBTI rhetoric at the highest political level, advancing narratives of protecting the “traditional family,” while undermining freedom of expression, non-discrimination and access to information.

² <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22441365>

³ <https://pravo.by/novosti/novosti-pravo-by/2025/july/89500/>

Shrinking civic space and collapse of LGBTI infrastructure

Since approximately 2022, most LGBTI organisations in Belarus have been forced to close or were liquidated by the state. This has left communities without institutional protection in an environment where LGBTI existence is officially framed as “propaganda.”

The trans advocacy organisation TG House continues to document cases⁴ of violence, discrimination, persecution and intimidation against trans people and their families, including coordinated raids on community events and gatherings.

TGEU position

TGEU condemns the Lukashenko regime’s ongoing systematic repression and persecution of LGBTI people and other targeted groups, which reflects a broader picture of entrenched authoritarian rule and the erosion of fundamental rights.

We call on democratic states, international institutions and human rights actors to strengthen coordinated resistance against this escalation of repression and to ensure protection for those affected.

Recommendations

To UN human rights mechanisms

- Ensure all UN bodies explicitly recognise vague “propaganda” bans as incompatible with international human rights law.
- Frame LGBTI-related restrictions as part of a broader pattern of shrinking civic space, institutionalised discrimination and restrictions on freedom of expression.
- Ensure that Universal Periodic Review (UPR) mid-term reporting includes clear benchmarks on repeal or amendment of SOGI-related restrictions.
- Recommend that Belarus align its legislation with international human rights standards, particularly regarding non-discrimination, freedom of expression and access to information.

To donors and international advocacy organisations

- Establish emergency funding mechanisms for trans activists and LGBTI human rights defenders at immediate risk under the “anti-propaganda” framework.
- Provide dedicated support for asylum pathways and relocation, including legal assistance and access to trans-specific healthcare in host countries.

⁴ <https://tbelarus.com/en/post/the-monitoring-of-repression-2025-eparticularlyn>

- Ensure Belarusian LGBTI activists are recognised as a priority protection group within HRD protection programmes.
- Increase long-term, flexible funding for exile-based Belarusian trans and LGBTI organisations to enable documentation of human rights violations with international advocacy and representation.
- Fund safe, remote psychosocial and peer-support services for trans and non-binary communities inside Belarus, as well as for activists in forced displacement.