

**International  
Photo Exhibition 2025**

**Queer  
sports**



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## Queer Sports

Sports have the power to unite, inspire, and celebrate human potential—yet for many in the LGBTIQ+ community, the world of athletics remains a space of both triumph and struggle. This year, the Rainbow Cities Network presents “Queer Sports,” a compelling photo exhibition that captures the joy, resilience, and challenges of queer athletes around the globe, playing with pride. Through striking visuals, the exhibition invites viewers to witness moments of victory, camaraderie, and unapologetic self-expression, while also reflecting on the barriers that still prevent full inclusion in sports.

The exhibition showcases powerful images of LGBTIQ+ individuals and teams—whether in volleyball, swimming, skating, or dancing—breaking stereotypes and thriving in their disciplines. These photos tell stories of perseverance. They remind us that sports should be for everyone, regardless of gender identity or sexual orientation.

Yet, behind these moments of pride lies a harsh reality. Many LGBTIQ+ athletes face discrimination, harassment, and systemic exclusion. Homophobic slurs in locker rooms, biased refereeing, and restrictive policies—especially against trans and non-binary competitors—are still widespread. In some countries, queer athletes risk their safety simply by participating, while others are forced to hide their identities to avoid backlash.

Even in more progressive regions, stereotypes persist. Women in sports are often subjected to sexist and homophobic scrutiny, while gay male athletes may fear coming out due to stigma. Trans athletes, despite their skill and dedication, are frequently tar-



geted by debates that question their right to compete. These challenges push many talented individuals away from sports altogether, depriving the world of their potential.

“Queer Sports” is more than just a collection of images—it’s a call to action. By highlighting both the beauty of queer participation in sports and the obstacles that remain, the exhibition urges viewers to reflect: How can we make sports truly inclusive? Join us in reflection and celebration!

We invite you to experience this powerful exhibition—celebrate the courage of LGBTIQ+ athletes, but also acknowledge the inequalities they face. Let their stories inspire you to stand for fairness, respect, and the right of every individual to play without fear.

Sports should be about passion, skill, and teamwork—not exclusion. Let’s change the game together.

The Board  
Rainbow Cities Network

**The board**  
Rainbow Cities Network







## The RCN exhibition “Queer Sports”

Sport is healthy. It supports physical and mental development, teaches teamwork, and enables us, from an early age on, to enjoy victories and deal with disappointments. It unites us as a community and opens up a space where one might show and celebrate one's feelings. Sport is art, a way to express ourselves, and gives us the opportunity to experience freedom.

And yet, there is a shady side to sport: too much pressure to succeed, doping, exploitation, and the generation or reproduction of hegemonic body norms are part of the game—just like sexism, racism, and homo-, bi-, trans-, and interphobia. So far, only the mascots have been allowed to be gender-atypical, at best.

All of this has led to the fact that top athletes almost never come out as queer during their active years. On the podiums, national flags are waving vividly, while the rainbow flags—most of the time—only wave in their hearts, hidden from everyone else.

Amateur sport also seems to be daunting, even scary, for queer people. They experience discrimination and/or exclusion every day; sport, unfortunately, is no exception: changing rooms, communal showers, and physical contact often prevent queer individuals from participating due to the fear that the heterosexual majority in clubs might reject them as being different, might not want them nearby, or might imply that queers joined only out of sexual interest. These issues often already start in school...

While queer people, for all these reasons and more, have been avoiding sport—or mainly sports clubs—in the past, the next generation of queers didn't give up: they

defy norms, build strength, and claim their place—everywhere in society, including gyms and training groups. Often, these new initiatives come to life through collaboration between public city authorities, sport organizations, and queer communities.

With a fast-growing number of members, these queer sport groups, clubs, and associations—mostly run by volunteers—promote equal opportunities for physical activity and recreation, and offer a variety of disciplines to encourage people to try new things. As they welcome everyone with respect for all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions, they are more than just spaces for sport—they are places of welcome and empowerment. They have become benchmarks in creating environments where everyone can live and express themselves freely.

