



Banning the Rainbow – How Hungarian authorities banned the upcoming Pécs Pride and what the EU should do about it

Pécs Pride organiser faces threat of imprisonment - The annual LGBTQI Pride March in Pécs (Hungary) is scheduled to be held on 4 October 2025. Unlike the Budapest Pride, which was held in June as a municipality event, the Pécs Pride is organised by a private individual as an assembly. It had been banned by the police on 5 September and the Kúria (the Supreme Court of Hungary) upheld the ban. The ban on Pécs Pride is exposing the organiser to the threat of imprisonment, as holding a banned assembly constitutes a criminal offence under the Hungarian Criminal Code.

Pécs Pride participants face fines - As the Pride is expected to be a smaller event than Budapest Pride, the risk for participants to be exposed to exorbitant fines and facial recognition surveillance is much higher than it had been in Budapest.

The Hungarian Pride ban - [Since 15 April 2025](#), Hungarian authorities may ban assemblies that “depict” or “promote” homosexuality and gender diversity in any way, or – as [practice](#) has shown – any assembly for equal rights for LGBTQI people or with speakers belonging to sexual and gender minorities. Organisers of banned LGBTQI-related assemblies may now face criminal prosecution, with a penalty of up to one year in prison, while participants could be subjected to excessive fines. Authorities are now authorised to use facial recognition technology to identify participants.

The new legislation violates the fundamental rights of LGBTQI people and citizens who support them: it infringes equality and non-discrimination, the freedom of expression, the freedom of assembly and association, and violates the right to the protection of personal data. Hungarian police have applied the arbitrarily restrictive law multiple times in relation to assemblies with a diverse range of stated purposes, from protesting the ban on legal gender recognition through remembering LGBTQI victims of the Holocaust, to protesting against the restriction on freedom of assembly, to celebrating the rights enshrined in the Fundamental Law, the EU Charter and the European Convention on Human Rights. In previous bans, the police argued that the designation of a trans person or an openly gay person who was also the organiser of the assembly, as a speaker, is in itself sufficient to establish that prohibited content will be displayed. The discrimination is thus based on the gender identity or sexual orientation of the speaker or the organiser.

Despite Budapest Pride’s success, the Mayor is now facing criminal charges - On 28 June, Budapest Pride ended up as a historic march of hundreds of thousands of people who stood up for equality and protested against the government's measures to restrict human rights, freedom of assembly in particular. The march was a municipal event organised by the municipality of Budapest; therefore, under the previously accepted interpretation of the relevant laws, it did not fall under the police’s power to acknowledge or ban it. Nonetheless, the police considered it as a banned assembly under the assembly law. After having been questioned as a suspect by the police in the investigation about Budapest Pride on 1 August, the Mayor of Budapest, Gergely Karácsony is now facing charges that could eventually lead to incarceration. The investigation is ongoing.

How Pécs Pride will be different from Budapest Pride - The Pécs Pride, which is the only Pride taking place outside of the capital, was banned on 5 September. The legal context here is distinct from that of Budapest Pride. The notification of the Pécs march was submitted to the police by a private

individual who is the director of the Pécs-based Diverse Youth Network (the organising group of previous Pécs Prides and the preceding *Freedom of My Identity* Human Rights Festival). Neither the Municipality of Pécs, nor any public body is involved in the organisation of the event, which makes the organiser and participants more vulnerable to the arbitrary restriction of rights and possible legal consequences.

The scope of this year's Pécs Pride is also different from that of Budapest Pride. According to the notification sent to the Police, its purpose is (1) to stand up for the legal equality of sexual and gender minorities, (2) to protest against the arbitrary restriction of freedom of assembly, (3) to remember the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people murdered during the Holocaust, and (4) to speak out against the application of the 15th Amendment to the Fundamental law, that allows for discriminative restrictions of the right of Roma people to settle.

In its decision of 5 September the police [banned](#) the assembly. The legal basis of the decision is Section 13/A of the Assembly Act read together with Article XVI (1) of the Fundamental Law. On 14 September, the Kúria [rejected](#) the appeal of the organiser. According to the Kúria, the police had reasonably concluded that the notification was aimed to hold an assembly prohibited under the law on the right of assembly. The Kúria also stated that an assembly can have at most one purpose. If any element of a complex purpose falls under the ban, the entire assembly has to be banned. The Kúria also firmly dismissed the request to turn to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU) with a request for preliminary ruling arguing that the matter does not fall under the scope of EU law, and even if it did, the three-day deadline established for judicial review in assembly cases does not allow for initiating either a preliminary ruling procedure at the CJEU, or a concrete review of compliance with the Fundamental Law before the Hungarian Constitutional Court.

[What does the ban mean for organizers and participants?](#) - The organiser is determined to hold the event as assembly and has started to publicise Pécs Pride. Far-right political activists have announced that the police have acknowledged five anti-LGBTQI gatherings for the date of the Pécs Pride. The organiser faces the threat of criminal sanction, including up to one-year imprisonment. Participants face the threat of fines up to EUR 500 and the use of facial recognition technology to identify them for investigation in petty offence procedures.

[What should the European Union do?](#)

We call on the European Commission to take immediate action to ensure that Hungary respects the fundamental rights of LGBTQI persons. The ban on Pécs Pride constitutes an arbitrary restriction of rights, violates the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, and undermines freedom of assembly and expression. The discriminatory amendment to the Assembly Act is based on the "Child Protection Law", which is currently the subject of an ongoing infringement procedure before the CJEU ([C-769/22](#)). Both the Commission and the Attorney General in her opinion of 5 June 2025 found that the basis of the amendment to the Assembly Act is in breach of EU law and violates the values on which the EU is founded.

We urge the Commission to

- use all available enforcement mechanisms to lift the ban and protect both organisers and participants;
- do everything in their power to stop the law from being enforced in Pécs on 4 October 2025; and
- pronounce itself on the entirety of the amendments related to the restriction of fundamental rights introduced earlier this spring. Moreover, it should move to open an accelerated infringement procedure against Hungary's abuse of facial recognition technology.

We call on the European Commission, the European Parliament and EU Member states to publicly condemn the ban on Pécs Pride and the ongoing violation of the fundamental right to assembly by the Hungarian government, and show its support for the organisers and the LGBTQI community in Hungary who are claiming their fundamental rights.

We call on EU Member States and (Members of) the European Parliament to take action against the ban through public and diplomatic efforts towards relevant authorities in Hungary and by announcing participation in the Pécs Pride.