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Media Regulation and LGBTQ Representation: Analyzing the Impact of Hungary’s “Pedophile Law” in the EU Context

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Abstract: This paper examines the Hungarian legislation, colloquially referred to as the “pedophile law,” and its implications for media regulation and LGBTQ rights. The law, which restricts the promotion of homosexuality and gender reassignment to minors, has sparked considerable controversy and prompted an infringement procedure by the European Commission. Through a critical analysis of this legislation and its enforcement mechanisms, this study discusses the tension between national sovereignty in media regulation and EU principles of human rights and non-discrimination. It also explores how the ambiguity of certain EU legal frameworks can be exploited by member states to justify and enact discriminatory measures under the pretext of child protection, with broader implications for democratic governance in Central and Eastern Europe.

Keywords: Hungary, “pedophile law”, AVMSD, child protection, anti-LGBTQ, EU, infringement procedure

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Following an amendment to the Hungarian Fundamental Law in December 2020, the constitution incorporated the principle that “Family ties shall be based on marriage or the relationship between parents and children. The mother shall be a woman, and the father shall be a man” (Hungarian Fundamental Law, 2011, Foundations, art. L). József Szájer, the politician who authored the Hungarian constitution including this amendment, became internationally known after he was reported to have participated in a “gay orgy” in Brussels and was arrested shortly for it not long before the amendment was adopted (Walker, 2020). In the summer of 2021, the Hungarian Parliament passed a package of laws (Law LXXIX of 2021) aimed at taking stricter action against pedophile offenders and amending certain laws to protect children. However, during the legislative process, the draft was expanded with anti-LGBTQ provisions motivated by political goals. It appears that, first, the law was probably created to distract attention from other issues such as the Hungarian government’s support for the planned campus of China’s Fudan University in Budapest (Fülöp, 2021). Second, an old/new enemy was given shape in addition to migrants and US billionaire George Soros (Sík & Krekó 2025). Third, the topic was also intended to divide the opposition, which was working to join forces to defeat the governing parties in the 2022 elections (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights [ODIHR], 2022). The legislation generated extensive national and international protests and is widely referred to as the “pedophile law” (Thorpe, 2021).

In addition to prohibiting sex education that “propagates divergence from one’s biological sex, change of gender or homosexuality,” these provisions were incorporated into several existing laws, such as the family protection act of 2011, the child protection law of 1997, the advertising act of 2008, and the Hungarian media law of 2010 (Hungarian Helsinki Committee, 2021). The media law now classifies content that is dominated by sexuality or that propagates divergence from one’s biological sex, change of gender, or homosexuality to minors as “not recommended for viewing for audiences under the age of eighteen” (Hungarian Media Law, 2010, art. 9 (6), Category V), placing it in the same category as content dominated by graphic violence and sexuality. Linear media services (broadcasters) may air such programs only between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. using the proper rating, while on-demand media service providers must use effective technical solutions to prevent minors from accessing such content. The implementation of these provisions is supervised by the Media Council, Hungary’s media regulator.

The Media Council issued in 2011 a document entitled “Recommendations Containing the Guiding Criteria for the Age Rating of Television and Radio Content,” providing guidelines to broadcasters for deciding which age category and time slot to use for broadcasting their individual programs (National Media and Infocommunications Authority, 2021). These Recommendations were amended in September 2021 in line with the “pedophile law” to protect young people from programs that endanger their development into self-reliant persons capable of social coexistence. According to the Recommendations, programs fall under this category if they support behaviors, ideologies, and values that contradict accepted social norms, in particular

fundamental constitutional values. Notably, the Hungarian constitution now states: “The mother shall be a woman, the father shall be a man” (Fundamental Law of Hungary, 2011, Foundations, art. L).

EU Media Regulatory Context

Hungarian media regulation is based on the relevant EU legislation. The EU adopted the Television without Frontiers (TVwF) Directive in 1989 as its primary tool for regulating audiovisual content (Ward, 2016; Gordon, 2007). The TVwF Directive was the first to focus on the protection of minors, requiring member states to take appropriate measures to ensure that broadcasters did not transmit programs which “might seriously impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors” (Little, 2008; Valcke & Stevens, 2007; Füg, 2008). These provisions were extended to other programs “likely to impair” the physical, mental or moral development of minors, except where the time of broadcast or the use of a technical measure ensured that minors would not normally see or hear such broadcast (Trigo, 2017).

