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## **Andorra set to become latest nation to legalize gay marriage**

By Sonia Elks & Hugo Greenhalgh

Thomson Reuters Foundation (23.03.2020) - <https://reut.rs/21q8WMf> - Andorra, one of Europe's smallest countries, is set to legalize gay marriage, highlighting that eastern European countries with anti-LGBT laws are "on the wrong side of history", leading human rights specialists said on Monday.

A bill presented by the ruling coalition of Andorra, a nation of 80,000 people on the border of France and Spain, will remove the legal distinction between same-sex civil unions and heterosexual weddings. It is expected to take effect in months.

"For countries that continue to discriminate against LGBT people and persecute them as they do in Russia, (Andorra's) move is further evidence that they are on the wrong side of history," said barrister Jonathan Cooper at Doughty Street Chambers.

Katrin Hugendubel, advocacy director at LGBT+ rights group ILGA-Europe, stressed that human rights must not be overlooked as the world suffers under the effects of the coronavirus.

"(Andorra's decision is) also a message to all of Europe that human rights are not to be forgotten, or to be exploited for political gain, at this time of global turbulence," Hugendubel told the Thomson Reuters Foundation by email.

Around the world, same-sex marriage remains an issue for many countries. Here are the key facts:

- The first country to legalize same-sex marriage was the Netherlands in 2001.
- Same-sex marriage is legal in 27 United Nations member states: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Britain, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Ecuador, Finland, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Uruguay, and the United States.
- A total of 32 U.N. states recognize some form of civil partnership for same-sex couples.
- Taiwan was the first place in Asia where gay marriages were allowed. Drives for that right to be granted in China and Japan have faced stiff opposition.
- In Africa, where homosexuality is a crime in many countries and can lead to imprisonment or the death penalty, South Africa alone allows for same-sex marriage.
- Gay marriage is hotly contested among many religious groups. Leaders of the United Methodist Church announced proposals to split the church into two amid deep disputes over the issue.

- Almost one in three adults globally believe people of the same sex should be allowed to marry, a survey of almost 100,000 people in 65 countries showed in 2016.

*Sources: ILGA State-Sponsored Homophobia report, Pew Research Centre, Thomson Reuters Foundation, Reuters.*

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