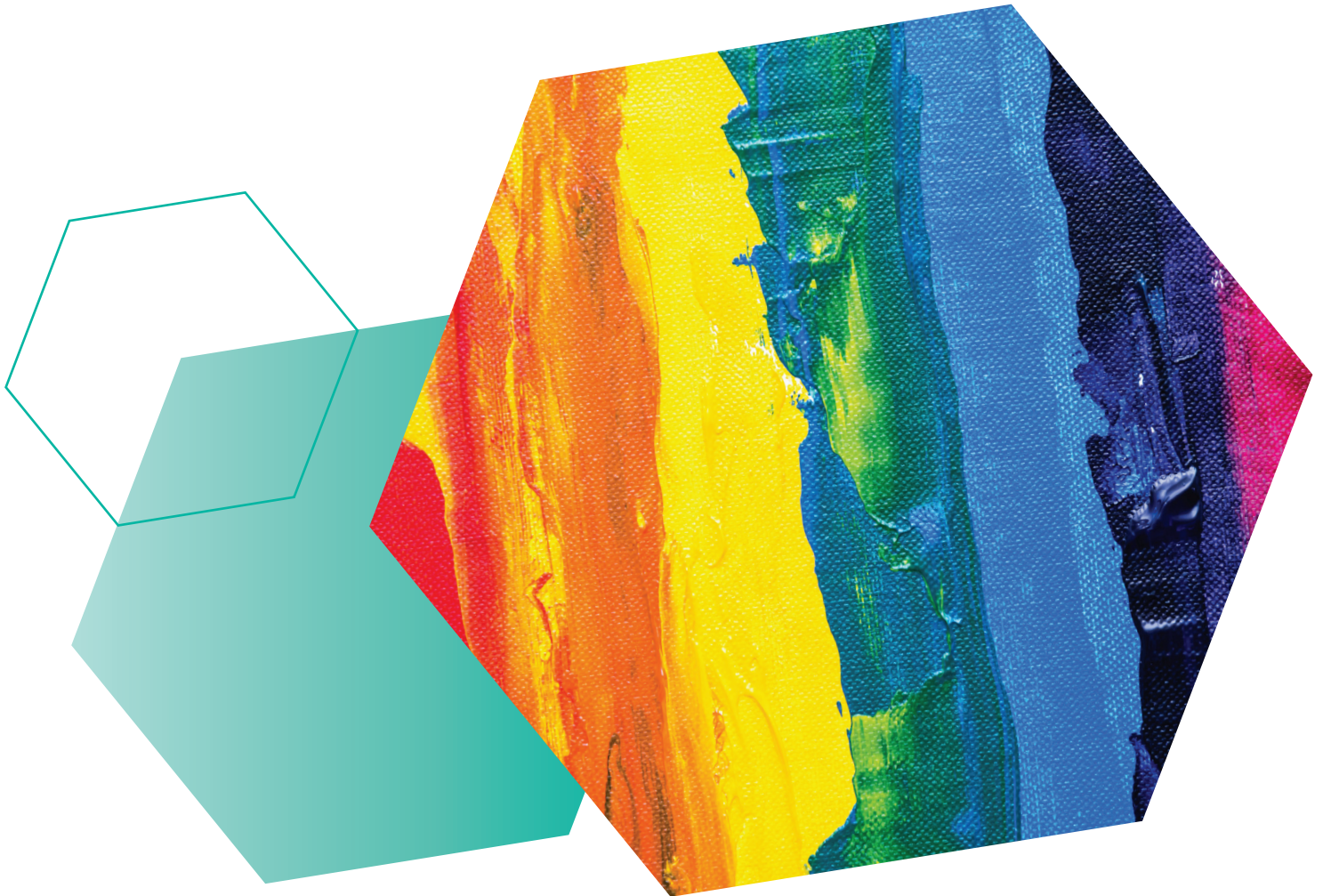




GLOBAL
EUROPE



Attitudes Towards LGBTIQ Rights in The EU

By Ross Fitzpatrick | January 2021

Overview of LGBTIQ rights protection at Member State level

Quantifying the situation concerning LGBTIQ rights protection at EU Member State level is by no means a straightforward task. Indeed, the existence of the appropriate LGBTIQ legal frameworks and policy initiatives at both EU and Member State level does not always translate into favourable societal attitudes.