The TVwF was repealed by the new Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD) in 2010, which incorporated non-linear services and is currently applicable (Iosifides et al., 2005). The AVMSD was reviewed and amended in November 2018 and was extended to video-sharing platform services, in view of the changing market realities (Haug, 2008; Metzdorf, 2014; Ariño, 2007; Lutz, 2006; Castendyk et al., 2008).

The AVMSD similarly protects minors from content that could impair their physical, mental, or moral development, and it also requires EU Member States to ensure that minors are not typically exposed to such programs by selecting the time of the broadcast (Parcu & Brogi, 2021).

Article 6a(1) of the directive stipulates that:

“Member States shall take appropriate measures to ensure that audiovisual media services provided by media service providers under their jurisdiction which may impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors are only made available in such a way as to ensure that minors will not normally hear or see them. Such measures may include selecting the time of the broadcast, age verification tools or other technical measures. They shall be proportionate to the potential harm of the programme. The most harmful content, such as gratuitous violence and pornography, shall be subject to the strictest measures.” (Directive (EU) 2018/180, 2018)

To enable parents and children to make an informed decision, Article 6a(3) requires broadcasters to provide sufficient information to viewers about content which may impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors by using a system that describes the potentially harmful nature of the content (Weinand, 2018).

Due to socio-cultural differences among Member States, views on what constitutes harmful content for minors vary widely (Láncos, 2018). As a result, harmonizing the substance of harm, i.e., what seriously impairs the physical, mental or moral development of minors, was never seriously considered. The only specified contents are pornography and violence (in TVwF, extreme violence; in AVMSD, gratuitous violence). To fulfill the broad framework of Article 6a of AVMSD and avoid potential obstacles to free movement of media services, the EU legislator turned to soft law measures including green papers (European Commission, 1996a), recommendations (Council of Europe, 1998; European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2006; European Commission, 2009), communications (European Commission, 1996b), programs, reports (European Commission, 2011), strategies (European Commission, 2012), and action plans (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 1999). These soft law measures primarily focused on three main areas: preventing exposure of minors from harmful content, enhancing media literacy, and promoting self-regulation and cooperation between national authorities (Láncos, 2018). Therefore, the directive does not determine what can impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors; the concept of “harmful content” is not defined. According to critics, “the categories of content remain as vague as before, a concern that NRAs [National Regulatory Authorities, Z.D.] had raised through the ERGA [European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services, 2016a, Z.D.] early on in the reform process” (Weinand, 2018).

In the absence of a definition, AVMSD also allowed Member States to adopt more detailed or stricter rules as far as they are compliant with Union law:

Article 4.1. “Member States shall remain free to require media service providers under their jurisdiction to comply with more detailed or stricter rules in the fields coordinated by this Directive, provided that such rules are in compliance with Union law.” (Directive (EU) 2018/180, 2018)

Member States also have to ensure freedom of reception of media services (Art. 3 (1)) and require media service providers to comply with the rules of the system of law (Art. 2 (1)). As a result of the lack of definition and the prevalence of soft law measures, age-rating and content classification systems suffered “most extreme fragmentation” (p.6) which was detected by the European Commission in its 2011 report.

Hungarian Media Regulation

The currently effective Hungarian media law, adopted in December 2010, incorporated the AVMSD's provisions (Brouillette & Beek, 2012; Pázmándi, 2016; Koltay & Lapsánszky, 2011; Nagy, 2011). The Hungarian media law also includes provisions on the protection of minors, with six categories of content and age groups for rating purposes. The implementation of the 2018 AVMSD essentially did not alter the age

rating provisions in the media law, though it extended the potential use of technical measures.

As a result of the “pedophile law,” the fifth category (Category V, which is 18+ and may be aired between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. using the proper rating)—which previously included programs that may impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors, particularly because they are dominated by graphic scenes of violence or sexual content—was amended to also contain programs that may impair the physical, mental or moral development of minors by propagating divergence from one’s biological sex, change of gender, or homosexuality (Hungarian Media Law, 2010, art. 9(6), Category V).

