



Nordic Council
of Ministers

Rights and opportunities for LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland

Key actors, policy and legislation

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This publication is also available online in a web-accessible version at:
<https://pub.norden.org/temanord2026-523>

Introduction

The consequences are clear in public health surveys, which show that LGBTI people in the Nordic region have poorer mental and physical health than the rest of the population. Transgender people in particular report higher levels of mental ill-health. Self-harm, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts are also significantly more common, particularly among young LGBTI people. Studies show that the poor health of LGBTI people is, among other things, a consequence of prejudice and discrimination, having to hide their identity, and homophobia and transphobia that they encounter in everyday life. (Siverskog, 2021).

The living conditions of LGBTI people are influenced by where in the Nordic region they reside. There are regional differences in, for example, access to support, targeted initiatives and networks. Living in the Nordic region's rural and sparsely populated areas presents specific challenges arising from geographical, cultural and social factors. Young LGBTI people living in rural areas describe their health as poorer and are subjected to more bullying and violence compared with other young LGBTI people in the Nordic region. In many places, there is also a lack of expertise on issues relating to sexuality and gender identity within the healthcare system, as well as poorer access to gender-affirming treatment, compared with more urban areas in the Nordic region (Westerlund et al. 2022). International studies also indicate that indigenous people who identify as LGBTI generally face a higher risk of discrimination, violence, mental ill-health, suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts than other ethnic groups (Kristensen, 2024).

Purpose and mission

Some of the Nordic region's rural and sparsely populated areas are found in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. The countries have different challenges and opportunities, but what they share is that their geographical position, combined with the challenges of being small, in different ways affects LGBTI people's ability to live a life on equal terms. Additionally, knowledge of the conditions faced by LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland is limited, which affects the ability to design targeted initiatives and action plans.

In January 2020, Nordic cooperation through the Nordic Council of Ministers was expanded to include work on equal rights, treatment and opportunities for LGBTI people in the Nordic region. The Nordic Council of Ministers works in various ways to strengthen the rights of LGBTI people in the Nordic region and to promote a Nordic voice against the growing opposition to gender equality and LGBTI rights in various international contexts. An important part of this work is the Nordic LGBTI Fund, which aims to stimulate Nordic cooperation in the LGBTI field.

Since 2021, the Nordic LGBTI Fund has been funding projects aimed at addressing the challenges and barriers that limit the equal rights and opportunities of LGBTI people in the Nordic region. In the projects that have been awarded funding, organisations from the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland are participating to a lesser extent than those from the other Nordic countries. As a result, stakeholders from the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland participate to a lesser extent in Nordic cooperation and benefit less from the financial support, exchange and capacity-building it entails. Nordic cooperation, in turn, misses out on important perspectives, experiences and initiatives.

In 2026 a targeted call for proposals will therefore be launched to ensure that projects applying for funding from the Nordic LGBTI Fund include stakeholders from the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. The purpose of the call for proposals is:

- To increase knowledge and understanding of the issues that limit the rights and opportunities of LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland.
- To provide organisations in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland with better opportunities for cooperation and knowledge exchange
- To expand and strengthen Nordic cooperation on equal rights and opportunities for LGBTI people in the Nordic region

To provide insight into the current conditions for Nordic cooperation projects, the Nordic Council of Ministers' co-operation body, Nordic Information on Gender (NIKK), has written this report. The report identifies key stakeholders, policies, legislation and ongoing initiatives in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland in the LGBTI field.

Hopefully the results will form the basis for the implementation of the call for proposals, the drafting of applications, and future initiatives and activities. The report was conducted in February–March 2026 by Fredrika Almqvist, project coordinator at NIKK.

The report was originally written in Swedish and subsequently translated into English using the translation service DeepL.

Method and scope

A snowball sampling method was used to identify relevant documents and policies (see, for example, Browne, 2005). The method is based on gathering knowledge and information through contacts with individuals and stakeholders who have particular insight into or involvement in a specific area. By identifying and contacting key individuals, further relevant sources, documents and contacts can be gradually identified, making it possible to capture knowledge that might otherwise be difficult to locate. The collection of material took place in January and February 2026.

In practice, the relevant ministries in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland were consulted to ensure that relevant steering documents and policies were included in the report. The Nordic institutions in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland also assisted in identifying stakeholders and the ongoing work being carried out.

Texts have mainly been read in their original languages, namely Danish, Swedish and English. In some cases, web pages have needed to be translated into Swedish from Faroese and Greenlandic. This has been done using the translation service DeepL.