Moreover, the rate at which the position of certain Member States on LGBTIQ rights develops over time should be considered in any attempt to evaluate best practice, especially in light of how internal political dynamics can contribute to a sudden shift in the dominant narrative on such issues in a relatively short amount of time.

Nonetheless, the information presented below attempts to provide a broad overview of the attitudes towards LGBTIQ rights across the across the 27 EU Member States and the UK by looking at the situation under three broad headings:

1. Public Perception
2. Government Action
3. Legislation

The percentage of citizens who agreed or disagreed with the statement that gay, lesbian or bisexual people should have the same rights as heterosexual people provides an insight into the public perception of LGBTIQ equality across EU Member States (see figure 1).

In addition, the extent to which Member States have adopted progressive legislation and implemented policy initiatives on LGBTIQ rights can be evaluated by looking at how EU Member States compare across a number a key areas (see figures 2-7).

The data used in the figures below are supplied by the Final Report from the European Commission on the [list of actions to advance LGBTI equality](#) and a [Special Eurobarometer](#) on discrimination from 2019.

While the information presented illustrates that most EU Member States are implementing policies to advance LGBTIQ equality, a number of Member States have either failed to adopt progressive LGBTIQ legislation or take adequate action to implement policy to advance LGBTIQ rights.

An analysis of the data, however, illustrates that the public perception of LGBTIQ people across many Member States has not yet caught up with the existence of robust LGBTIQ legislative and policy initiatives and would suggest that a more holistic approach is necessary in order to eradicate discrimination and fundamentally alter societal attitudes towards LGBTIQ people.

Public Perception of LGBTIQ people in the EU

A [Special Eurobarometer on “Discrimination in the EU”](#) from September 2019 details the social acceptance of LGBTIQ people and perceptions based on sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics. Moreover, the response of citizens across Member States to a wide range of questions on

the social acceptance of LGBTIQ people indicates a significant divergence in perception based on an East-West divide.