Infringement Procedure

The amendments to the Hungarian media law, particularly those restricting the portrayal and promotion of homosexuality, gender reassignment, and divergence from biological sex to minors, quickly drew the attention of the European Union. Although framed as child protection measures, these provisions were widely criticized for their discriminatory impact on LGBTQ individuals and their incompatibility with EU fundamental rights standards.

Following initial concerns, the European Commission initiated an infringement procedure against Hungary (European Commission, 2021a). The Commission’s formal notice challenged the Hungarian law on several grounds, including discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Bouzoraa, 2021; Stychin, 2003; Timmer, 2011; Psychogiopoulou, 2007), lack of adequate justification, disproportionality, and violation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The European Commission (2021a) argued that the law stigmatizes non-heteronormative identities and restricts freedom of expression beyond what is permissible under EU law.

This infringement procedure specifically referenced Articles 2, 3(1), 3(2), 4(1), 6a, 9(1)(c)(ii), and 28b of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive (AVMSD), emphasizing that while the Directive allows member states to adopt stricter rules to protect minors, such rules must comply with overarching EU principles, including non-discrimination and proportionality (Directive 2010/13/EU, 2010; Directive (EU) 2018/1808, 2018).

Arguments and Counterarguments in the Infringement Procedure

The legal and political dispute between Hungary and the European Commission over the so-called “pedophile law” centers on several interrelated issues: minimum harmonization and cultural sovereignty, the vagueness of the legal framework, the general nature of the ban, proportionality, justification, and discrimination. This section analyzes each of these points in turn, highlighting the core legal conflict and its broader implications for the EU’s fundamental rights regime.

1. Minimum Harmonization and Cultural Sovereignty vs. EU Rule of Law

Hungary's primary legal argument is that the AVMSD is a minimum harmonization instrument, which explicitly allows Member States to adopt stricter or more detailed rules in the area of child protection, reflecting national cultural values and traditions. Hungary contends that its amendments—restricting access to content “propagating divergence from one's biological sex, change of gender or homosexuality”—fall within its sovereign right to protect minors according to its own constitutional and cultural standards (European Commission, 2021a). The Hungarian government frames these measures as a legitimate exercise of national competence, justified by the directive's recognition of cultural diversity across the EU.

The European Commission, however, counters that while the AVMSD does allow for stricter national rules, this discretion is not unlimited. Article 4(1) of the AVMSD explicitly states that stricter rules must be “in compliance with Union law,” (Directive (EU) 2018/180, 2018), including the Charter of Fundamental Rights. Article 21 of the Charter prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation. Thus, the Commission argues, Hungary's measures cannot be justified solely by reference to cultural sovereignty or minimum harmonization if they infringe fundamental EU rights.

2. Vagueness of the Legal Framework

A central issue in this dispute is the vagueness of both the AVMSD and the Hungarian law. The AVMSD does not provide a clear, substantive definition of “harmful content” beyond explicit references to pornography and gratuitous violence. This lack of definition has led to significant fragmentation in national approaches to age-rating and content classification, as noted by the European Regulators Group for Audiovisual Media Services (2016b). The Hungarian law exploits this vagueness by classifying any content depicting or “propagating” LGBTQ identities as inherently harmful to minors, without providing evidence or clear criteria for such harm.

The Commission argues that this vagueness undermines legal certainty and opens the door to arbitrary or discriminatory enforcement. It also makes it difficult for media providers to predict what content may be subject to sanction, chilling freedom of expression and access to information. The lack of clear standards also complicates cross-border media service provision, undermining the internal market objectives of the AVMSD.

3. The General Ban

Unlike targeted, content-specific restrictions, the Hungarian law imposes a general ban on the “portrayal or promotion” of LGBTQ identities in any content accessible to minors. This includes not only explicit sexual content but also any positive

representation of same-sex relationships, gender diversity, or non-traditional family models. The law does not distinguish between educational, documentary, or fictional content, nor does it provide for case-by-case assessment of potential harm. The Commission criticizes this general ban as excessively broad and indiscriminate (European Commission, 2021a). By treating all LGBTQ-related content as equally harmful, regardless of context or intent, the law amounts to blanket censorship. This approach is inconsistent with the principle of proportionality and fails to consider less restrictive means of protecting minors, such as parental controls, targeted age ratings, or media literacy initiatives.