Queer sport is more than just physical activity. It is—not just on specific queer action days—an act of constant resistance against the constraints of traditional gender norms. It stands for a colourful, tolerant society in which discrimination has no place, where bodies can move freely, and where identities require no apology.

Big queer sporting events like the EuroGames bring together athletes from all over the world. Their goals are to win medals—but more importantly, these events spread joy and celebrate the unique experience of being part of something bigger. Their presence honours resilience, inclusivity, and the unbreakable spirit of queer athletes who make sport a place for everyone—and who help queer public spaces into being.



Photo: Georg Wilke

**Wolfgang Wilhelm, Vienna**  
Curator of the exhibition





# Bremen Flies the Rainbow Flag

by Hartmut Müller

Bremen is a city known for its diversity and openness, welcoming people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds. The football club SV Werder Bremen also stands for a colourful, tolerant society in which discrimination has no place. A visible sign

of this attitude is the rainbow corner flags that have been displayed at the corners of the pitch at every home match for several years. These flags are now firmly anchored in the club's everyday life and symbolise support for equal rights and respect.





# Defying Gender Norms in Skateboarding

by Karina Buendía Monroy

Jessica Vazquez "PATO" is a lesbian skateboarder who has been performing wheel skills for 15 years and has represented Mexico in international competitions.





## Out in Slovenia Team at the Sports Camp in Slovakia

by Tina Eowyn Šmid

In cooperation with five other LGBTQIA+ sports organisations and as part of the ISSCCEE project, the Out in Slovenia organisation coordinated a sports camp in Slovakia. To combat discrimination, we created a safe space where participants could try

various sports such as football, badminton, floorball, volleyball, vogue, hiking and more. This allowed them to explore new activities while also becoming familiar with the work of multiple LGBTQIA+ sports organisations operating across different countries.





# Play as You Are!

by Flore Pratolini/Geneva Bad'Ass

With a fast-growing number of members, the Geneva LGBTQIA+ Badminton Club Bad'Ass welcomes everyone with respect for all sexual orientations, gender identities and expressions. Bad'Ass was

one of several queer clubs supported by the City to come together as part of a collective featured in an awareness-raising exhibition at the very popular Geneva Sports Festival.





## Trans & Inter Swimming in a Safe Setting

by Sandra Stein

Every fourth Friday evening of the month, a public pool in Cologne is reserved exclusively for transgender and intersex people. During pool times, the changing rooms, showers and toilets are gender-neutral to ensure that everyone feels safe and comfortable.

Swimming sessions alternate monthly between “trans & inter only” (including non-binary and genderqueer) and “trans & inter & friends”. The project has been a successful cooperation between the City of Cologne and two queer NGOs since 2020.





# **Pride in Every Step: Inclusive Dancing in the Streets of Copenhagen**

by Bjarke de Koning

Pan Idræt's Rainbow Sports Square, Nytorv, 14 August 2024.

Pan Sports' Rainbow Sports Square, New Square, 14 August 2024.





## United in Sporting Diversity

by mvd e.V.

Thanks to the founders who started as a gay volleyball team in 1996, the mvd-volleydolls recently organised the 22<sup>nd</sup> international LGBTIQ+ volleyball tournament. Over the years, mvd has added swimming, fitness, Asian sports, football, badminton, rowing, table tennis and bouldering. Today, mvd offers 25 different

sports every week, all run by volunteers. Playing sports together is a great way to celebrate our open-minded LGBTIQ+ community in a safer space. Refugees participate free of charge.

Website: [www.mvd-mannheim.de](http://www.mvd-mannheim.de)





# Swimming is for Everyone

by Laura Oja

The City of Helsinki has provided an accessible unisex dressing and shower room at the Itäkeskus swimming hall since 2018 in order to promote equal opportunities for exercise and recreation for people belonging to gender minorities. The picture features a gender-diverse family from Helsinki who often visits the Itäkeskus swimming hall.

“This room enables a safe space with one’s own body. Among our own family members, we can shower without shame and receive support and reinforcement from each other.”





