Trans Rights Index & Map 2025: The new trans tipping point and Europe's struggle for self-determination

article, intersectionality, health & depathologisation, legal gender recognition, non-discrimination

TGEU's Trans Rights Index and Map 2025 reveals an unprecedented reversal: for the first time in its 13-year history, setbacks in human rights of trans people across Europe and Central Asia now clearly outweigh progress. This regression signals more than just a crisis for trans communities — it is a broader crisis of democracy and fundamental rights across the region.

This is not merely a cultural rollback but a strategic assault on fundamental freedoms, equality, democracy, and on Europe itself. Coordinated anti-trans campaigns are converging with broader anti-rights and anti-EU forces, fueled by internal and external actors, from Trump-aligned global networks to the Kremlin. This is a defining moment: the new trans tipping point. As trans people fight for autonomy over their bodies and identities, Europe struggles for its identity and sovereignty.

Key data trends

Trans people — particularly trans people further marginalised by race, class, disability, migration, HIV status and other intersecting lived experiences — are seeing their human rights protections and fundamental freedoms stripped away at an aggressive pace. For instance, anti-discrimination protections have been rolled back in Georgia and Hungary, where governments introduced anti-trans and anti-LGBTI constitutional amendments. Protections against hate crimes and hate speech have been erased in Republika Srpska (Bosnia). Legal gender recognition is now entirely banned in Georgia, only inconsistently applied in Belarus, and under threat in the United Kingdom following a recent Supreme Court decision. In 2025, still, only one country in Central Asia – Kazakhstan – provides legal gender recognition.

Where progress did happen, it was sporadic and did not reflect strong or consistent political support. Germany stands out for its self-determination law that took effect last November, although the new conservative government has expressed its intention to review it adversarially.

The most significant positive developments of the year are from the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), which has repeatedly affirmed that trans people are explicitly protected under EU law. In recent rulings, the Court confirmed:

- Legal gender changes must be accessible without abusive requirements (*Deldits* case from Hungary);
- EU countries must recognise each other's gender recognition decisions (*Mirin* case from Romania); and
- Gendered titles such as 'Mr; or 'Mrs' must only be used when strictly necessary, protecting non-binary people from discrimination (*Mousse* case from France).

Meanwhile, the CJEU itself is under attack by coordinated illiberal and right-wing efforts targeting Europe's civil society and legal protections.

TGEU Senior Research Officer Freya Watkins comments: "*The data confirms what trans people have been saying*

and feeling. It shows a historically low amount of progress and historically high levels of stagnation. In 2025, we saw more than twice as much regression as progress on our Map. This marks the first time in the 13-year history of the project when clearly more rights have been taken away than have been gained."

Real-life impact

Every policy setback in the region translates into real human consequences. In Hungary, for example, the right-wing populist government changed the Constitution to exclude non-binary people, declaring that people can only be male or female. This change creates a legal basis to deny the existence and rights of people with other gender identities.

Previously a frontrunner on equality, the UK now has a Supreme Court, Prime Minister, and equality body singing from the same hymn sheet as anti-trans campaigners. The UK Supreme Court's decision, which defined a 'woman' for the anti-discrimination law, has severely undermined legal certainty for trans people. Furthermore, it has reinforced privacy risks and exclusion from essential services such as hospital wards, public toilets, changing rooms,and refuges, as well as reception centres for asylum seekers.

In Georgia, the increasingly hostile and Kremlin-aligned government has completely banned legal gender recognition, criminalised the provision of trans-specific healthcare, and exposed trans people and gender diverse people to mistreatment by removing the terms 'gender,' 'gender identity,' and 'gender expression' from anti-discrimination laws. These are not simply abstract points on the Trans Rights Index and Map or high-level policy talks — they are deliberate decisions with harmful consequences for people's safety and their lives.

Europe's self-determination

In 2025, the fight for self-determination goes beyond trans communities — it has become a defining test for Europe itself. As trans people defend their right to bodily autonomy and identity, Europe's identity and sovereignty are challenged, too. The treatment of trans people is being weaponised to erode the EU's foundational values of human rights, dignity, and solidarity. This is a pivotal moment. Europe must rise to the challenge and fulfil its promise — by advancing, and not retreating, from the values it was built on, both within its borders and beyond.

