

Legal recognition of same-sex relationships can be categorised in four main groups:

- **marriage**

Where the rights, responsibilities and legal recognition given to same-sex couples who marry is the same as those for married different-sex couples.

- **registered partnership**

Where same-sex couples have the possibility to enter formal registration that provides them with a virtually equivalent status, rights, responsibilities and legal recognition to that of married couples (with some possible exceptions). This form of registration is often exclusively open to same-sex partners; however some countries have also made it available to different-sex partners.

- **registered cohabitation**

Where a number of enumerated rights, responsibilities and legal recognition are given to couples who register their cohabitation. This form of registration is oftentimes available to both same-sex and different-sex couples and requires that the couples prove that they have lived together to a determined period of time before they can accede to their registration.

- **unregistered cohabitation**

Where very limited rights and responsibilities are automatically accrued after a specified period of cohabitation. These rights are almost always available to unmarried different-sex couples as well.

Please find below a list of all European countries with information on the legal recognition of same-sex partners:

[Albania](#) [Andorra](#) [Armenia](#) [Austria](#) [Azerbaijan](#) [Belgium](#) [Bosnia & Herzegovina](#) [Bulgaria](#) [Croatia](#) [Cyprus](#) [Czech Republic](#) [Denmark](#) [Estonia](#) [Finland](#) [France](#) [Georgia](#) [Germany](#) [Greece](#) [Hungary](#) [Iceland](#) [Ireland](#) [Italy](#) [Latvia](#) [Liechtenstein](#) [Lithuania](#) [Luxembourg](#) [Malta](#) [Moldova](#) [Monaco](#) [Netherlands](#) [Norway](#) [Poland](#) [Portugal](#) [Romania](#) [Russia](#) [San Marino](#) [Serbia & Montenegro](#) [Slovakia](#) [Slovenia](#) [Spain](#) [Sweden](#) [Switzerland](#) [FYR Macedonia](#) [Turkey](#) [Ukraine](#) [UK](#)

Albania

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Andorra

Registered cohabitation (2005)

Llei 4/2005, del 21 de febrer, qualificada de les unions estables de parella provides for the registration of 'unions estables de parella' (stable unions of couples) irrespective of whether they are of the same-sex or different-sex. The partners wishing to register their union must prove that they have lived together for a minimum of six months; have right of residency in Andorra; and also have a private pact regulating their property and personal relations.

A registered cohabiting couple has the duty to support one another and the right to compensation and maintenance in the event of a break-up. They also have the same rights as married couples for the purposes of social security and employment laws, as well as with regard to the adoption of children.

Read the text of the law introducing registered partnership to same-sex partners in Catalan [here](#).

Armenia

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Austria

Unregistered Cohabitation(2003)

Following the European Court of Human Rights' decision in *Karner v Austria* regarding the surviving same-sex partner's right to succession in tenancy agreements, cohabiting same-sex partners are entitled to the same limited set of rights available to unmarried cohabiting different-sex partners.

Read the text of the judgment of *Karner v Austria* [2003] (Application no. 40016/98) [here](#)

Azerbaijan

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Belarus

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Belgium

Marriage(2003)

In 2003, *Loi ouvrant le mariage à des personnes de même sexe et modifiant certaines dispositions du Code civil (1)*, widened the scope of Belgian marriage legislation to cover partners of the same-sex.

This law did not provide for presumed paternity for the female spouse of a woman who gives birth during their marriage; no provision for joint parental responsibility; and no possibility of adoption by a same-sex partner or a same-sex couple.

In 2005, the Chamber of Representatives of the parliament passed a law permitting adoption by same-sex couples thus removing the exception that had been included in the 2003 marriage law, and equalising the legal status of same-sex and different-sex relationships.

Read the text of the law opening up marriage to same-sex partners in French and Dutch [here](#).