# FLINTA\* CIRCLE Cypher im Klub

by Rimm Debesay

Founded in March 2022 by Melle Munz and now located at the cultural centre Karlstorbahnhof since 2024, the FLINTA\* Circle offers a welcoming space for sports and connection. With free, weekly beginner-friendly dance and movement workshops, it's a

multigenerational project open to all ages. As a queer-feminist safer space, it empowers FLINTA\* individuals (German for Women, Lesbians, Intersex, Non-binary, Trans, Agender) under the motto "each one, teach one."





# Transmasculinity in Soccer

by Olívia Lopes

“More than soccer, an act of resistance.” With this concept, Sport Club T Mosqueteiros was born in 2019, a transmasculine soccer team made up of 30 players that has excelled in sports competitions

with a focus on diversity. More than just a sports team, it is a place of welcome and empowerment for trans people, with an emphasis on physical and mental health.





# What Are You Looking at?

by Geert Dewachtere

This photo captures the essence of expression, strength, and queerness in motion. With a challenging gaze and a bold stance, the portrayed transcends the conventions of sport and gender. Sport is not just competition—it is a form of art, self-expression, and liberation. This image challenges, inspires, and

asks the question: why accept boundaries when you can break them? Something that Yves Herman, the portrayed, does on a daily basis.

Model: Yves Herman, Styling & MUA: Warry





## Embracing Diversity, Empowering Confidence

by Jing-Rong Wang

This photo was taken at the “Beauty & Power of LGBT+ Bodybuilding and Fitness Competition”, an event that breaks traditional gender norms in sports. Competitors are free to choose the attire and style that best represent their confidence and identity. The individuals on stage proudly showcase their physiques, which are not only a testament to

their dedication and training but also a powerful affirmation of self-identity.

Taipei City has been a long-standing advocate for LGBTIQ+ rights, supporting sports events and public initiatives that encourage self-expression and inclusion, fostering a more equal and accepting society.





# Rise, Queer, Conquer!

by Le Girofard

For the past two years, Le Girofard, Bordeaux's LGBTQI+ centre, has been developing a range of sports in an inclusive and caring environment. In 2025, six sporting activities are on offer (football, volleyball, badminton, handball, climbing and dance), with over 200 members.

An inclusive rugby club, "Les Cannelions", and a queer sports collective for all levels, "Queer moves", have also been set up to enable everyone to take part.

The City of Bordeaux is supporting this initiative for a more inclusive sport that respects all diversities, with specific slots available in its new Haku Michigami Gymnasium.





## Sporting Colors

by Yanrong Lu

This year's theme, "Queer Sports," aligns with the 2025 World Masters Games (WMG), hosted by New Taipei City and Taipei City. We saw this as an excellent opportunity to introduce the 2025 WMG through the lens of gender equality and inclusion.

At the centre of the photo is "Zhuang Bao," also known as Strong, the lovable mascot of this year's World

Masters Games. Zhuang Bao's colour palette – blue, pink and white – symbolises intersex, transgender and non-binary identities, underscoring the WMG's commitment to gender inclusivity, equality and respect for gender diversity.

Location: Banqiao First Stadium





## **We Are Sports and LGBTQ+ Rights!**

by Lluís Oliver, Club Esportiu Panteres Grogues

Barcelona is a pioneering city at the intersection of sport, diversity and inclusion. With a history marked by the defence of LGBTQ+ rights, it has always been a benchmark in creating spaces where everyone can live and express themselves freely.

For over 30 years, Panteres Grogues has been fighting for the visibility of the community in the world of sport, growing into a community of more than 2,400 people who continue to prove that sport is a space for diversity, community and pride.





# United in Sport, Proud in Cork

by Ryan O'Sullivan

This vibrant photograph captures the strength and unity of Cork City's LGBTI+ sports community, featuring members from seven diverse teams standing together against the backdrop of the city's iconic landmarks. Their presence celebrates resilience, inclusivity and the unbreakable spirit of queer athletes who make sport a place for everyone.