4. Proportionality

The principle of proportionality is a cornerstone of EU law and is explicitly referenced in Article 6a(1) of the AVMSD, which requires that measures to protect minors “shall be proportionate to the potential harm of the programme” (Directive (EU) 2018/1808, 2018). The Hungarian law’s blanket restriction on all LGBTQ-related content for minors is, according to the Commission, manifestly disproportionate to the stated objective of child protection.

The Commission argues that the law fails to demonstrate a concrete, evidence-based link between the mere presence of LGBTQ themes and any actual harm to minors. Instead, it relies on unsubstantiated assumptions and stereotypes, stigmatizing LGBTQ people and their representation in the media. The law also disregards the possibility of less restrictive alternatives, such as differentiated age ratings, content warnings, or educational guidance. By imposing the strictest possible measures (late-night broadcasting, technical barriers, and exclusion from public service announcements) on all such content, the Hungarian law goes far beyond what is necessary to achieve its stated aim.

5. Justification

Hungary attempts to justify its measures by invoking the general interest objective of protecting minors from exposure to “lifestyles” or “models” that deviate from traditional societal and constitutional norms. The government claims that minors are particularly susceptible to influence and that unrestricted access to LGBTQ content could undermine their development or confuse their sense of identity.

The Commission, however, finds this justification inadequate. It points out that the law makes an unqualified and stigmatizing link between LGBTQ representation and harm, without empirical support. The Commission also notes that the law does not provide for individualized assessment or consideration of the context in which such content appears (e.g., educational vs. entertainment). Furthermore, the law’s justification is undermined by its discriminatory impact and by the absence of similar restrictions on heterosexual or cisgender content.

6. Discrimination

At the heart of the Commission's challenge is the claim that the Hungarian law is discriminatory, both in intent and effect. By singling out LGBTQ-related content for special restriction, the law treats sexual orientation and gender identity as inherently problematic or dangerous, in violation of Article 21 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (Beger, 2004). The Commission argues that such discrimination cannot be justified by cultural or child protection arguments, particularly in light of the EU's commitment to equality and respect for diversity.

The law's discriminatory effect is further exacerbated by its enforcement: the Media Council has cited specific examples, such as the film *Jenny's Wedding*, as grounds for sanctioning media providers. This practice not only limits the representation of LGBTQ people in Hungarian media but also signals to society that such identities are unacceptable or taboo.

Soft Law Approach

Hungarian legislation exploited the ambiguities and lack of clear definitions in the AVMSD to amend its media law with the so-called "pedophile law". This European soft-law approach to regulating harmful or "seriously impairing" content attempts to balance harmonization with competition. While the EU strives to harmonize legal systems to create a uniform internal market, certain areas—such as media regulation—are influenced by socio-cultural differences among Member States, making convergence difficult and fostering competition between legal systems (Láncos, 2018; Gormley, 2009).

In some Member States, labeling systems are not mandatory (e.g., Denmark, Czech Republic), while others implement mandatory labeling through co-regulation (e.g., Netherlands, Finland, Germany, Italy, Spain). However, Hungary, along with Croatia, France, Slovakia, and Norway, has implemented strict hard law regulations for labeling requirements. Although the "pedophile law" was largely symbolic, aimed at fulfilling political goals, Hungary's media law already included stringent rating requirements before the law's enactment. Despite provisions for co-regulation and empowering self-regulatory bodies, the Media Council retains control over age-rating and content classification, particularly for linear audiovisual services. Since January 2018, the Hungarian Administrative Code allows soft law instruments to be directly contested in courts. Nevertheless, courts are unlikely to annul these measures due to the constitutional provision that defines family ties strictly as "the mother shall be a woman, the father shall be a man" (Hungarian Fundamental Law, Foundations: Article L).

The long-term effects of this legislation are twofold. Politically, the law achieves its goals by its mere enactment. However, its enforcement within the EU internal

market is questionable. For broadcasts from other Member States containing allegedly infringing content, Hungary must consult with the transmitting Member State to reach an amicable settlement. If this fails, the European Commission must assess whether Hungary's measures comply with Union law, as stipulated by Article 3 of the AVMSD (Directive 2010/13/EU, 2010). Given the contentious nature of the “pedophile law”, it is unlikely the Commission would approve Hungary's measures.