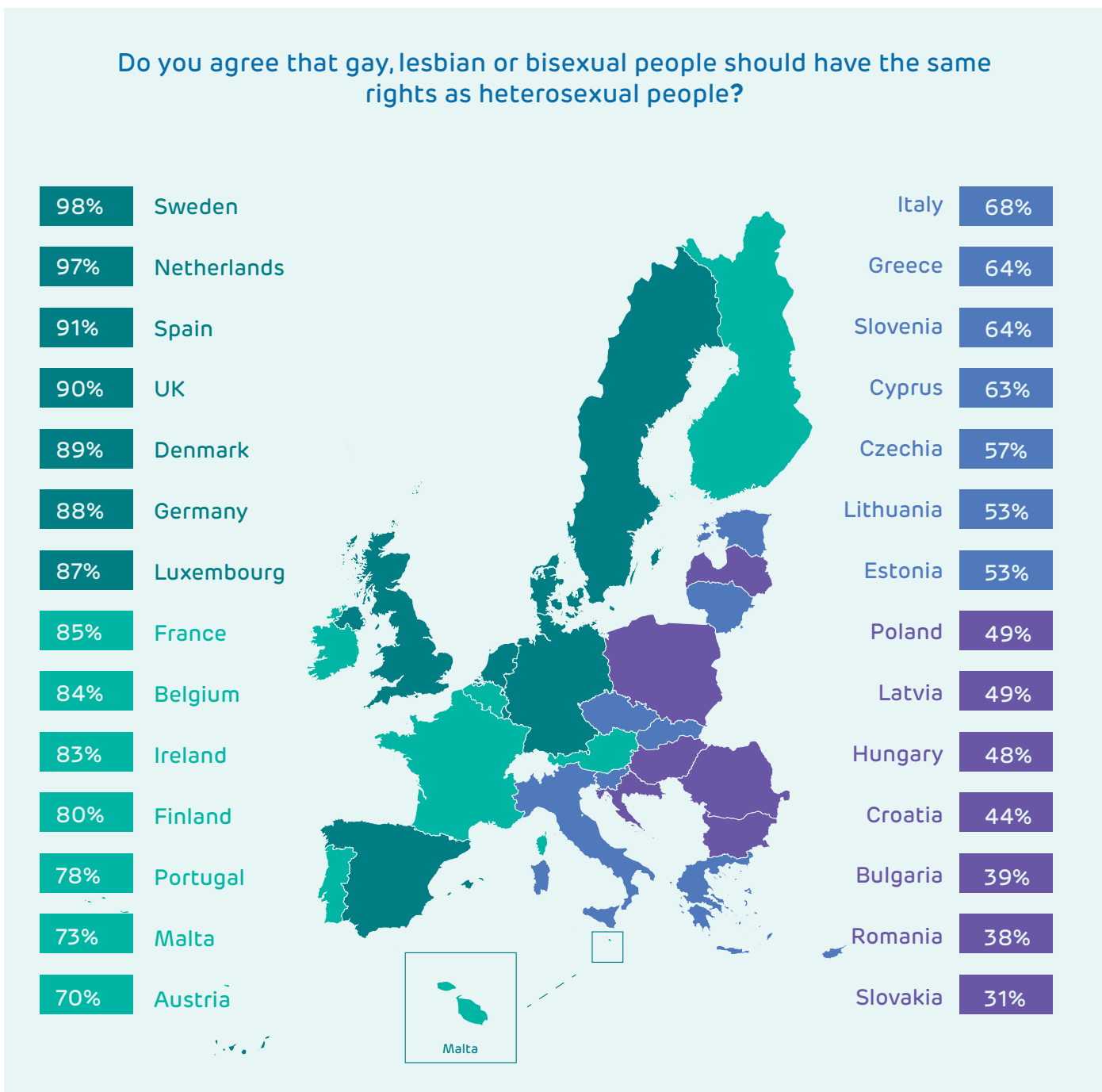


Figure 1

For instance, when asked to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement ‘Gay, lesbian and bisexual people should have the same rights as heterosexual people’, upwards of 80% of people from Finland, Ireland, Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Germany, Denmark, Spain, Netherlands and Sweden agreed, while less than 50% of people from Poland, Latvia, Hungary, Croatia, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia agreed.

According to the Eurobarometer, the support in the EU for LGBTIQ equality increased from on average 71% of EU citizens in 2015 to 76% in 2019. Despite this increase of 5% of EU citizens who support LGBTIQ equality, there is still a wide divergence at Member State level where support ranges from 31% of citizens in Slovakia to 98% in Sweden.

This suggests that that 1 in 4 citizens in the EU still do not fully support equality regardless of a person's sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics, and that [in some Member States, even 2 out of 3 citizens do not fully support equality](#).

Government Action and Legislation

Assessing the extent to which Member States have adopted progressive legislation and implemented policy initiatives illustrates the relationship between effective policy and robust legal frameworks with favourable attitudes towards LGBTIQ people (see figures 2-7).

First, whether or not Member States have introduced an LGBTIQ equality action plan, engaged with civil society organisations (CSO) at the political level, or provided financial support to civil society organisations (see figures 2-4), demonstrates that countries with more favourable views towards LGBTIQ people are more often than not those which have implemented pro-LGBTIQ policy initiatives.