Registered Cohabitation(1999)

Loi du 23 novembre 1998 instaurant la cohabitation légale made 'statutory cohabitation contracts' available to both same-sex and different-sex couples as from 1 January, 2000. This law provided couples with a narrow set of rights, as well as with an option to have their own legally binding agreements regarding their mutual responsibilities. However, such agreements do not have effect for the purposes of governmental legal or financial benefits.

Read the text of the law introducing registered cohabitation to same-sex partners in French and Dutch [here](#).

Bosnia & Herzegovina

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Bulgaria

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Croatia

Unregistered Cohabitation(2003)

Zakon o istospolnim zajednicama, koji je donio Hrvatski sabor na sjednici 14. srpnja 2003 (Law on Same Sex Civil Unions) , grants cohabiting same-sex partners (that have cohabited for a minimum of three years) the similar rights and responsibilities of unmarried cohabiting different-sex partners, namely – right to joint property and the partners' responsibility to support one another.

There is an anti-discrimination provision that prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation or same-sex civil union. The provisions contained in the *Law on Same Sex Civil Unions* were taken over from the Family Act and adapted. The rights of different-sex married and cohabiting partners which are regulated by separate acts cannot be realised by same-sex partners. Although the *Law on Same Sex Civil Unions* contains the anti-discrimination provision on the basis of the same-sex civil union, it does not represent the sufficient legal basis for the application of other acts except the Criminal Code, Article 106 Violation of Equality of Citizens and Art. 174 Race and Other Discrimination. Numerous rights ensured by other acts are applied to married and cohabiting different sex partners and lack of application on same-sex partners represents discriminative practice. For example, the Inheritance Act was adopted after the *Law on Same Sex Civil Unions*, but nonetheless the rights available to different sex cohabiting and married partners were not made available to same-sex partners. This represents a continuing discriminative practice from the legislators and insufficient implementation of the anti-discrimination provisions of the *Law on Same Sex Civil Unions*.

Read the text of the law introducing unregistered cohabitation to same-sex partners in Croatian [here](#) or the English translation [here](#).

Cyprus

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Czech Republic

Registered Partnership (2006)

Zákon ze dne 26. ledna 2006 o registrovaném partnerství a o změně některých souvisejících zákonů introduced registered partnerships open exclusively to same-sex partners as from 1 July 2006. Through this law same-sex partners are able to benefit from many of the rights available through marriage including: inheritance; hospital; spousal privilege; and alimony rights. Nonetheless, same-sex registered partners are barred from the same rights when it comes to – joint property rights; the adoption of children; impact on citizenship, residence or work permit acquisition; financial compensation in case of the death of one of the partners; advantages stemming from income tax law (e.g. joint taxation); survivor's pensions; and the use of a common or double surname.

Read the text of the law introducing partnership to same-sex partners in Czech [here](#).

Unregistered Cohabitation

The Czech Republic currently allows unregistered cohabitation status to "persons living in a common household". It gives partners inheritance and succession rights in housing.

Denmark

Registered Partnership (1989)

Lov om registreret partnerskab (nr. 372 af 7.6.1989) introduced 'registreret partnerskab' (registered partnerships) open exclusively to same-sex partners as from 1 October 1989. This law was the first of its kind in the world, and virtually granted same-sex partners the full range of protections, responsibilities and benefits offered through marriage. The four exceptions laid in this law state that - registered partners cannot adopt, with the exception that one party can adopt the biological children of the other; they cannot have joint custody of a child, except by adoption; laws making explicit reference to the sexes of a married couple do not apply to registered partnerships; and regulations by international treaties do not apply unless all signatories agree.

Read the text of the law introducing registered partnership to same-sex partners in Danish [here](#) or translations in English [here](#).

Estonia

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Finland

Registered Partnership(2001)

Laki rekisteröidystä parisuhteesta introduced registered partnerships for same-sex partners only and grants a similar set of rights and responsibilities to those offered to different-sex partners through marriage. Registered partners enjoy the right to joint custody of children and the right of immigration of a foreign partner, however, they do not have access to joint adoption or a shared surname.