The freedom of movement within the EU internal market allows broadcasting companies to choose between competing legal systems. If dissatisfied with Hungary's legal requirements or administrative fees, a TV channel may relocate to another jurisdiction to transmit its programs. This flexibility undermines the effectiveness of the “pedophile law”, as broadcasters can simply move their operations to countries with less restrictive regulations.

Recommendations in the Case of the Film *Jenny's Wedding*

The Hungarian Media Council's Recommendations

To operationalize the legal amendments introduced by the so-called “pedophile law,” the Hungarian Media Council updated its “*Recommendations Containing the Guiding Criteria for the Age Rating of Television and Radio Content*” in September 2021 (National Media and Infocommunications Authority, 2021). These Recommendations serve as a practical guide for broadcasters and on-demand media providers, specifying how to classify content into age categories and determine appropriate time slots for broadcast.

The Recommendations are not legally binding in the strict sense but are highly influential. They provide the interpretative framework that the Media Council uses in its supervisory and sanctioning activities. According to the revised text, programs are to be classified as “not recommended for audiences under the age of eighteen” (Category V) if they contain content that, in the Council's view, could endanger the development of minors into self-reliant persons capable of social coexistence. This includes not only depictions of graphic violence or sexuality but also any portrayal or “propagation” of behaviors, ideologies, or values that contradict “accepted social norms,” especially those newly enshrined in the Hungarian constitution (such as the exclusive definition of family as a union between a man and a woman) (Hungarian Fundamental Law, Foundations: Article L).

The Recommendations specifically instruct providers to restrict content that “supports or presents as normal” any divergence from biological sex, gender change, or homosexuality. This approach is broader and more restrictive than most European standards, as it does not distinguish between explicit sexual content and the mere representation of LGBTQ identities or relationships.

Application in Practice: The Case of Jenny's Wedding

The practical implications of these Recommendations are evident in the Media Council's enforcement actions. A notable example is the case of the film *Jenny's Wedding*, which was explicitly cited by Hungarian authorities as content falling under the new restrictions.

Jenny's Wedding is an American drama that tells the story of a woman who decides to marry her girlfriend, leading to various family dynamics and discussions about acceptance. The film does not contain explicit sexual scenes; rather, its focus is on the social and familial aspects of a same-sex relationship. Despite this, the Media Council classified *Jenny's Wedding* as Category V content, arguing that its central theme—presenting a same-sex marriage as normal and worthy of acceptance—contradicts the constitutional definition of family and could “confuse” or “mislead” minors about gender roles and family structures (Hungarian Media Law, 2010, art. 9(6), Category V). As a result, the film could only be broadcast late at night or behind age-verification barriers, effectively limiting its accessibility and visibility for younger audiences.

This case illustrates how the Recommendations, in conjunction with the amended law, function as a mechanism for (pre-)censorship of LGBTQ representation in Hungary. The focus is not on protecting minors from explicit material, but on restricting access to any positive or normalized depiction of LGBTQ identities.

Comparison: Youth Media Protection and LGBTQ Content in Other European Countries

In recent years, several Central and Eastern European countries have witnessed the consolidation of illiberal political agendas that challenge liberal democratic norms, minority rights, and gender equality. These developments have created a political climate in which measures restricting LGBTQ visibility are framed as part of a broader defense of “traditional values,” national sovereignty, and child protection. In Hungary, such narratives were pivotal in the adoption of the 2021 “child protection” package, while similar rhetoric has informed initiatives in Poland, Bulgaria, and Slovakia. This broader trend forms part of what scholars describe as the rise of illiberalism—a mode of governance that blends majoritarian nationalism with opposition to perceived “Western liberal” ideals of diversity and equality (Pech & Scheppelle, 2025; Paternotte & Verloo, 2021). Transnational networks—including Russia’s state-backed promotion of “traditional family values,” the U.S.-based Heritage Foundation’s campaigns against “gender ideology,” and European far-right parties such as France’s National Rally—have contributed to the diffusion of these discourses across borders (Kuhar & Paternotte, 2017; Graff & Korolczuk, 2022). Against this backdrop, laws restricting LGBTQ expression and representation do not arise in isolation but as manifestations of a wider illiberal turn reshaping the region’s political and legal landscape.