In a world where representation matters, this image proudly showcases Cork as a city where diversity thrives – on and off the field.

(Cork Rebels FC, Cork Racketeers Badminton, Hellhounds RFC, Cork Ramblers, Queer Bike Rides, Na Laochra Aeracha GAA, Frontrunners & Briskwalkers Cork)





## Bregenz Sets an Example for Diversity

by Stadt Bregenz

All people in the LGBTQ+ communities in Bregenz have the framework conditions that enable them to freely organise a queer life without discrimination and with equal rights. The city administration, the

LGBTQ+ department and local politicians are actively committed to this – not just on specific queer action days, but continuously and across all areas of society. Bregenz visibly lives diversity.





## Just Let us Train

by Indra Crittin

In a public workout spot largely dominated by cis men, queer women train outside the constraints of traditional gender norms. Through this image, we challenge conventions: topless bodies, loose clothing, weighted pull-ups – practices typically

seen as “masculine”. The message is political: why is it surprising to see queer women taking up space, unconcerned with others’ (sexualising) gaze? In this context, sport becomes a bold statement of self-empowerment and a queering of public spaces.





## Intergenerational Cooperation

by Mara Monetti, City of Frankfurt

Artemis Sport Frankfurt e.V. is the largest women's sports club in the federal state of Hesse and one of the oldest women's and lesbian sports clubs in Germany. Since 1984, the club has been dedicated to the development and promotion of female-oriented sports. The programme in today's ten departments

ranges from health-oriented training to competitive sports. Artemis also offers leisure activities such as feminist cultural programmes and dance parties. This photo shows a cooperative coordination and whole-body fitness training.





# Strong and Visible

by Benjamin Farnam

Trans people don't give up. They defy norms, build strength and claim their place – in gyms, in society, everywhere. They are visible, proud and unfiltered. This series captures an everyday life that should be

a matter of course: a body in motion, an identity that needs no apologies. Being yourself is a constant resistance, but also a victory – every single day.





# Making Waves: Breaking Barriers in Sports

by Valeria Witters

Sport promotes social cohesion and personal well-being. However, many queer people face exclusion and discrimination in sport. As part of the Hamburg Senate's strategy for gender and sexual equality, the Hamburg Sports Association established the

LGBTIQ+ Sports Commission in 2022. It fosters inclusion through collaboration between public authorities, sports organisations and the queer community of the Active City Hamburg. The photo shows the commission's current members in action.





## Embrace Diversity – EuroGames 2024 in Vienna

by Renate Schwarzmüller

“Embrace Diversity” was the proclaimed motto of the EuroGames 2024 in Vienna. For the first time, the EuroGames – Europe’s biggest LGBTQI+ sports event that takes place regularly – was hosted and organised in Austria. About 4,000 athletes from both inside and outside Europe joined the event to compete in 31 sports. One goal was to win

medals, but above all, the event spread joy in sport and celebrated the unique experience shared with so many. For the EuroGames are more than just a sporting event – they are a festival of diversity, a celebration of the lust for life, and a powerful feeling of togetherness.





## Together to the Top with DAV GOC – Der queere Alpenverein by GOC

It began as a gay hiking group in 1986 and became a club after the death of founder John Heeley in 2002. Over time, the concept and membership developed into the largest queer sports club in Europe, with a diverse membership of more than 2,400 people. It offers a wide range of outdoor activities, with safety

being a top priority. Members share a passion for mountains and nature conservation.

The club stands up for LGBTIQ\* rights, diversity and openness, and fights all forms of discrimination, intolerance, racism and hate.





# Pride House – 2024 Paris Games

by Benjamin Vodant, bv\_photographies

In the heart of Paris, the Pride House – Paris 2024 was a vibrant daily celebration during the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Organised by the Fier-Play association, it was dedicated to the promotion of inclusion and diversity, and recognised as an official

Games fan zone and key site of the City of Paris. A true safe space, it brought together the LGBTQIA+ communities and their allies through sport, culture and festivities, making the Olympic spirit shine with pride.





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