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## **EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER**

Comments submitted by  
the ILGA-Europe  
concerning the cost-of-living crisis

Report registered by the Secretariat  
on 28 June 2024

**CYCLE 2024**



**Ad-hoc Report on the Cost-of-Living Crisis**

**Submission from ILGA-Europe to the ECSR**

**28/6/2024**

## General comments

This submission was compiled by ILGA-Europe with contributions from our members Legebitra in Slovenia, Asocijacija Spektra in Montenegro, and May 17th Association and Kaos GL in Türkiye; and our [Annual Reviews](#) from 2021-2024 which collect information from from 54 countries across Europe and Central Asia. We have compiled responses to the final four questions as these are the most relevant to the LGBTI community and to the expertise of our members.

Discrimination and exclusion have prevented LGBTI people's full enjoyment of social rights under the European Social Charter. This situation has deteriorated during the cost of living crisis. State supports have been inadequately targeted to the most marginalised members of society, including those in the LGBTI community. Exclusion and marginalisation also mean that state supports are often not fully accessible to the LGBTI community. This has put additional strain on civil society organisations, whose funding has remained stagnant or decreased while costs and the need for their services have risen sharply.

## Questions

- 1) Please provide information as to whether and how the statutory minimum wage is regularly adjusted/indexed to the cost of living. Please indicate when this last happened, specifically whether it has been adjusted /indexed since the end of 2021.
- 2) Please provide information on any supplementary measures taken to preserve the purchasing power of the minimum wage since the end of 2021.
- 3) For States Parties with no statutory minimum wage, please describe any measures taken to preserve the purchasing power of the lowest wages since the end of 2021.
- 4) Please provide information as whether the cost of living crisis has led to the extension of in work benefits.
- 5) Please provide information on changes to social security and social assistance systems since the end of 2021. This should include information on benefits and assistance levels and the allocation of benefits
- 6) Please provide information as to whether social security benefits and assistance are indexed to the cost of living, as well as information in particular on how income-replacing benefits such as pensions are indexed. Please indicate when benefits and assistance were last adjusted/indexed.

N/A

- 7) Please provide information as to whether any special measures have been adopted since late 2021 to ensure persons can meet their energy and food costs, such as price subsidies for energy, fuel, and basic food items.

State support for the LGBTI community during this crisis has been notably lacking. Targeted policies to improve living conditions in these challenging times have been absent.

Given the high levels of precarious work, social exclusion and discrimination among the community, along with barriers to access of state services such as a lack of legal gender recognition in some countries, this lack of targeted supports illustrates a major problem in the design of effective poverty relief measures at state level. This need for targeted supports is further elaborated upon below.

Consequently, civil society organisations and community support have become the primary providers of support and services to marginalised communities. The situation underscores the critical need for more comprehensive and targeted governmental intervention to alleviate the pressures on vulnerable populations and the organisations that support them.

8) Please provide up-to-date information on at-risk-of-poverty rates for the population as a whole, as well as for children, families identified as being at risk of poverty, persons with disabilities and older persons. Please show the trend over the last 5 years, as well as forecasts for upcoming years.

Poverty among the LGBTI community is a critical issue, with trends indicating that this group is disproportionately at risk of poverty, housing exclusion and precarious employment due to discrimination, LGBTI-phobia and exclusion. The FRA LGBTI Survey II found that 1 in 3 LGBTI people are exposed to poverty. Research conducted by the Association Spektra on the socio-economic status of TIRV (trans, intersex, and gender-variant) individuals showed that 26% of respondents rated their socioeconomic position as very poor and 63% of respondents reported experiencing discrimination due to their gender identity when seeking jobs. A lack of legal gender recognition in several states also contributes to the community's exclusion from social benefits.

Rising housing costs have had a strong impact. The LGBTI community are disproportionately at risk of housing insecurity already. Discrimination in employment and on the private rental market make it harder to find secure housing, and many younger LGBTI people are forced out of their family homes due to rejection and LGBTI-phobic domestic violence. Between 2019 and 2023, there have been slight increases in the number of LGBTI people who are unemployed or experiencing housing difficulties, accompanied by a sharp increase in violence towards the community. In Italy, the national LGBT helpline documented [400 cases](#) in 2022 where LGBT young people were kicked out of home, with only 10% being able to find emergency shelter. Research from Association Spektra in Montenegro showed that housing affordability is perceived by the community as the most pressing issue, with 82% of respondents stating that the most helpful form of support to them would be financial assistance from the state to reduce rental costs.

The severe impact of rising food costs on the LGBTI community has been documented by several organisations. LGBTI civil society organisations provide [food packages and basic supports](#), noting that the demand for these services continues to increase. The lack of specific policies and support from the state exacerbates these issues, leaving non-governmental organizations to provide essential services and advocacy.

9) Please provide information on what measures are being taken to ensure a coordinated approach to combat poverty as required by Article 30 of the Charter, and to diminish reliance on last-resort relief, such as food banks and soup kitchens.

The higher levels of poverty in the LGBTIQ community are regularly undetected by government mechanisms, leading to a lack of a coordinated response that addresses the needs of the most

vulnerable. Inadequate targeting of those most at risk of poverty was noted as a major obstacle to the success of existing anti-poverty measures, along with insufficient funding and high administrative barriers/implementation problems.

Where supports are available, high levels of discrimination faced by LGBTI people regularly make such supports inaccessible or overly burdensome. More than one in ten LGBTI people report experiencing discrimination when in contact with administrative offices or public services (FRA 2023 LGBTI survey). For trans women, almost 40% report facing discrimination from administrative and public services. A lack of awareness of the needs of the community in social and public services coupled with the higher levels of need in the community mean that without targeted supports for the LGBTI community, those most at risk of poverty are those not able to access aid. In some countries, state services are developing best practise guides for working with LGBTI people and implementing trainings for public sector workers, such as a [guide](#) for Catalan social workers and trainings run in Greece and [Czechia](#). However, most such trainings are sporadically implemented across social and public sectors, and are not mandatory.

In addition, the burden of rising costs has hit civil society organisations particularly hard. Our members have noted that rising operating costs have been compounded by increased difficulties in finding funding. This has led to staff redundancies, the constant need to prioritise seeking out new sources of funding and partnerships, and unsustainably high workloads.

10) Please provide information on steps taken to consult with, and ensure the participation of, the persons most affected by the cost of living crisis and/or organisations representing their interests in the process of designing of measures in response to the crisis.

Despite the higher rates of poverty among the LGBTI community, there is a lack of engagement with LGBTI civil society from governments. Members noted that governments frequently see LGBTI issues as completely separate to poverty and social support policies. There is a tendency for governments to overlook the significant role that NGOs play in providing essential services that should ideally be within the government's purview. This lack of collaboration can result in policies and interventions that do not fully address the nuanced needs and challenges faced by marginalized communities, including the LGBTI population. A lack of legal gender recognition and equal marriage prevent access to pension entitlements, medical treatment, emergency housing, social welfare benefits and other state supports. Even in countries where LGR is available, supports can have blind spots that unintentionally exclude trans people. For example, in Denmark during the Covid-19 pandemic some social security benefits were limited to those with at least nine years of residence, but trans people who met this threshold but had changed their legal gender were excluded as their social security numbers did not show their correct total years of residence.

There is an urgent need for the inclusion of LGBTI groups in order to ensure state anti-poverty measures are effective and reaching the most vulnerable.