

## >THEMES

# PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

## ALBANIA

In May, the 'I Am Your Child' exhibition opened in Tirana as part of Pride week. Poetry, cinema, theatre and drag shows were also part of Pride week.

The Queer Film Marathon Tirana festival took place in October.

In July, the Agimi cinema in the city of Tirana screened two queer films, 'Hippocampus' and 'Letter to myself', produced by Rainbowphilia.

Trans activist, Luana Myrto was elected member of Tirana's youth council.

## ARMENIA

The online news site Epress launched a series of articles featuring the stories of LGBT students. HetQ, another online news site, launched the podcast 'Flesh and Blood', a series about the LGBTQ+ community in Armenia.

## AZERBAIJAN

Several people who wanted to participate in Eurogames 2023 in Switzerland were denied a visa by the Swiss Embassy in Baku.

In November, the UN Human Rights Council reviewed Azerbaijan's human rights records during its Universal Periodic Review (UPR), to which Queerdian, Gender Resource Center and Q Collective jointly submitted a report assessing the impact of existing legal frameworks. Nafas together with ECON presented a report too, focused on bias-motivated speech and crime, among other areas of concern.

## BELARUS

Lesbian activists Volha Harbunova and Nasta Bazar, criminally persecuted in the past for their activism, became part of opposition leader Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's office.

Belarusian basketball player Ekaterina Snytnina, who lives in London, came out this year.

Three books on queer experiences of Belarusians were published in 2023.

## BELGIUM

The Belgian Football Association launched a campaign

against racist and homophobic hate in the sport, as the number of incidents more than doubled between 2021-2022. Eight football teams joined the Jarfi tournament against homophobia and discrimination, remembering Ishane Jarfi who died in a homophobic murder in 2012.

## BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

The second edition of the summer festival Kvirhana was held in June in Sarajevo, and in July in Tuzla

## BULGARIA

An openly gay architect is running in the local elections for Sofia municipality.

## CYPRUS

The fourth Queer Wave film festival took place in September 2023. The State Gallery of Contemporary Art - SPEL hosted a series of queer-themed performances between June and December.

## CZECHIA

One of the most well-known football players, Jakub Jankto came out as gay in February.

'We Have Never Been Modern', a film about intersex people living before the Second World War in Czechoslovakia, premiered this summer and features a trans actor as its protagonist.

## DENMARK

The Danish Institute for Human Rights, Denmark's equality body, launched a LGBT+ barometer on the living conditions of LGBT people in Denmark, grouping existing data from different sources, but failed to include key information on human rights violations against intersex people, which had been supplied by CSOs.

## ICELAND

Trans Iceland received the Reykjavík Human Rights Award 2023 in May.

## DENMARK

Denmark's two main sports associations introduced a third gender option, allowing sports clubs to register members who do not identify as male or female.

In November, the Danish Football Association,

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which organises 359,000 professional and amateur football players in Denmark, [decided to adopt the recommendations](#) of a working group on inclusion of transgender, intersex and non-binary players. A new diversity officer will implement the changes in the coming years, which will mean full access for all gender minorities in amateur football based on self-id, full access for trans men in the men's elite ranks. For the women's elite ranks, inclusion will be based on individual assessment.

### ESTONIA

The exhibition on the history of Estonia's LGBT community in the 20th century was [added](#) to the Vabamu Museum's permanent exhibition.

### FINLAND

(See also under Equality and Non-Discrimination)

### FRANCE

The Minister of Labour, Olivier Dussopt [came out](#) as gay in March, seen by many as a political move amidst the pension protests (see under Social Security and Social Protection). The Minister of Youth, [Sarah El Haïry](#), came out as lesbian in April. Mayor of Estevelles, Estelle Szabo, became the first mayor to [transition](#) during her mandate. Marseille councillor Nathanaël Bignon also [spoke](#) about being a trans man.

Le Bonjour Madame, a queer and feminist bar in eastern Paris, was [forced](#) to close in May after a police raid and checks, which the owners [interpreted](#) as clear intimidation.

