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Latvian Foreign Minister Reveals He Is Gay, Prompting Mixed Reactions in Russia

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Latvia's Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics pictured Nov. 25, 2011.

Latvia's Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics has come out as gay, advancing LGBT rights in former Soviet republics but prompting a few indignant remarks in Russia where "gay propaganda" is forbidden by law.

In a Twitter post in English late Thursday, Rinkevics said: "I proudly announce I'am gay ... Good luck all of you ..." In a preceding message in Latvian, he said that his announcement was likely to cause "mega-hysteria" but that he was proud to be gay.

Rinkevics has confirmed the authenticity of the post, Latvia's TVNET reported.

Russia's pro-Kremlin tabloid Moskovsky Komsomolets derided his announcement, saying in a headline that the foreign minister has "decided to exhibit his sex life for everyone to see,"

and some Internet users responded with derogatory comments on social networks.

Moskovsky Komsomolets also said that the announcement was made "without cause or reason."

The tabloid did not specify what it would consider a valid cause. Rinkevics said via Twitter that he would fight for the recognition of "all types of partner relations."

But he appeared to offer no explanation for the timing of his announcement, which came a day after Latvia's new parliament, elected last month, confirmed the composition of the Cabinet, including Rinkevich's job.

The announcement also comes amid substantial tensions between Russia and the West over Moscow's policies in Ukraine.

Latvia and its Baltic neighbors — Estonia and Lithuania – that were for decades under Soviet rule see Moscow's annexation of Crimea and its meddling in east Ukraine as a threat to their security and have been sharp critics of Russia's policies.

Estonia recognized gay marriage last month, becoming the first former Soviet republic to do so.

In Russia, a former Soviet law that made homosexual relations punishable by a prison term was abolished following the collapse of the U.S.S.R., but a new law adopted last year bans gay "propaganda" where it can be seen by minors.

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