



E-newsletter:
LGBTQ+ in the Belarusian media in 2023

Journalists for Tolerance

2023

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Monitoring of Hate Speech against LGBTQ+ in the Belarusian Media: 01-10.2023 (brief)

‘Journalists for Tolerance’ (further – J4t) regularly monitor hate speech against vulnerable groups in the Belarusian media, including annual monitoring of rhetoric in relation to LGBTQ+. In 2023, the J4t research team observed rhetorical fallacies and hate speech against LGBTQ+ for ten months, from the beginning of January till the end of October. The situation with representation of LGBTQ+ in the media space remained to be complicated after its dramatic deterioration in 2022:

- In 2023, 51% of monitored publications in the Belarusian mass media on LGBTQ+ issues contained correct vocabulary and 49% of such publications contained incorrect vocabulary. However, the situation seems to be very unstable.
- Incorrect vocabulary became less common in the Belarusian nation-wide media in comparison with local media in 2023. It was significant progress compared to 2022. At the same time, the LGBTQ+ issue practically disappeared in local media, and if covered there, the group was represented in the context of inciting hatred only.
- Just like in 2022, almost every second publication on the LGBTQ+ issue in the Belarusian media contained manifestations of hate speech in 2023. However, the trend of exponential growth of hate speech that characterized 2020-2022 was suspended.
- In 2023, again, just like in 2022, the J4t research team observed a situation where correct vocabulary was used to incite hatred in relation to LGBTQ+. As for incorrect vocabulary, in most cases it was accompanied by manifestations of hate speech.

More details: <https://gpress.info/2023/12/31/monitoring-of-hate-speech/>

Coverage of LGBTQ+ issues in the Belarusian media.

Analytical notes for 01-03.2023

The first quarter of 2023 was not marked by significant attacks from pro-government media on the LGBTQ+ community.

There were usual "nods" towards the so-called collective West, which wants to destroy the "traditional values" of Belarusians. The publication "Soviet Belorussia" noted that "in the Belarusian society, the problem of the LGBT community does not exist as such."

The format of covering the LGBTQ+ agenda on the national television website is noteworthy. For the 1st quarter of 2023, there were two news items on the subject under consideration only and both in a neutral style: "[Ukraine proposes to legalise same-sex marriages between the military](#)" and "[LGBT soldiers of Ukraine's armed forces proved they 'love Ukraine'.](#)"

A quote from the latter news item generally sets records for freedom of speech in the Belarusian pro-government media: "... the traditional values promoted by the Russian president served as an incentive for Ukrainian gay people to enrol in Ukraine's armed forces and become patriots. Because of this, other Ukrainians have become more positive about gays and transgender people."

A. Lukashenka's statements during the so-called address to the people and parliament could also be regarded as an unspoken command "not to touch" the loyal members of LGBTQ+ community for a while. After the usual homophobic rhetoric, he said:

"I instructed, report to me, give a description of what kind of people they are, how they work... God grant that non-gays work like them. There was not a single negative characteristic. None, I checked in different directions.

... Well, let's forbid these guys from tumbling with other men, well, what would it lead to? To nothing. Moreover, they do not create problems for us, they work well."

More details: <https://gpress.info/2023/05/30/digest-coverage-of-lgbtq-issues-in-the-belarusian-mass-media-january-march-2023/>

Coverage of LGBTQ+ issues in the Belarusian Media.

Analytical notes for 04-06.2023

The second quarter of 2023 was marked by info noise around the idea of banning "LGBT propaganda" in Belarus at the example of the Russian Federation.

However, along with the statements of pro-government activists and propagandists, some MPs delivered quite unambiguous statements on the subject matter: '[MPs believe that it works more effectively in Belarus so far even without the law](#)'.

Iryna Kastsevich, the Minister of Labor and Social Protection expressed herself in the same way: "I see no reason to consider childfree and LGBT as a trend in Belarusian society."

In mid-April 2023, discussing new amendments to the law 'On Mass Media', the Belarusian MPs proposed to supplement it with a ban on "LGBTQ+ propaganda". In response to this proposal, the head of the Ministry of Information noted that the department had already taken 'sufficient measures to limit the distribution of such production in the country.' And he added that, in his opinion, it was necessary to 'take a comprehensive approach to the development of such a draft law, and the key role should be played by the legislators, getting together various governmental agencies: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health Care, the Ministry of Information, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, so that it would be a comprehensive and extensive legal act'.

In addition, the Minister of Information said that the governmental agency had sent 500 warnings to all publishers and bookstores, stating that if such literature is found on sale, 'certain measures of administrative influence will be applied.'

On June 19, 2023, it became known that the security forces [proposed](#) to introduce '*administrative responsibility for the promotion of non-traditional sexual relations, gender reassignment, pedophilia, and child-freedom ideas.*' The representatives of the Prosecutor General's Office presented all these initiatives along with innovations in protecting children from sexual violence and exploitation. According to the Prosecutor General's Press Service, the idea was supported by Aliaksandr Lukashenka.