In May, The French Football League [launched](#) its annual campaign to tackle homophobia. Several players refused to [wear](#) jerseys featuring rainbow symbols or play at all - they were [reprimanded](#) by their teams, [fined](#), and/or [benched](#), and their refusal was condemned by the Sports Ministry. The government [supports](#) the sanctions. Despite the efforts, an increase in homophobic verbal attacks was witnessed during sports games. In October, the Ministry of Sport, FFF and LFP [sent](#) a letter to professional clubs outlining actions to tackle homophobia. In November, Rouge Direct, a collective fighting homophobia in football, [closed down](#), citing institutional inaction and death threats

In May, the LGBT Families association [filed](#) a complaint against Amazon Prime Video for broadcasting

homophobic chants and banners at football games. Nicolas Pottier, former referee, [spoke](#) about homophobia, rape, and harassment he was subjected to and filed a complaint.

Paris 2024, the organising committee of the 2024 Olympic Games, [launched](#) a partnership with Pride House. Nevertheless, female trans athletes will be unable to compete in the women's category - the Sports Minister [shared](#) in April that the Olympics will follow the rules of international sports federations. Halba Diouf, French sprinter [spoke out](#) against the World Athletics's [discriminatory ban](#) against trans women in March. At national level, the Minister of Sport [announced](#) in May that an expert group will be [set up](#) to make recommendations on the inclusion of trans athletes in sport. No national civil society organisations have been included in the process so far.

A report [showed](#) that most LGBT people have either witnessed (73%) or suffered (52%) a homophobic or transphobic attack in sports.

### GREECE

Stefanos Kasselakis, openly gay politician, [became](#) the new president of leading opposition party SYRIZA after the party's crushing [defeat](#) during the June elections.

Civil society organisations [worked](#) hard throughout the year to [lobby](#) journalists and [candidates](#) in the national and municipal elections to [address](#) LGBTIQ+ rights in their [political agendas](#), but most [did not cover](#) them in a meaningful way. Civil society also [warned](#) that trans people must be protected from questioning, harassment, and discrimination when going to the voting polls.

### HUNGARY

(See also under Freedom of Expression)

In July, German football fans [put up](#) an anti-homophobia banner during a game against a Hungarian team.

The LIFT festival on lesbian identities was [celebrated](#) in October after a three-year break.

A lesbian-themed film was [released](#) in November. The Petőfi Literary Fund, which had previously translated *Wonderland is for Everyone* into Estonian with public funding, [stopped](#) translations of the book into other languages.

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### ICELAND

Reykjavik voted to make its rainbow crossing a permanent part of its city landscape.

Samtökin '78 continued its education program targeting coaches, staff, and other key stakeholders in sport associations.

The Archery Association introduced a third gender category for competition and will organise unisex events as well.

### IRELAND

In March, the new Coimisiún na Meán (media commission) was formed. A Gender, Equality, Inclusion, and Diversity Strategy is being developed to bolster the positive portrayal and representation of LGBTI+ identities in the media.

The Ladies Gaelic Football Association approved its first trans applicant this year, implementing new guidelines.

Four runners participated in the Dublin Marathon's non-binary category.

A mural was unveiled in Dublin during Pride week.

The Irish football league carried a large campaign ahead of Pride in support of LGBT Ireland and the National LGBT+ helpline.

This Solution, a documentary-theatre piece about the gay porn industry premiered in October. A theatre piece about an Irish-born trans soldier toured this year.

After backlash in the LGBTQ community, Cork's only queer bar Chambers issued an apology after rebranding itself and removing all Pride-related decor and cancelling drag performances during the first week of the University term.

### ITALY

MEP Eilly Schlein became the first openly bisexual woman to lead the Democratic Party.

Miss Italia refused to open the competition to trans women. In protest, several trans women and over 100 trans men applied to compete.

### KAZAKHSTAN

LGBTQI activist Zhanar Sekerbayeva ran elections as an open lesbian for Almaty's local council (Maslikhat) in March. She was not elected but came in third among participating candidates.

The closed screening of *Queer in Kazakh*, a film by Mutali Moskeu, was held in June in Almaty. The film was first posted on social media in May.

Aid Yesimova's collection of stories of LGBT+ people from Kazakhstan, *On the Other Side of the Rainbow* was published in August.

### KOSOVO

CEL Kosovo launched Queer TV this year.