While youth media protection is a common regulatory aim across Europe, the Hungarian approach stands out for its explicit and categorical targeting of LGBTQ content. In most EU member states, age classification systems focus on shielding minors from explicit sexual content, graphic violence, or other clearly defined harms, but do not treat LGBTQ themes as inherently harmful. However, recent years have seen a concerning trend in several Central and Eastern European countries, where laws and proposals have emerged that mirror or are inspired by Hungary's restrictive measures.

Poland has pursued a path of increasing hostility toward LGBTQ visibility, though not through a single national law identical to Hungary's. Instead, over 100 municipalities have declared themselves "LGBT-free zones," vowing to refrain from promoting so-called "LGBT ideology," (European Parliament, 2021) which has a chilling effect on LGBTQ representation and rights (European Commission, 2021b). In 2021, the Polish parliament debated the "Stop LGBT" bill, which would have banned Pride marches and any public demonstration of "homosexual propaganda" (Amnesty International, 2021). Although this bill has not become law, its consideration reflects the political climate and the willingness of lawmakers to restrict LGBTQ expression under the guise of protecting public morals and children.

In June 2023, Bulgaria took a drastic step by amending its *Protection of Children from Harmful Information Act* to prohibit the dissemination of information to minors that "promotes a sexual orientation different from heterosexuality or presents gender change as an acceptable norm" (ILGA-Europe, 2024). Widely seen as modeled after Hungary's and Russia's anti-LGBTQ "propaganda" laws, the amendment effectively bans LGBTQ-related educational materials, media content, and public information aimed at minors.

Similarly, Slovakia has also seen legislative efforts to restrict LGBTQ representation. In 2023, members of the Slovak parliament introduced a bill that would ban the "promotion" or "display" of LGBTQ relationships and gender diversity to minors, directly inspired by the Hungarian and Russian laws (Bortoletto, 2024). The proposal would restrict media, advertising, and educational content that "depicts or promotes non-heterosexual relationships or gender reassignment" to persons under 18. Although the bill had not passed as of early 2024, it signals a broader legislative trend in the region (Amnesty International, 2025).

The Russian Federation serves as a clear model for these developments. Since 2013, Russia has enforced a federal law banning "propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations" among minors, which has been used to justify censorship of LGBTQ content in media, education, and public life (Amnesty International, 2013). The Russian law's vague language and sweeping application have influenced lawmakers in Hungary, Bulgaria, Slovakia, and elsewhere, who invoke child protection as a rationale for restricting LGBTQ visibility.

By contrast, in Western European countries such as Germany, France, the Netherlands, Spain, and Sweden, regulatory authorities have clarified that LGBTQ themes—including depictions of same-sex relationships or gender diversity—are not inherently harmful to minors. Age ratings are based on context, explicitness, and potential for real harm, not on the sexual orientation or gender identity of characters.

This divergence illustrates a growing East-West divide within Europe on the issue of LGBTQ rights and media regulation. The spread of Russian-style “propaganda” laws and the willingness of some EU member states to emulate or adapt such measures underlines the fragility of fundamental rights protections in the face of rising illiberalism (Katsuba, 2025).

Conclusion

The Hungarian “pedophile law” and its implementation through media regulation mark a pivotal moment in the struggle over LGBTQ rights and democratic values in the European Union. While Hungary’s approach is unique in its legal detail and scope, it is no longer an isolated case. The emergence of similar laws and proposals in Poland, Bulgaria, and Slovakia—often explicitly modeled on Russian legislation—demonstrates a broader regional trend toward the use of child protection rhetoric as a pretext for restricting LGBTQ visibility and expression.

These developments highlight the dangers of vague legal frameworks and the political instrumentalization of youth protection. Where the AVMSD and national laws lack clear definitions, they create opportunities for illiberal governments to impose discriminatory restrictions under the guise of cultural or moral sovereignty. The rapid diffusion of such measures across Central and Eastern Europe, and the influence of Russian policy, threaten the coherence of EU fundamental rights and the principle of non-discrimination.

At the same time, the contrast with Western European countries—where LGBTQ representation is not treated as inherently harmful—underscores the need for the EU to clarify and enforce minimum standards for media regulation. The ongoing infringement procedures and legal challenges are not just about Hungary, but about the future of pluralism, equality, and democracy in Europe. The EU must act decisively to ensure that youth protection is not weaponized against minority groups and that all member states uphold the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The outcome of these debates will shape not only the media landscape but the very character of European democracy in the years ahead.

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