The appearance of a number of materials that are critical of the replicas of pro-government speakers in the independent broadcast media looked positive. Independent mass media analyzed such statements and competently disavowed them: '*An MP Has Stated that People Don't Watch Films on LGBT-thematic. They Do Watch Them [Though](#).*'

The appearance of the '[Gender Gap](#)' program on Euroradio became a counterweight to the pro-government propaganda. PhD Iryna Sidorskaya [analyzed](#) live the gender agenda and provided scientifically based arguments that broke the state propaganda.

More details: <https://gpress.info/2023/08/21/digest-coverage-of-lgbtq-issues-in-the-belarusian-mass-media-april-june-2023/>

Coverage of LGBTQ+ issues in the Belarusian media.

Analytical notes for 07-09.2023

The third quarter of 2023 was marked by a significant increase in the mentioning of LGBTQ+ topics in pro-government and independent media.

One of the main reasons was the initiation by the General Prosecutor's Office of Belarus of the draft law "On administrative responsibility for the promotion of non-traditional sexual relations, gender correction, pedophilia and child-free ideas".

The legislative initiative became the basis for another round of hate speech by propagandists and pro-government activists. As experts noted, the absence of such a law did not prevent the homophobic rhetoric of the regime and its officials.

In this regard, it is important to consider this narrative, its causes and possible predictions. Iryna Sidorskaya, PhD and expert in the field of Communications [dwelt upon the issue.](#)

A significant part of materials in the pro-government media were devoted to the situation with the LGBTQ+ community outside Belarus, mainly in Europe and the USA. Several articles were also dedicated to the upcoming elections in Poland from the point of view that this country was governed by the so-called "collective West".

The main message of such publications was not new: "Look how bad it is there, and Belarus is a haven of stability, and traditional values are preserved here."

Here is a typical quote: "We know that Europe knows how to play the long game and always makes far-sighted plans. And while they create a new controlled crowd, we, Belarusians, will create a strong institution of [traditional family](#), so that our children do not fall on the hook of European debauchery and LGBT propaganda."

Apparently, with the deterioration of the economic situation in Belarus, homophobic rhetoric from the regime will increase, since, quoting Iryna Sidorskaya, "Lukashenko needs to earn political capital first of all. First, to find enemies. He cannot accept the point of view that what he built does not work. That people live poorly, they do not see prospects. It is better to show that some enemies are to blame. Here is the collective West, plus there is also a "fifth column" inside Belarus. And that apart from the "fighters", this "fifth column" also, allegedly, includes the people of, as he names it, "non-traditional sexual orientation".

... A dictator can never effectively lead a complex system. The dictator tries to simplify the world, not to see all its shades, not to see different social groups, but to divide it into black and white. This is the picture of reality that, as it seems to me, Lukashenka possesses.

More details: <https://gpress.info/2023/10/20/digest-coverage-of-lgbtq-issues-in-the-belarusian-mass-media-the-third-quarter-of-2023/>

Coverage of LGBTQ+ issues in the Belarusian media. Analytical notes for 10-12.2023

The last quarter of 2023 looked relatively calm in terms of mentioning LGBTQ+ topics by pro-government media.

Propaganda paid considerable attention to the decision of the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation to recognize the LGBT movement as extremist and to ban its activities in the country.

It is noteworthy that “*Journalists for Tolerance*” couldn’t find any mentioning of the Belarusian “anti-LGBT” law in the pro-government media, which had been abundant in the 3rd quarter 2023.

The narrative of comparing life in Belarus and “in the West” with its freedoms for LGBTQ+ people became traditional for propagandists, which, of course, was presented in an exclusively negative way.

The publication by pro-governmental Sputnik by [“Due to LGBT propaganda a family left for Belarus after 20 years of living in Ireland”](#) was quite specific. It named the only reason for the Irish family to leave their country, which was “the situation that is currently developing throughout the entire European Union and in Ireland in particular.” Here is a quote from the heroine of the material, the mother of the family: “My heart hurts for what is happening now in schools and not only in schools. This is everywhere in everyday life, it is on the streets, in stores, on television, this is LGBT propaganda, which is becoming more and more aggressive and begins to attack and get into the heads of our children more aggressively.”

As for independent media, topic No.1 was the **coming out** of the Belarusian basketball player Katsiaryna Snytsina on the air of Mikalai Khalezin’s cooking show. This was a unique case for the Belarusian sport in particular and Belarus in general. Previously, none of such famous people spoke openly about their homosexuality.

As a result, a number of independent media published news materials about the coming out, and also interviewed Katsiaryna.

More details: <https://qpress.info/2023/12/30/digest-lgbtq-coverage-in-the-belarusian-mass-media-10-12-2023/>