The first Pristina Queer Festival was held in September. The three-day cultural festival featured film screenings, concerts, and the promotion of the Albanian language edition of the Kosovo section of the 2022 book, *Transgender in Post Yugoslav Space*. The organisers shared that some performers were reluctant to participate.

Kosovo's first gay bar, Bubble, continued to operate since the opening in 2022. Bubble regularly receives threats, but none of them have materialised to date.

The Sekhmet Institute conducted a study on queer people's access to voting.

At the end of November, the play *The Apple Was Not an Accident* premiered, a performance about the power of not giving up. The play was directed and performed by a lesbian couple and was supported by CSGD.

### LATVIA

The parliament elected openly gay Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvičs as the country's new president, becoming the first LGBTI person to hold this post in the EU.

'Daugaypils', a film about being LGBTQ+ in Daugavpils was released this year.

### LITHUANIA

An exhibition at the National Art Gallery celebrates the work of Veronika (Vėra) Šleivytyė, the first Lithuanian photographer to capture love in lesbian relationships.

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### LUXEMBOURG

Centre LGBTIQ+ Cigale's "Marc Grand" library entered the national network of libraries as the only one specialised on queer topics in Luxembourg.

In 2023, Rosa Lëtzebuerg launched the [Queer Archive Luxembourg](#) to document contemporary queer life in Luxembourg. In this context, parts of the exhibition 'LGBTIQ+ History in Luxembourg,' which originated from a project of the Queer Archive, were [displayed in Berlin](#).

In the final agreement released on October 17, the government coalition incorporated 6 out of 37 of Rosa Lëtzebuerg's election demands, published before the elections. These included the establishment of a Ministry for Gender Equality and Diversity, automatic recognition of same-sex parents in cases of assisted reproduction or surrogacy abroad, a ban on 'conversion practices', and enabling full blood donation for men who have sex with men. However, Rosa Lëtzebuerg [expressed](#) disappointment with the new coalition government's reluctance toward broader reform.

### MALTA

The exhibition Tender and Masculine was [hosted](#) in Rosa Kwir in January.

In September, several cultural events and performances were held in Valletta as part of EuroPride 2023, including exhibitions, theatre, concerts, drag shows, literary events, and more.

### MONTENEGRO

Montenegro held its general elections in June. Civil society analysed the list of candidates and party programs, finding a serious [gender gap](#); a complete [lack](#) of candidates who are openly LGBTIQ+ and [very little coverage](#) of gender equality and [LGBTIQ+ issues](#) by parties.

### NETHERLANDS

(See under Bias-motivated Speech)

The [Rainbow Ballot Box Agreement 2023](#) by COC, addressing issues such as countering violence and discrimination, acceptance in schools and improvement of LGBTI+ human rights, was signed by ten political parties ahead of the general elections in November.

In February, NOC\*NSF [presented](#) their updated Guide to Gender and Sex Diverse People in Sports, which was welcomed by Transgender Netwerk.

Rikkie Kollé, a trans woman, [won](#) Miss Netherlands 2023. She was targeted by endless hate comments afterwards.

The Dutch competitor, Solange Dekker, [won](#) Miss International Queen 2023, a beauty pageant for trans women.

### PORTUGAL

The short film *Um Caroço de Avocado*, featuring the story of a trans woman, won the award for best queer film at an international film festival.

Mariana Mortágua, leader of the Left Bloc, [came out](#) as lesbian in May.

In October, Marina Machete, a trans woman, [won](#) Miss Portugal.

In October, Festival Imersão, a festival promoting emerging LGBTIQ+ talent, was [held](#) for the first time in Lisbon.

Porto will have a street [named](#) after Gisberta Salce Júnior, a migrant trans woman who was brutally murdered in 2006.

### RUSSIA

Bisexual writer, Sveta Lukyanova [released](#) her debut novel, *I'm Not Doing Anything Bad*.

### SAN MARINO

Long-time [LGBT activist](#) and openly gay politician Paolo Rondelli continued speaking up for LGBTI rights after having been one of two captains regent, San Marino's heads of state (see [here](#) and [here](#)).

### SERBIA

A short film was [released](#) celebrating the contributions of lesbians to the LGBT movement in Serbia.

*Enough with the silence*, a comic book based on an intersex person's life was [published](#) in October. Vrhunac, written by Aleksandra Bojanića about a queer young person, was [published](#) this year.

