

To:

Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Roxana Mînzatu
Executive Vice-President for Social Rights and Skills, Quality Jobs and Preparedness

Henna Virkkunen
Executive Vice-President for Technological Sovereignty, Security and Democracy

Raffaele Fitto
Executive Vice-President for Cohesion and Reforms

Michael McGrath
European Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection

Hadja Lahbib
European Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management

Subject: **Urgent call for European Commission action concerning the systematic ban of Oradea Pride March in Oradea, Romania**

Dear President, dear Executive Vice-Presidents, dear Commissioners,

We are writing to urge the European Commission to intervene in response to the **second and consecutive ban of the Oradea Pride March** as part of the **persistent and systematic obstruction of the freedom of peaceful assembly** faced by the LGBTQIA+ community in Oradea, Romania.

Today, the Municipality of Oradea has banned the Oradea Pride March for the second consecutive year, despite the notification for this year's March being submitted within the legal deadline and the local organiser proposing more than 100 route options.

While in previous years, the grounds invoked by the municipality were administrative and procedural, citing overlapping construction works and events, this year's decision goes a step further. **For the first time, the Oradea Town Hall explicitly cites "violation of norms of social conduct and morality"** as grounds tied to the march itself.

The Town Hall's decision is not an isolated incident. It is part of a persistent and serious threat to civic space and democratic freedoms, which has been unfolding since 2023, and which is now explicitly a judgment on the community's right to be visible at all.

When Oradea Municipality prevents a community from assembling peacefully for four years, it undermines a fundamental right on which the freedom of every citizen depends.

In 2025, all routes proposed by the organisers were rejected. The Pride March nevertheless took place as an act of civil disobedience, but organisers and several participants faced

substantial administrative fines. The cumulative effect of route refusal, procedural delays, last-minute uncertainty and sanctions is to deter participation and effectively erase the LGBTQIA+ community from public space.

The authorities' positive obligation is not merely to tolerate peaceful assemblies, but to take reasonable and appropriate measures to enable them to take place safely. The repeated rejection of routes without any intention to identify a suitable alternative cannot be considered neutral or just a public-order management. When applied consistently to a demonstration such as a Pride March, it functions as a restriction aiming to block any visibility of the LGBTQIA+ community in the life of the city. Oradea readily benefits from substantial EU funding, while making no comparable effort to uphold the European values that underpin such support: equality, inclusion, human dignity, and respect for fundamental rights.

Across Europe, restrictions on Pride marches have become an alarming sign of democratic backsliding and the erosion of the rule of law. This is particularly alarming in Romania in the aftermath of the 2024 elections, when the country's democratic institutions and critical human rights institutions came under intensified pressure and attacks against the LGBTQIA+ community moved into mainstream political discourse. Romania must not continue down this highly problematic path. Oradea risks becoming in 2026 the only city in the European Union where local authorities obstruct a Pride March, further undermining Romania's credibility as an EU Member State.

The situation raises substantial concerns under Articles 10, 11 and 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 39 of the Romanian Constitution, and the principles reflected in Articles 12, 21 and 23 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. At its core, this is a direct test of the values enshrined in Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union: human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights.

This case is particularly concerning in the light of the European Commission's own assessment of civic space in Romania. The 2026 Rule of Law Report indicates that civil society organisations are currently facing increasing restrictions on their work. The systematic obstruction of Oradea Pride, now openly mentioning moral grounds, is a pattern of institutional exclusion and a concrete manifestation of the wider assault on civic space, fundamental rights, and democracy in Romania. Treating it as a local incident risks normalizing the erasure of the LGBTQIA+ community from public life and the erosion of European values.

We therefore respectfully call on the European Commission to:

1. Publicly call on the Romanian Government, Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Municipality of Oradea to take all necessary steps to enable the 2026 Oradea Pride March to proceed on 25 July along a safe, central and visible route, in accordance with applicable national and European human-rights standards;
2. Publicly affirm that organisers and participants in peaceful assemblies must be able to exercise their rights without intimidation or disproportionate administrative or

criminal sanctions, and call on the competent Romanian authorities to ensure their protection;

3. Urgently seek information from the Romanian Government about the repeated obstruction of Oradea Pride, the legal grounds relied upon by the Municipality and the measures being taken to safeguard freedom of peaceful assembly and prevent discrimination; and engage, as appropriate, with Romania's Ombudsperson, National Council for Combating Discrimination and relevant civil society organisations;

4. Assess whether the decisions and practices at issue fall within the scope of EU law or indicate wider concerns requiring follow-up through the Commission's rule-of-law, fundamental-rights and equality-monitoring mechanisms, including in the follow-up to the 2026 Rule of Law Report;

5. Examine whether EU-funded programmes or investments implemented by the relevant Romanian authorities comply with the applicable fundamental-rights requirements, including the Charter-related enabling conditions governing relevant EU funds, and take appropriate action where the legal conditions for doing so are met.

As President von der Leyen stated in the context of Budapest Pride in 2025, marching for one's rights is a fundamental freedom in Europe. The LGBTIQIA+ community in Oradea deserves the same clear and unequivocal protection and support. **We urge the European Commission to act before 25 July using the political, monitoring and legal instruments available within its competences, and to stand publicly with the organisers, participants and local community in defence of freedom of peaceful assembly, equality and democratic civic space.**

Yours sincerely,



ARK ORADEA
Association



ACCEPT
Association



ECPI – Euroregional Center
for Public Initiatives



ILGA-Europe



IGLYO



Forbidden Colours



ACT – Against
Conversion
Therapy