Read the text of the law introducing registered partnership to same-sex partners in Finnish [here](#), in Swedish [here](#) or translation in English [here](#).

France

Registered Partnership (1999)

LOI no 99-944 du 15 novembre 1999 relative au pacte civil de solidarité introduced a 'pacte civil de solidarité' (civil pact of solidarity, *known as PaCS*) for both same-sex and different-sex partners alike. This form of registered partnership allows the partners to accede to some of the rights and responsibilities of marriage, although containing a lesser level of legal consequences. For example, the partners will only accede to joint taxation and welfare benefits after three years of partnership. Furthermore, they have no right to joint custody, second parent adoption or jointly adoption of unrelated children.

Read the text of the law introducing registered partnership to same-sex partners in French [here](#) or information about it in English [here](#).

Unregistered Cohabitation (*Concubinage*)

Very limited rights in such areas as tenancy, immigration, and health insurance for same-sex cohabiting partners.

Georgia

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Germany

Life Partnerships (2000)

Gesetzes zur Beendigung der Diskriminierung gleichgeschlechtlicher Sexualität: Lebenspartnerschaften (The Life Partnership Act) introduced registered partnerships for same-sex partners as from 1 August 2001. This law grants the same set of responsibilities that are granted through marriage, albeit with a more limited set of rights. For example, German tax law still treats registered partners like two single individuals, and the exemption amount in inheritance tax for registered partners is only €5,200 whereas for married partners the exempted amount is €307,000.

On 12 October 2004, the *Gesetz zur Überarbeitung des Lebenspartnerschaftsrechts* (Life Partnership Law (Revision) Act) was passed by the Bundestag, increasing the rights of registered same-sex partners to include, among other things, the possibility of second parent adoption, pension rights for workers and employees (not for federal civil servants), and simpler alimony and divorce rules. This law, however, still excluding the same tax benefits that are available to married different-sex partners. Registered partners do not have full adoption rights.

German law allows registered partners to change their last names; joint custody over child for whom one partner already has custody and allows adopt each other's children; grants recognition of next-of-kin rights; joint eligibility for some social security benefits; survivor's pension right; similar rights in the field of tenancy; and immigration concessions and working permission for foreign partner.

Read the text of the law introducing registered partnership to same-sex partners in German [here](#).

Greece

No legal recognition for same-sex partners

Hungary

Registered Partnership (2007)

2007. évi CLXXXIV.tör vény a bejegyzett élettársi kapcsolatáról was approved by the Hungarian Parliament on 17 December 2007 and opened registered partnerships to both same-sex and different-sex partners to the full range of protections, responsibilities and benefits of marriage with some exceptions. Among these exceptions are the right to adopt, access to fertility treatment and the partner's right to a common or double surname. This law shall enter into force on 1 January 2009.

Read the text of the law introducing registered partnership to same-sex partners in Hungarian . [here](#)

Unregistered cohabitation (1996)

Through an amendment to the Civil Code both same-sex and different-sex partners couples living together in an economic and sexual relationship (common-law marriage) accede to specified rights and benefits that are available to two persons living together. These rights and benefits are not automatic, and are only provided following an application to the social department of the local government on a case-by-case basis.

Iceland

Registered Partnership(1996)

564. *Frumvarp til laga* introduced registered partnerships for same-sex partners only and grants the full range of protections, responsibilities and benefits that are granted through marriage. Joint custody of children is permitted, where one partner already has custody of the child.

This law also stated that registered partners can adopt the other partner's child (unless the child is adopted from a foreign country), while it banned joint adoption for registered same-sex partners. These restrictions have now been removed through a law that was enacted on 27 June 2006 stating that same-sex couples have full adoption rights and lesbian couples have the right to fertility treatment.

Read the text of the law introducing registered partnership to same-sex partners in Icelandic [here](#) or translated in English [here](#).

Ireland

There is no legal recognition for same-sex partners yet. However, on 25th June 2008 the Government of Ireland published a draft proposal entitled *General Scheme of Civil Partnership Bill* for the introduction of **Registered Partnership** for same-sex partners only.