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Serbian *Eurovision Song Contest* runner-up contestant, [openly gay performer](#), Luke Black [spoke up](#) for LGBTQ+ rights.

Rainbow Ignite opened the first LGBTQ+ archive in the Balkan region and the exhibition “Arkadija - Where we were”: about Serbian LGBTI heritage and cultural history was [held](#) in September in Belgrade.

### SLOVAKIA

A young Roma queer person, Vojtěch Klinec [released](#) a song about his experiences growing up as part of two minorities.

In October, a Czech and Slovak produced film, *Úsvit*, the story of an intersex person, premiered in theatres across Slovakia and Czechia. A trans non-professional actor, cast as an intersex character, was [awarded Best Actor Award](#) at Thessaloniki International Film Festival in Greece.

### SPAIN

In June, trans activist Sandra Rodríguez Salas [resigned](#) as PSOE councillor in Granada due to “latent transphobia” in the party. Carla Antonelli, who [left](#) PSOE for Más Madrid, [became](#) the first trans senator in July. Municipal candidate Pilar Lima in Valencia was [targeted](#) by ableist and lesbophobic speech. A gay candidate in the municipal elections, Óscar Balcones, [reported](#) homophobic threats and hate messages.

Under Spain’s new [Sports Law](#), discrimination against LGBTI people in sports is prohibited. In May, however, the Spanish Basketball Federation [refused](#) to allow a trans player to participate in the second league. Valencia hosted a running race, which [featured](#) a non-binary category for the first time.

A goalie in the fourth football division [came out](#) with an affectionate kiss after a successful game. A famous flamenco singer also [came out](#).

A production of the opera, *Tosca in Seville* [received](#) homophobic backlash for featuring a same-sex scene.

### SWEDEN

The play *Ulla & Zarah*, by Elisabeth Ohlson [premiered](#) in August. The play is about the relationship between the, during the 1930’s and 1940’s, between the celebrated Swedish singers, Ulla Billquist and Zarah Leander.

### SWITZERLAND

(See also under Equality and Non-discrimination)

The Swiss army [announced](#) in January it would carry out a thorough investigation to map anti-LGBT and sexist discrimination and violence within its ranks. In February, an army official was [fined](#) for homophobic insults against a gay soldier during and after their service together.

In January, the Zurich cantonal council [voted](#) against mandatory training on anti-LGBTI aggression for police officers, prosecutors and court employees.

Bern hosted Europe’s largest LGBTQI sports event Eurogames in July. Over 2,300 participants [registered](#) for 20 sports.

Since September, the city of Zürich, together with TGNS and trans activists, reserves a [swimming](#) pool once a week for the trans community.

An opera about trans pioneer Lili Elbe premiered in St. Gallen in October.

### TURKEY

LGBTI+ activists including trans activist Esmeray Özadikti [ran](#) as a candidate for the Turkish Workers’ Party (TİP).

A total of 58 candidates from CHP, TİP, and the Green Left Party signed the LGBTI+ Rights Charter prepared by SPoD, which was open for signatures by parliamentary candidates from all political parties. Eleven candidates who signed the LGBTI+ Rights Charter were elected: one MP from CHP, three from TİP, and seven from the Green Left Party.

Pop singer Gülşen [was given a suspended sentence](#) of ten months in prison for mocking religious schools and served five days in prison and 15 under house arrest. She has frequently been targeted by pro-government media for her support of LGBTI+ people and for using the rainbow flag at concerts.

### UNITED KINGDOM

Instead of a blanket ban, Swim England [introduced](#) an ‘open’ category for trans/non-binary athletes; trans people can compete in amateur and recreational races on the basis of self-ID. UK Athletics also [seeks](#) a similar ‘open’ category, which while would allow trans women to

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compete, would [ban](#) them from the women's category. British Rowing [did](#) the same after a membership vote. Several others adopted similar bans this year.

TRUK United FC [made headlines](#) as the first trans-masculine football team in the world.

Mermaids' Young People and Sport report [found](#) that over a half of trans youth felt their gender identity impacted their participation in sport; over a half were worried about exclusion; 63% said exclusion from sport had [worsened](#) their mental health.