TGEU's data suggests several critical pathways forward. The EU needs a renewed and strengthened LGBTIQ Strategy that specifically addresses the needs of marginalised groups, including trans people, disabled people, asylum seekers, and those facing multiple forms of marginalisation. 'Gender identity' and 'gender expression' must be explicitly included in EU Commission initiatives on equality. With human rights protections visibly eroding across Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, the data also points to the importance of embedding human rights benchmarks into EU foreign policy. In times of enhanced attacks against minorities, global safeguarding mechanisms need to be strengthened, not dismantled.

TGEU Expert Advisor, Richard Köhler, comments: "Ten years after the 'transgender tipping point' brought hope, Europe stands at a far grimmer crossroads. This isn't merely about trans rights—it's a fundamental test of self-determination for democratic societies. How we respond now to the attacks against civil society defines not just the future of vulnerable communities, but Europe's very soul and global standing."

TGEU Executive Director, Ymania Brown, said: "Despite the unmistakable deterioration of the situation for trans people, many political leaders halt progress and recoil from solidarity action —as if this could stop the attack. The opposite is true. Only going forward will stop the attack on rights and our value system. The EU must now actively defend trans people's dignity and human rights by adopting an ambitious EU LGBTIQ Strategy. How the EU responds to this threat within its own borders sets the tone globally. In Eastern Europe, Central Asia, and the Caucasus, Human rights protections are visibly eroding. This is a critical moment. Europe can defend or it can lead. But it cannot look the other way. Dignity is not optional. Equality is not negotiable. And most important of all,

freedom, is not for the few. “

explore the 2025 data

Call to action

TGEU calls on the EU to adopt and proactively implement a strong EU LGBTI Strategy with a clear focus on the human rights of further marginalised groups — trans people, Black people and People of Colour, disabled people, intersex people, asylum seekers, sex workers, and people living with HIV. The new strategy should build upon the lessons learnt from the 2020-2025 Strategy and address widening gaps in human rights and healthcare access. In the new Strategy, the EU Commission needs to commit to supporting Member States with the implementation of EU law on the rights of trans people and hold Member States accountable for their implementation. ‘Gender identity’ and ‘gender expression’ must be included in all EU Commission initiatives on gender equality and be considered grounds for anti-discrimination protections under EU law. Finally, the EU should enforce its global leadership in promoting LGBTI equality, particularly in accession and neighbourhood countries, by embedding strong human rights benchmarks into foreign policy.

Global safeguarding mechanisms need to be strengthened, not dismantled. For this, we urge states in Europe and globally to reinforce support for the UN system, as a precondition for human rights for all, anywhere on the globe. State leaders ought to renew the continuation of the mandate of the Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on SOGI in July 2025 as an essential watchdog and lifeline for trans people globally under threat.

We call on governments and human rights movements — from LGBTI to broader feminist, climate justice, and other movements — to join our fight. Building these movements and democratic mechanisms took many years, and we cannot allow the political conservative rollback to discourage and divide us.

At a time where crisis has become the new normal, our communities are our strength — we stay in solidarity and mutual care, acknowledging and investing in the Power of Communities, the central theme of IDAHOBIT 2025 celebration.

About Trans Rights Index and Map

TGEU’s Trans Rights Index & Map documents the legal situation of trans people in Europe and Central Asia. TGEU’s Trans Rights Index & Map is the most comprehensive data collection and analysis of human rights of trans people in Europe and Central Asia to date. Started in 2013, it now illustrates the legal situation of 54 countries in 32 areas of trans-specific legislation. Central Asian countries were added to the map in 2019. It is available in English, Russian, Spanish, French, BCMS, and Czech, with an Italian version added in 2025. The map tracks six legal categories:

- Legal gender recognition
- Asylum
- Hate crime and speech
- Non-discrimination
- Health
- Family.

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