Initially, a literature search was conducted in the *Overton* database. Search terms relating to LGBTI and the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland were used in the respective languages. This search yielded few results.

There is a lack of data to enable quantitative studies on LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. This is noted in several Nordic studies and national reports, including the Åland LGBTI Action Plan and *At være LGBTQIA+ i Kalaallit Nunaat (Being LGBTQIA+ in Kalaallit Nunaat)*, which focuses on the LGBTI situation in Greenland. These emphasise the lack of statistically verified data. During 2026–2027, a project is underway in Greenland to supplement the national population survey on health and well-being with questions aimed at LGBTI people.

The lack of reliable statistics also means that certain international comparisons cannot include the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. This lack of data, in turn, affects the ability to design effective measures and action plans for LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. The international LGBTI organisation ILGA, which annually assesses the status of LGBTI rights in Europe with a focus on protection against discrimination, the right to form a family, protection against hate crimes, recognition of legal gender and the right to bodily integrity, civil society and asylum laws, does not publish statistics on the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland due to a lack of data (Siverskog & Bromseth, 2023).

Mapping of key actors, policy and legislation

The UN conventions on human rights establish fundamental principles regarding the equal value and rights of all people. There are significant differences in how countries around the world have adapted their national legislation and practices to the provisions of the conventions and ensured that these rights are upheld in practice.

The extent to which the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland comply with the conventions on the equal rights and opportunities of LGBTI people varies, both between them and in comparison with Denmark and Finland. Åland largely has the same anti-discrimination legislation as Finland, whilst Greenland included LGBTI rights in its anti-discrimination legislation much later than Denmark. The Faroe Islands have an anti-discrimination law that includes LGBTI people but lack anti-discrimination legislation for LGBTI people in the workplace, in schools and in healthcare. Which, in practice, means that it does not cover most cases of discrimination.

In Greenland, same-sex couples have been able to marry on the same terms as heterosexual couples since 2016, and in Åland since 2017. In the Faroe Islands, same-sex couples have been able to enter a civil partnership since 2017. In the Faroe Islands and Greenland, it is not possible to change one's legal gender. Åland has the same legislation as Finland, which has permitted legal gender reassignment since 2003, and since 2023 has made the process easier with a law based on self-identification.

Faroe Islands

Legislation

In the Faroe Islands, there have been several changes to legislation in the LGBTI field over the past ten years. These developments have mainly been driven by individual members of the Faroese parliament, Lagtinget.

The Nordic Council of Ministers' 2020 publication *Kartläggning och analys av LGBTI-området i Norden* (*Mapping and analysis of LGBTI issues in the Nordic region*) describes several of the rights reforms implemented during the 20th and 21st centuries. Since 2017, civil same-sex marriages have been permitted, and since 2021, parents in same-sex (female) relationships have had equal rights to those in opposite-sex relationships. Hate crime legislation has included sexual orientation since 2006 but does not include discrimination on the grounds of gender identity. There is a lack of protection against discrimination for LGBTI people in the workplace, in schools and in healthcare.

Hate speech legislation has included sexual orientation since 2006 and 2025 a trial also ratified that gender identity also falls under the same law. There is a lack of protection against discrimination for LGBTI people in the workplace, in schools and in healthcare.

In several areas, LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands are denied certain rights, but progress has also been made in recent years. The Faroe Islands responsible for family and social legislation, which has meant that rights reforms implemented in Denmark have been ratified much later in the Faroe Islands. Same-sex couples have the same right to assisted reproduction as heterosexual couples since 2024.

It is possible to change one's biological sex as a Faroese citizen, but gender-affirming hormone treatment must take place in Denmark. The medical treatment may be funded by the Faroese healthcare system if it is approved by the Danish healthcare system. Unlike in Denmark, it is not possible to legally change one's gender, either before or after gender-affirming treatment has been carried out.

Policy and key factors

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Civil society

Civil society organisations have an important role in the LGBTI community in the Faroe Islands. Two local organisations in particular stand out in their work to raise awareness of the conditions faced by LGBTI people and to push for extended rights: Amnesty International Føroyar and LGBT+ Føroyar.

Amnesty International Føroyar is the Faroe Islands' oldest civil society organisation, founded in 1965 in Tórshavn. It has two staff members and works to ensure that LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands can live free and secure lives without discrimination or injustice. This work has yielded tangible results. The organisation was one of the driving forces behind the legalisation of same-sex marriage and is now continuing its work on issues such as the right to legal gender reassignment. Amnesty International Føroyar was the initiator behind the formation of the organisation LGBT+ Føroyar.