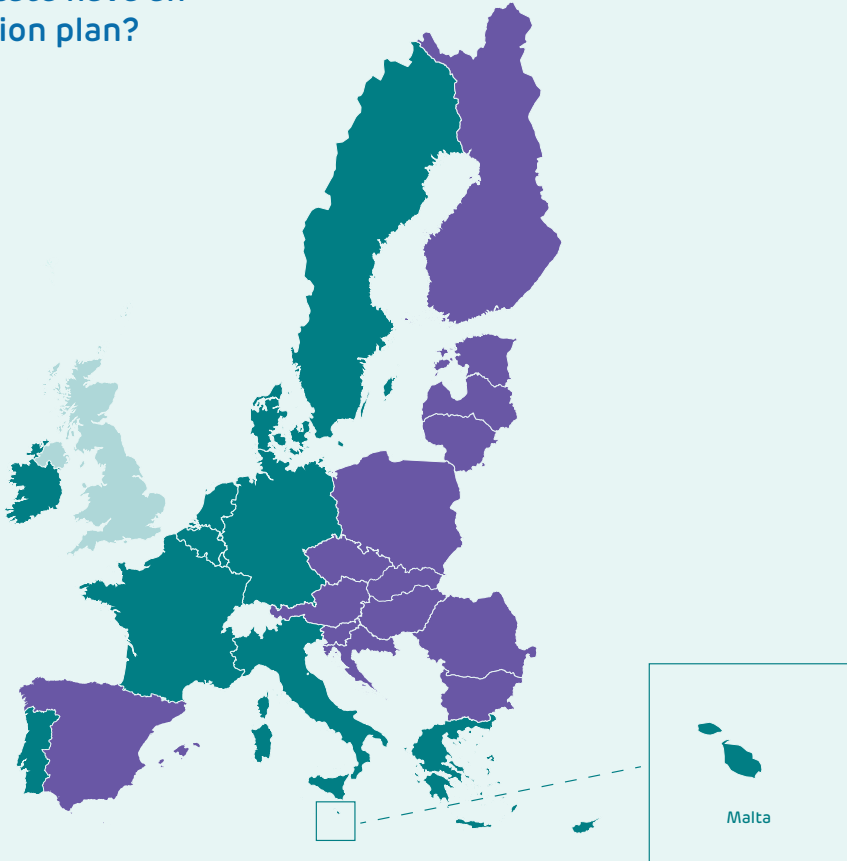
Second, the evidence suggests a strong link between the existence of LGBTIQ specific legislation and societal attitudes (see figures 5-7). For example, in Member States where LGBTIQ legislation is in place and where same-sex marriage is legal, the data overwhelmingly shows a higher acceptance of LGBTIQ people, illustrating how legislation is a powerful influence in shaping social attitudes.

Does the Member State have an LGBTIQ equality action plan?

