SWEDEN

ASYLUM
In August, RFSL released a new report, based on 1,360 decisions and judgments in LGBTI asylum cases between 2020-2023, which found that 96% of the decisions led to rejection; that LGBTI applicants rarely receive an individual examination; that the ‘discretion requirement’ and stereotypical requirements are both still applied; and that applicants are deported to home countries that criminalise LGBTI people, including with the death penalty. RFSL reminds that LGBTQI refugees remain a priority group in the governing coalition’s agreement, which also sets out a review of the asylum process to improve procedures for LGBTQI applicants. In response to the report, the government promised to investigate the issues outlined.

BIAS-MOTIVATED SPEECH
(See also under Education; and Freedom of Assembly)
Anti-LGBTQI statements remained common this year, of which many originated from right wing populist politicians from the governments cooperation party Sweden Democrats (SD). In Eskilstuna SD called Pride a “radical political organisation” in April and requested the municipality to stop funding the event in order to “protect children from sexual influences”. In September, SD MP Björn Söder said that Stockholm Pride was not suitable for children and young people. MPs of SD said in parliament that drag story events violated the best interest of the child. In an interview, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson rebuked Söder’s statement.

Mockery and hate against trans children and their parents have become the norm, with parents and trans groups urging decision makers to take action. In September, the public service TV channel SVT launched the series “The Trans War”, which featured anti-trans rhetoric and misinformation. Civil society organisations issued several statements in response (see here, here, here, and here). At least 100 complaints were sent to the Review Board asking for the removal of the series. In April, a teenager in Gothenburg said they would “cut the throats of homosexuals” in response to the Pride flag at a local library.

BIAS-MOTIVATED VIOLENCE
A group of young Pride participants were verbally harassed on their way to Helsingborg Pride in July. The city reported the case to the police.

EDUCATION
In September, several media outlets spread false rumours that preschoolers are taught sex education. Sweden Democrats (SD) continued to speak against sex education and norm-critical education in hostile ways.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION
As part of the Swedish Presidency of the EU, Sweden and the European Commission hosted the High Level Conference on LGBTQI Equality in the EU in April. Following the end of the Presidency, civil society urged the government to continue working on gender equality, LGBTQI rights, and sexual and reproductive rights.

In July, the Minister for Equality Paulina Brandberg announced that the state would provide 4.6 million SEK to municipalities and regions to increase knowledge about the situation of LGBTQI people and to promote digital meeting places.

1.4 million SEK will go to the Gender Equality Agency (Jämställdhetsmyndigheten) for a survey with LGBTQI people who are exposed to partnership violence.
During Stockholm Pride in August, Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson raised the flag at the PM’s official residence. RFSL welcomed the move but asked for a more effective response to hate speech in parliament instead. Prime Minister Kristersson also, during Stockholm Pride, hosted a Pride cocktail party, which was the first time a Swedish Prime Minister hosted a rainbow event at his residence.

FAMILY
RFSL continued to lobby for law reform that protects all families. Since 2022, the presumption of parenthood is automatic for all couples who are married and have a child in Sweden, regardless of gender. The law includes two exceptions where parenthood can be later invalidated – in the case of home insemination or assisted reproduction that was conducted abroad and with an unknown donor.

FOREIGN POLICY
Sweden joined the European Commission’s infringement proceedings against Hungary over its anti-LGBT legislation.

As one of the final steps of the Swedish Presidency of the EU, the EU Justice Affairs Council adopted conclusions on the protection of LGBTI communities in Europe.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY
A camp for trans children, organised by Transsammans and RFSL Ungdom was cancelled in June due to threats.

HEALTH
In February, Transsammans opened the first national helpline for trans youth.

Ahead of Women’s Day, RFSL Stockholm released a report about LBQ women’s access to healthcare. The majority of 812 participants reported having good contact with healthcare, but many avoid seeking care. For instance, almost a third said they do not go to a gynaecologist.

Following from the 2021 decision, the National Board for Health and Welfare (Socialstyrelsen) classified gender-affirming care as so-called “national specialised healthcare”. In March the Board announced that as of January 1, 2024, there will be six clinics, with three main ones in Stockholm, Alingsås, and Linköping, which cooperate with satellite clinics in Uppsala, Umeå and Malmö/Lund.

In June, the Agency for the Assessment of Health Technology and Social Services (SBU) released a study to conclude that few people regret transitioning or detransition. The rate of between 0–4% is based mostly on literature from outside Sweden.

In September, the largest clinic in Sweden that provides care for trans minors issued an internal guidance telling care providers not to refer minors under the age of 11 to their clinic. The decision was made a few days after SVT’s documentary premiered (see under Bias-motivated Speech). At the time, 74 of the 368 patients were under 11, which means that a significant rate of trans minors would be left without care.

The National Board of Health and Welfare investigated whether the guidelines for adults with gender dysphoria should be updated to better fit the national specialised health care system.

In October, Sweden Democrats (SD) in the parliament proposed to raise the age limit for trans healthcare to 25.

The government said they would commission the National Board of Health and Welfare to plan individual risk assessment for men who have sex with men (MSM) from 2024, instead of a blanket rule. The current blood donation rule sets out a six-month deferral period for MSM.

HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS
The youth organisation RFSL Ungdom turned 20 this year.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT
(See under Equality and Non-discrimination)

LEGAL GENDER RECOGNITION
The legal gender recognition (LGR) reform continued to be stalled this year. In September, the Moderates (M) and Liberals (L), both government parties, shared that they were going to table a new bill in parliament, as a way of circumventing the deadlock in the government coalition, which would require an expert opinion from a doctor or psychologist and would make LGR available for those aged 16–17 if they have parental consent. The bill has high probability of becoming law. Civil society continued to lobby for a model based solely on self-determination (see here, here, here, here, here, and here). 50 organisations are currently supporting this call and a demonstration was held in September by LGBTQI activists calling for LGR based on self-determination. Sweden is currently the only Nordic country that does not have such a model in place.
PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL LIFE

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.