The first Pride parade in the Faroe Islands was held in 2005, but it would be another few years before the Faroe Islands also got its first dedicated LGBTI organisation. In 2011, LGBT+ Føroyar was formed, with over 100 participants attending its first founding meeting. LGBT+ Føroyar engages in advocacy work and supports LGBTI people by, among other things, offering advice on issues such as coming out and dealing with family reactions, as well as organising film nights and open meetings.

The Nordic House in the Faroe Islands NLH, is the Faroe Islands' largest cultural producer, staging more than 400 events annually. NLH is committed to LGBTI issues through art and culture, including several performing arts productions on the theme. They have participated in Faroe Islands Pride since its inception in 2005 and make their cultural centre available for events during the festival. They have on several occasions taken part in debates regarding the conditions faced by LGBTI people and have at times faced criticism for this.

Nordic cooperation

Through the Nordic Gender Equality Fund and the Nordic LGBTI Fund, the Nordic Council of Ministers funds collaborations that promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTI people. Each year, the fund allocates resources to projects in which at least three different organisations from at least three different Nordic countries collaborate. The projects can, for example, contribute to the exchange of experiences, new knowledge and Nordic networks. Organisations from the Faroe Islands have participated in two collaborative projects:

Miðnám í Vestmanna is an educational institution in the Faroe Islands that runs the *Tilfeingisbreyt* (the Resource Line) upper secondary programme. Together with an Icelandic and a Swedish partner, they are carrying out a collaborative project funded by the Nordic LGBTI Fund 2023, Developing training program to support LGBTI wellness in school. The project highlights how LGBTI children and young people in small rural communities are particularly vulnerable. By providing teachers and school staff with training to combat prejudice, exclusion and marginalisation of pupils, the aim is to improve the well-being of pupils who identify as LGBTI.

The Faroese LGBTI organisation LGBT+ Føroyar was one of 11 organisations participating in the project LGBTI and Ageing in the Nordic Countries. The project received funding from the Nordic LGBTI Fund in 2023 and culminated in a conference and network. Within the network, LGBTI organisations and other relevant stakeholders can exchange knowledge and experiences of bringing together older LGBTI people, collaborate and support one another in the work to include the LGBTI perspective in policy processes that are specifically relevant to older people.

Legislation

Åland has largely followed Finnish legislation in the LGBTI field. Åland is governed by the Åland Parliament and the Provincial Government, which enact implementing legislation tailored to local circumstances. Discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation has been prohibited since 1995, and since 2005 the Discrimination Act has also included gender identity or expression. Registered partnerships were introduced in 2002, and in the same year it became possible to change one's legal gender. Same-sex female couples have been able to receive IVF treatment (also known as in vitro fertilisation) since 2007. Under the new Maternity Act of April 2019, parenthood is automatically recognised for same-sex couples who have a child through assisted reproduction by mutual consent. Parenthood can thus be established as early as during pregnancy – rather than through an adoption process for the non-gestating partner.

It has been possible to change one's legal gender in Åland since 2003, but at that time this required a diagnosis and sterilisation. Since 2023, the determination of legal gender has been separated from medical diagnoses and treatments under the Act on Gender Determination, and sterilisation is no longer required. (FFS 295/2023). Gender-affirming hormone therapy has been permitted in Åland since the 1970s, but in practice there is a lack of access to care, and those seeking treatment are referred to hospitals on the Finnish mainland or in Sweden via the Åland health and medical services in order to undergo their treatment.

Policy and key factors

Today, LGBTI issues fall under the remit of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. One of the Åland implementing laws stipulates that all Åland authorities have obligations in the LGBTI field. Discrimination legislation follows that of Finland, with some local adaptations.

The Åland Ombudsman's Office is responsible for monitoring compliance with equality legislation. The Åland Ombudsman's Office is an independent authority which, under the Provincial Act, is tasked with promoting and safeguarding the individual's right to equal treatment, with sexual orientation being one of the grounds for discrimination. The Authority's latest survey, *Upplevd diskriminering i det åländska samhället 2025* (*Experiences of discrimination in Åland society 2025*) does not report any specific data for respondents belonging to a sexual minority.

Among respondents who consider themselves to belong to some form of minority (ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability) in Åland, 65 per cent stated that they have experienced discrimination. This is significantly higher than among those who do not consider themselves to belong to any minority, where the corresponding figure is 29 per cent.

