

Participation in Public Cultural and Political Life

ALBANIA

Ahead of the parliamentary elections of 11 May 2025, the third edition of the *Mendo Politikisht* [analysis](#) reviewed political party programmes with regard to LGBTI rights. The report found that only one political subject explicitly referred to sexual orientation and gender identity as protected grounds from discrimination. All other parties and coalitions analysed either made no reference to LGBTI issues or addressed human rights in general terms without specific commitments. The majority of political programmes did not include concrete proposals on legal recognition of same-sex couples, legal gender recognition, protection from hate speech and hate crimes, or access to LGBTI-inclusive services.

AZERBAIJAN

In 2025, several [short films](#) in Azerbaijan used personal storytelling to depict LGBTI lives, bringing visibility to experiences that have historically been absent from the country's cinema.

BELGIUM

A [draft resolution](#) was introduced in the Belgian Senate by the PS political group. Its objectives included achieving pay equality between male and female elite athletes and promoting the inclusion of LGBTI people in sport. Both texts were rejected twice by the Belgian majority.

CROATIA

In March, [backlash](#) erupted in Croatia following the victory of 21-year-old singer Marko Bošnjak, in the Dora national final to pick an entry for the Eurovision Song Contest one of the few openly queer public figures in the region. After his win, right-wing Catholic media outlets accused the jury of privileging "non-binary" and "transgender" performers against the "will of the people." The conservative group Vigilare went further, denouncing Bošnjak's 2022 Dora entry "Pray for Us" as evidence that he had "sold his soul to the devil," while branding Eurovision a "fair of Satanism and perversion."

GREECE

In July, 26-year-old Electra Rome Dohtsi was [elected](#) president of Volt Greece, becoming the country's

first openly trans political party leader.

ICELAND

In September, the new Icelandic Queer Film Festival [took place](#) at Bíó Paradís from September 4 to 7. The inaugural festival showcased documentaries, feature films, and short films, combining new releases with curated classics.

ITALY

The Winter Olympics Milano-Cortina 2026 will host [Pride House Milano 2026](#), an LGBTI space promoted by Milano Pride to unite sports and human rights. The venue will operate from February 6-22 at MEET in Porta Venezia, Milan, featuring talks, cultural events, and live viewing of competitions.

KAZAKHSTAN

In late December 2024, the Almaty Defense Department issued a [statement](#) regarding a trans blogger who had received a military summons from the Medeu district office in Almaty. The Defence Department clarified that summonses are issued to all citizens eligible for conscription, regardless of social status, profession, or other factors. Whether she will ultimately serve will depend on the outcome of a medical examination and a review of the documents she provides.

KYRGYZSTAN

In June, the participation of a Kazakh trans blogger in a fashion show in Bishkek caused [controversy](#). According to the blogger, her appearance on stage led to immediate backlash from local authorities. She reported that event organisers informed her of a conflict with the State Committee for National Security (SCNS), which objected to her participation.

NETHERLANDS

In late October, leaders and representatives of seven political parties [signed](#) a Rainbow Ballot Agreement 2025 with COC Netherlands. Through the agreement, the parties committed to advancing safety, emancipation, and human rights for LGBTI people during the upcoming cabinet period. The agreement was signed by Frans Timmermans (GL|PvdA), Henri Bontenbal (CDA), Rob Jetten (D66),

Dilan Yeşilgöz (VVD), Bastiaan Meijer (SP), Ines Kostić (PvdD), and Marieke Koekoek (Volt).

NORWAY

In February, Elisabeth Meling became the first trans person in Norway to top a parliamentary election list. The decision was confirmed when the Centre Party held its nomination vote in Vestland county. Meling was placed first on the party's list in the Hordaland electoral district, while also being nominated in second place on the list for the Sogn og Fjordane district.

In June, the Oslo District Court removed a judge from the upcoming terror trial against Arfan Bhatti after he wrote an editorial in support of Pride. District Court Judge Steinar Backe had criticised teachers who opposed Pride celebrations in an *Aftenposten* editorial in May of last year. Bhatti's defense attorney, John Christian Elden, argued that these statements made the judge unfit to preside over the trial.

