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Ukraine Edges Toward EU With Anti-Discrimination Labor Law

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Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, homosexuality in Ukraine has been legal, but anti-gay prejudice is rife in the predominantly Orthodox society neighboring Russia.

A new law banning the discrimination of LGBT and disabled people in the workplace came into force on Thursday in Ukraine, in a controversial move that brings Kiev closer to Europe amid continuing tension with neighboring Russia.

The bill, a copy of which was published Wednesday on the Ukrainian upper parliament's Golos website, prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or disability in the workforce, and was passed by the Ukrainian parliament earlier this month on its sixth attempt.

The protection clause is part of a package of judiciary and human rights measures demanded by the European Union in order to make Ukraine eligible for a visa-free travel deal with the 28-member bloc. The easing of travel restrictions between the EU and Ukraine is expected to go into force next year as part of an association agreement with the bloc strongly opposed by Moscow.

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Parliament Chairman Volodymyr Groysman said ahead of the vote on the amendment that it did not signify Ukraine would be legalizing same-sex marriage, the Interfax news agency reported earlier.

“I've heard some fake [reports] that there could be same-sex marriages in Ukraine. God forbid this should happen. And we'll never support this,” he was cited as saying.

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