A previous *Civil Partnership Bill* had been initiated in parliament during 2005.

General Scheme of Civil Partnership Bill proposal [here](#).

Italy

No legal recognition for same-sex partners that is applicable at national level. However, a number of cities and some regions have made available their **Registered Cohabitation** registry to same-sex and different sex partners indiscriminately. These registrations tend to be mainly symbolic and offer very few legal consequences.

For an updated list click [here](#).

Latvia

No legal recognition for same-sex partners

Liechtenstein

No legal recognition for same-sex partners yet, however, the Landtag (the Liechtenstein Parliament) has on 24 October 2007 supported with 19 votes in favour (out of 25) the Freie Liste's motion towards the introduction of **Registered Partnership** legislation along the lines of that of Switzerland.

Read Freie Liste's motion in Parliament for the introduction of registered partnership for same-sex partners in German [here](#).

Lithuania

No legal recognition for same-sex partners

Luxembourg

Registered partnership (2004)

Loi du 9 juillet 2004 relative aux effets légaux de certains partenariats provides for the registration of both same-sex and different-sex partnerships. Registered partners enjoy many of the rights of married couples including access to welfare benefits, and most of the fiscal advantages. However, registered same-sex partners do have access to joint adoption.

Read the text of the law introducing registered partnership to same-sex partners in French [here](#).

Malta

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Moldova

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Monaco

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Netherlands

Marriage (2000)

Wet van 21 december 2000 tot wijziging van Boek 1 van het Burgerlijk Wetboek in verband met de openstelling van het huwelijk voor personen van hetzelfde geslacht (Wet openstelling huwelijk) widened the scope of Dutch 'huwelijk' (marriage) legislation and states that 'marriage can be contracted by two persons of different sex or of the same sex'. This law provided the same rights and responsibilities as different-sex married partners with the exception of the adoption of children from abroad. The Netherlands was the first country in the world to extend this right to marry to same-sex partners.

Read the text of the law widening marriage to include same-sex partners in Dutch [here](#) or translated in English [here](#). Read the text of the law allowing adoption by same-sex partners in Dutch [here](#) or translated in English [here](#).

Registered Partnership (1997)

Wet van 17 december 1997 tot aanpassing van wetgeving aan de invoering van het geregistreerd partnerschap in Boek 1 van het Burgerlijk Wetboek (Aanpassingswet geregistreerd partnerschap) introduced 'geregistreerd partnerschap' (registered partnership) for both same-sex and different-

sex couples as from 1 January 1998. This law provides virtually all rights and responsibilities as married partners, with two exceptions: no right to inter-country adoption, and no automatic presumption of paternity. Through a very simple procedure any registered partnership can be converted into a marriage, and vice versa.

Read the text of the law introducing registered partnerships for same-sex partners in Dutch [here](#) or translated in English [here](#).

Unregistered Cohabitation (1970s)

Since 1970s same-sex and different-sex cohabiting partners were increasingly granted legal rights in such areas as rent law, social security, income tax, immigration rules, inheritance tax, state pension, and death duties. Almost all the legal consequences of marriage are currently also available to cohabitants.

Norway

On 11 June 2008 the Norwegian parliament adopted new gender-neutral **marriage** legislation that permits same-sex couples to marry and adopt children, as well as artificial insemination for lesbians. The text of the law was adopted by a vote of 84 to 41. This new legislation replaces the 1993 partnership law allowing same-sex registered partnerships. The new law is expected to come into force on 1st January 2009.

Read the text of the law widening marriage to include same-sex partners in Norwegian [here](#).

Poland

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Portugal

Unregistered Cohabitation (2001)

Lei Nº 7/2001 de 11 de Maio - Adopção Medidas de Protecção das Uniões de Facto extends to same-sex couples the same limited set of rights enjoyed by different-sex couples living in a de facto union for more than two years ("common economy"). These rights regard housing arrangements, same property regime as married partners, civil servants and work benefits, fiscal status, welfare benefits. Unlike cohabiting different-sex couples, cohabiting same-sex couples are denied access to joint adoption.