In June, the Norwegian Football Federation (NFF) continued work on guidelines for the participation of trans women in football, involving consultation with trans players and a review of international practices. A draft framework had been prepared, but no final guidelines were published or adopted by the end of 2025.

In October, Tromsø Municipality announced that it had entrusted the Arctic Pride organisation with coordinating the development and implementation of the municipality's forthcoming action plan on gender and sexual diversity. The mandate includes delivering capacity-building activities in cooperation with civil society partners.

POLAND

In late September, a report by a special commission established by the Ministries of Justice and Interior concluded that Poland's public media had engaged in systematic repressive and defamatory actions against activists, non-governmental organisations and civil society during the Law and Justice (PiS) government (2015-2023). The commission found that public broadcasting was used to promote the government and marginalise or discredit opponents,

including civil-society actors. It cited imbalanced media coverage, noting that in debates on tightening abortion law in 2016 and 2020, *Polskie Radio* invited 61 guests, 55 of whom presented anti-abortion views, while no pro-choice activists were included. The commission announced that it would forward its findings to prosecutors to assess potential criminal liability.

SPAIN

In April, the Constitutional Court upheld the appeal of unconstitutionality filed by Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez against the reform introduced in 2023 by Madrid's current governor Isabel Díaz Ayuso to Madrid's law against LGBTI-phobia. The reform aimed to limit the role of LGBTI associations, human rights organisations, and other entities as "interested parties" in administrative procedures seeking protection against discrimination. While the original law allowed such organisations to intervene in defence of collective rights and, with consent, represent individual victims, Ayuso's reform excluded this possibility in both criminal and administrative sanctioning proceedings. The Court ruled that the measure was unconstitutional, declaring it null and void on the grounds that it infringed on the State's exclusive competences over procedural legislation.

In May, the Socialist Party of the Valencian Community called for disciplinary proceedings against an advisor to the Presidency of the Valencian parliament following the expulsion of LGBTI organisations from a plenary session. The removal occurred during a control session after representatives chanted in support of the Trans Law. Vox, which holds the presidency of *Les Corts*, publicly opposed any disciplinary action.

In June, the Official State Gazette published an order from the Ministry of Culture amending the rules for film cost recognition and state aid to cinema, introducing new measures to promote the "real and effective" equality of trans people. The reform stipulates that all state production aid will award additional points when trans people are part of the project team in the positions specified by the calls.

SWEDEN

In November, two members of the Open Christian Democrats (KD), Sara Bystam and Maria Hansson, requested to leave the party in protest after the leader of the party, Deputy Prime Minister Ebba Busch, announced that KD will work to dismantle the recently passed Gender Identity Act.

TURKEY

In September, the Ministry of Family and Social Services requested that access to the song 'Perperişan' by Turkish singer Mabel Matiz be blocked, claiming that its content could "harm the family institution, negatively affect the mental development of children and young people, disrupt public order, and cause outrage in society." Following this, the Ministry of Interior filed a criminal complaint against Matiz with the Istanbul Chief Prosecutor's Office under Article 226 of the Turkish Penal Code, which criminalises "obscenity" under the broader category of "crimes contrary to general morality." The song was blocked on September 18, and Matiz testified to the prosecutor on September 22. By October, the Ankara Criminal Court of Peace sentenced him to six months to three years in prison for "mediating the publication of obscene publications," rejecting the singer's defense.

UKRAINE

In September, the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine appointed Ivan Verbytskyi, who is known as a human rights activist and an open representative of the LGBTI community, as Deputy Minister of Culture and Strategic Communications, the Ministry of Culture and Strategic Communications announced. In this role, Verbytskyi will oversee the protection of cultural heritage, guide the development of the museum sector, and supervise the processes of export, import, and repatriation of cultural assets.

UZBEKISTAN

In January, a virtual exhibition of Uzbek queer artists titled Queer Square opened on the metaverse platform Spatial. The online setting offers safety and anonymity, enabling LGBTI artists to present their work free from censorship and allowing audiences to view it without fear.