- YES
- NO

Figure 2

2019

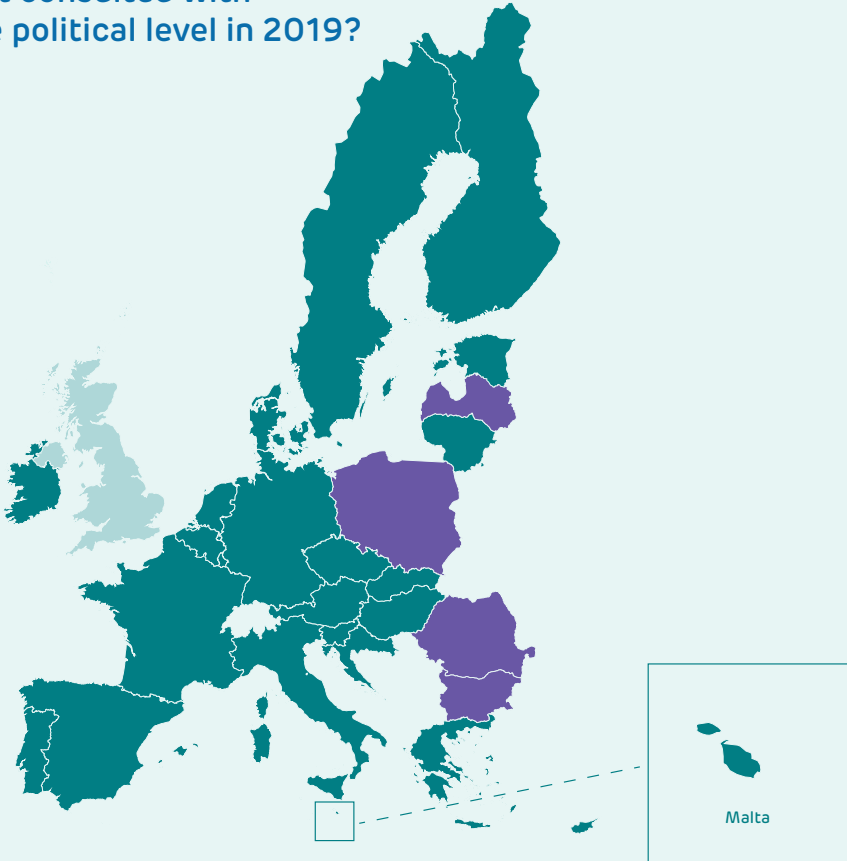


Has the government consulted with LGBTIQ CSOs at the political level in 2019?

- YES
- NO

Figure 3

2019

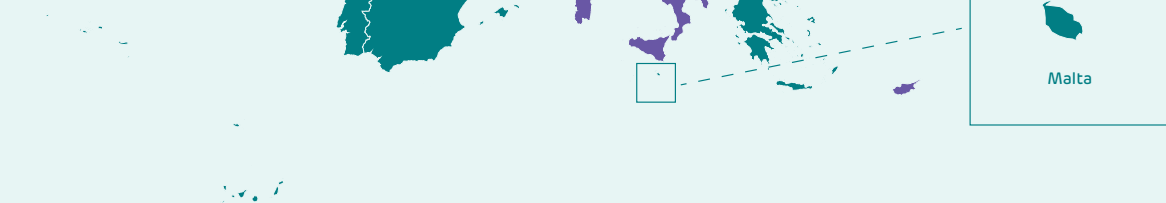


Is sexual orientation covered beyond the area of employment in equality legislation?

YES

NO

Figure 6

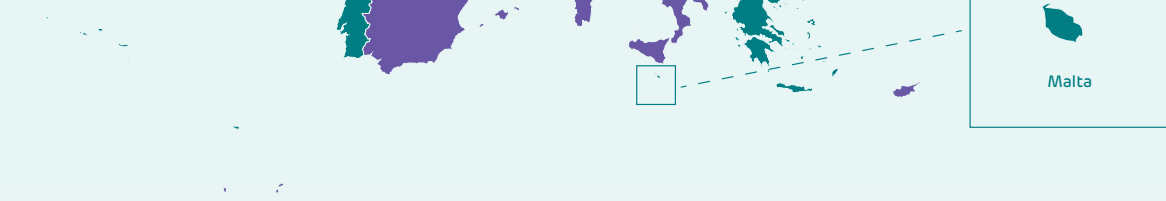


Are sex characteristics covered in equality legislation?

