

New Law Gives Legal Recognition to Transgenders

Transgender people in Ireland have won legal recognition of their status through the passage of a law allowing them to change their legal gender with no medical or state intervention.

The majority of countries in Europe require transgender people to undergo surgery and sterilization, be diagnosed with a mental disorder and get divorced if married in order to have their desired gender legally recognized.

The Gender Recognition Bill, passed late on Wednesday and set to be signed into law by the end of July, makes Ireland only the third European nation, after Denmark and Malta, to allow transgender people aged over 18 to change their legal gender without intervention.

The bill was passed just months after the people of Ireland backed same-sex marriage by a landslide in a referendum that marked a dramatic social shift in a traditionally Catholic country that only decriminalized homosexuality two decades ago.

Until now, transgender people in Ireland had no legal avenue by which to change legal gender.

Denmark last year became the first European country to allow transgender people to self-determine their legal gender, from the age of 18. Malta's law, introduced in April, allows parents or legal guardians of a person under the age of 18 to apply in court on their behalf to change legal gender.

Campaigners welcomed the Irish law but expressed concern at the restrictions for transgender people aged between 16 and 18, who will require medical observation, parental consent and

a court order, and the lack of legal provision for those under 16.

Amnesty International estimates up to 1.5 million people across Europe are transgender, a term that describes those who identify as a different gender from the one they were born with.

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