Read the text of the law introducing unregistered cohabitation to same-sex partners in Portuguese [here](#).

Romania

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Russia

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

San Marino

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Serbia & Montenegro

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Slovakia

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Slovenia

Registered Partnership(2005)

Zakon o registraciji istospolne partnerske skupnosti (ZRIPS) Ur.l. RS, št. 65/2005 introduced a significantly weaker form of registered partnership that is open to same-sex partners only. It covers only the property relations, the right/obligation to support the socially weaker partner and only partly the inheritance rights. It does not grant any rights in the area of social security (social and health insurance, pension rights and so on), or provide partners with the status of a next-of-kin to one another.

Read the text of the law introducing registered partnership same-sex partners in Slovene [here](#).

Spain

Marriage (2005)

LEY 13/2005, de 1 de julio, por la que se modifica el Código Civil en materia de derecho a contraer matrimonio widened the scope of Spanish marriage legislation to include partners of the same-sex. Same-sex married partners now enjoy all the rights and responsibilities of marriage without exception.

Read the text of the law widening marriage to include same-sex partners in Spanish [here](#).

Sweden

A gender-neutral **Marriage** law will soon be proposed. The enactment of this law will most likely abolishing the current registered partnership law, and automatically convert registered partnerships into marriages.

Registered Partnership (1994)

Lag (1994:1117) om registrerat partnerskap opened 'registrerat partnerskap' (registered partnership) to same-sex partners only and grants the full range of protections, responsibilities and benefits as are provided by marriage. The law also states that same-sex registered partners can adopt jointly.

Since 2000, non-Swedes legally resident in Sweden have been entitled to the right to register their partnership. In 2005, in vitro fertilization for lesbian couples has been allowed.

Read the text of the law introducing registered partnership to same-sex partners in Swedish [here](#) or translated in English [here](#).

Unregistered Cohabitation (1988)

In 2003, *Sambolag (2003:376)* replaced the previous cohabitation act . This law provides a limited set of rights that mainly have to do tenancy and property, and applies equally to cohabiting and unmarried same-sex and different-sex couples.

Read the text of the law introducing unregistered cohabitation to same-sex partners in Swedish [here](#) or translated in English [here](#).

Switzerland

Registered Partnership(2004)

Ordonnance sur la mise en oeuvre de la loi du 18 juin 2004 sur le partenariat dans la prévoyance professionnelle vieillesse, survivants et invalidité was originally passed by Parliament on 18 June 2004. However, the conservative Federal Democratic Union collected enough signatures to force a national referendum on this law. The law subsequently received 58% approval by the Swiss people and it came into effect on 1 January 2007.

Through this law, registered same-sex partners accede to the same rights and responsibilities as married different-sex partners, except for the right related to adoption, fertility treatment and take the same surname.

Read text of the law introducing registered partnership to same-sex partners in French [here](#), in German [here](#) or Italian [here](#).

FYR Macedonia

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Turkey

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

Ukraine

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.

UK

Registered Partnership (2004)

The *Civil Partnership Act 2004*, opened 'civil partnerships' exclusively to same-sex partners as of 5 December 2005. This Act gives same-sex partners the same rights and responsibilities as marriage. In fact, among other rights, civil partners are entitled to the same property rights; exemption on inheritance tax; social security and pension benefits; parental responsibility for the partner's children; responsibility for reasonable maintenance of one's partner and children; tenancy rights; full life insurance recognition; and next-of-kin rights in hospitals.

Read text of the law introducing registered partnership to same-sex partners in English [here](#).

Unregistered Cohabitation

Cohabiting same-sex partners are recognised and enjoy variety of rights in such areas as accidents and compensations, tenancy, immigration, mental health.

Vatican City

No legal recognition for same-sex partners.