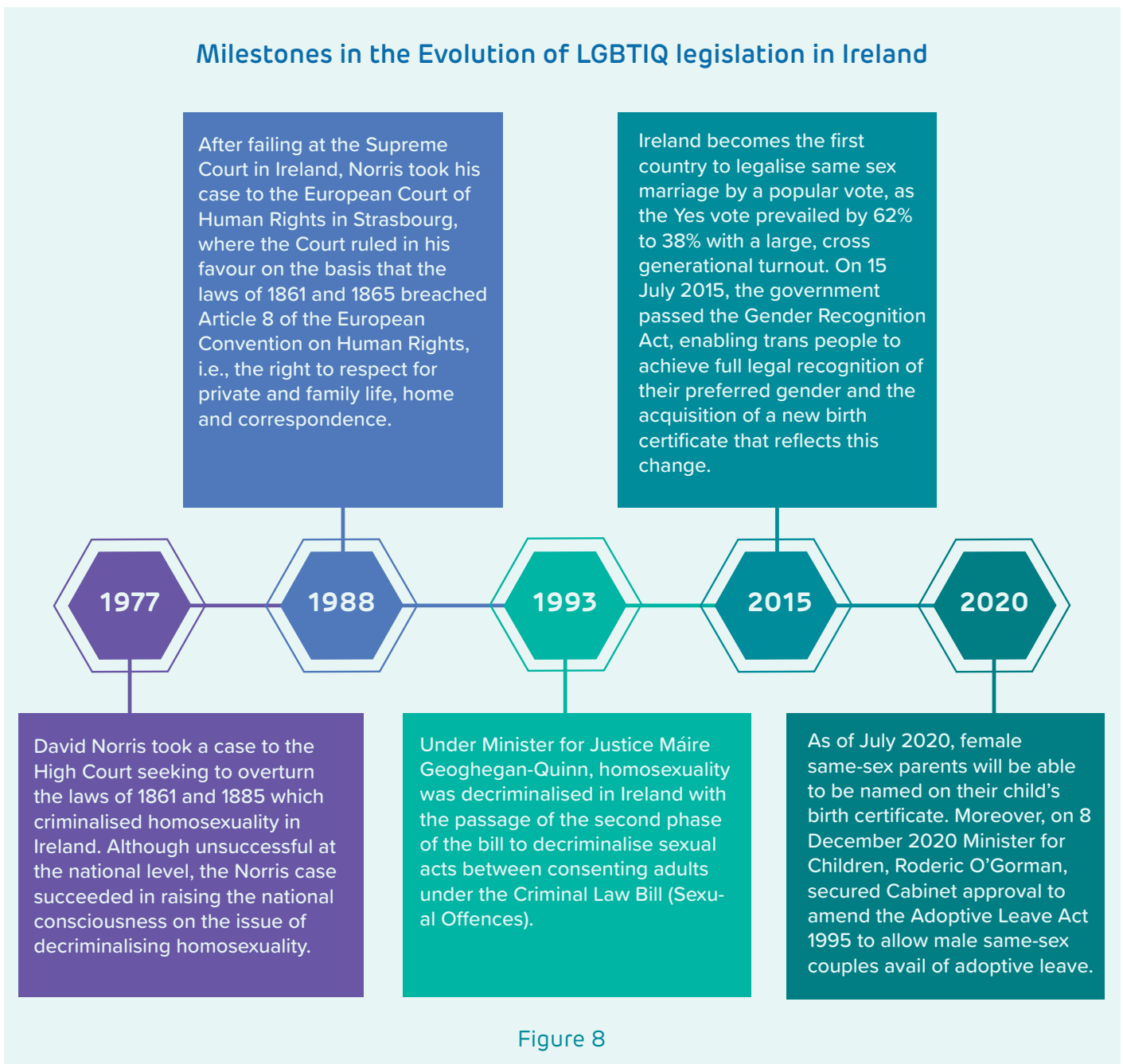
YES

NO

Figure 7



Ireland's journey from a predominantly conservative catholic country to one of the most socially liberal countries in the EU has been accompanied by an evolution in the legal protections afforded to LGBTIQ people. The huge strides which have been made on a legislative level in the advancement of LGBTIQ rights in Ireland are illustrated in the following timeline.



According to the OECD, Ireland is one of 17 countries in the OECD that have the most legal protections for sexual and gender minorities, reaffirming the evolution of a robust legal framework for the protection of LGBTIQ people in Ireland.

Moreover, Ireland performs better than the OECD average concerning laws protecting LGBTIQ individuals against discrimination. Furthermore, discrimination explicitly based on sexual orientation and

gender identity is outlawed in a broad range of fields, including employment, education, the provision of and access to goods and services and housing.

In terms of further improving legal protections for LGBTIQ people, the OECD has recommended that Ireland should continue to remain active in three key complementary policy areas:

- 1.) Enforcing LGBTIQ-inclusive anti-discrimination, hate crime/hate speech and asylum laws, e.g. through training police officers on properly dealing with hate crimes targeting LGBTIQ people.
- 2.) Fostering a culture of equal treatment in education, employment and healthcare, beyond enforcing laws prohibiting discrimination in these fields, e.g., through a whole-school approach to tackle LGBTIQ-phobic bullying.
- 3.) Creating and maintaining popular support for LGBTIQ inclusion, e.g., through well-designed awareness-raising activities among the public.

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