In 2018, the Local Government decided to appoint a working group to draw up an action plan to make society more accessible, safe and inclusive for LGBTI people in Åland. In 2019, the first action plan was adopted; *Handlingsplan för hbtqia-personers lika villkor i det åländska samhället (Action plan for equal opportunities for LGBTQIA+ people in Åland society)* and the updated plan, to be published in spring 2026, is valid until 2031. The working group for the updated plan includes representatives from the education sector, the social sector, the Patient and Client Ombudsman, and the Government Secretariat.

The group working on the action plan noted at an early stage that statistics and information on LGBTI issues in Åland were lacking, and that there was a need to assess the current situation, set priorities and identify areas for action. Furthermore, the plan notes that the public health surveys conducted in Åland lack questions relating to LGBTI issues. In a small (fewer than 50 respondents) cross-sectional survey, which were carried out in connection with the development of the action plan, just over nine out of ten respondents stated that they felt the treatment of LGBTI people was generally different from that of other people in Åland. Three in ten stated that they felt lonely. The survey and questionnaire responses in the action plan also show that experiences of and fear of discrimination, violence and harassment on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression are common within the LGBTI community in Åland.

Civil society

The Åland LGBTI Action Plan describes how the development of LGBTI rights in Åland has primarily been driven by individual activists, the third sector such as NGOs and private actors. In the early 1990s, the first Åland LGBTI organisation, Vildrosorna, emerged. Vildrosorna consisted of a few passionate individuals who organised regular LGBTI meetings at designated locations. Today, it is instead the LGBTI organisation Regnbågsfyren that is active. Regnbågsfyren began its work in 2005 and is currently engaged in awareness-raising, political advocacy and other social and support activities, such as writing letters to the editor, organising events, acting as a consultative body to the provincial government, and providing information in schools about a norm-critical approach and what it is like to be an LGBTI person.

Since 2014, Regnbågsfyren has organised the annual Åland Pride in Mariehamn. During the centenary year of 2022, when Åland celebrated its 100th anniversary, Regnbågsfyren highlighted Åland and Ålandic history from a queer historical perspective through the collection of traces of queer Ålandic lives, exhibitions, manifestos, discussions and lectures.

The Nordic Institute in Åland (NIPÅ) is involved in LGBTI issues in various ways and draws attention to *the Nordic Council of Ministers' programme for gender equality and LGBTI* (2025–2030), including by participating in Åland Pride, marking IDAHOT (International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia) and screening films and theatre performances on the theme.

Nordic cooperation

Organisations from Åland have been participating in two projects funded by the Nordic LGBTI Fund. Regnbågsfyren was one of the partner organisations in the LGBTI Fund project *Trans, Labour Market, Wallet* (2023–2024). The project aimed to produce equality data for transgender people and those with transgender experience, focusing on the labour market and personal finances. A study was carried out in two stages: A large-scale quantitative survey followed by a qualitative study to explore the results in greater depth.

Regnbågsfyren was also involved in the LGBTI Fund project *LGBTQI senior issues in the Nordic countries* (2023–2024). A physical conference was held in Stockholm in autumn 2024, bringing together experts, professionals and representatives of the target group – older LGBTI people – from all the Nordic countries. The conference resulted in a network where LGBTI organisations and other relevant stakeholders can exchange knowledge and experiences of bringing together older LGBTI people, collaborating and supporting one another in the work to include the LGBTI perspective in political processes that are specifically relevant to older people.

Greenland

Legislation

Regarding the legal rights of LGBTI people in Greenland the country has historically followed Denmark, with a few years' delay. Since 2016, same-sex marriage has been permitted in Greenland (Denmark, 2012). In December 2023, the Danish Folketing voted in favour of a legislative amendment recognising 'co-parenting', thereby enabling two women to be parents of a child in Greenland. However, the law does not cover male same-sex couples.

Since 1 July 2024, there has been a comprehensive law on equal treatment and anti-discrimination in Greenland. The grounds for discrimination listed in the LGBTI context are sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and gender characteristics. In connection with the new Equality Act, an independent Equality Board was also established to examine complaints of discrimination against individual Greenlandic citizens, similar to a discrimination ombudsman.

Policy and key factors

In Greenland, the Minister for Health and Social Affairs is responsible for LGBTI issues. There are also independent national key actors working to promote LGBTI people's right to equal conditions and opportunities. IPPS (IPPS – Pisinnaatitaaffiit) is Greenland's National Institute for Human Rights, an independent council that contributes to general knowledge and skills development and is tasked with promoting and protecting human rights in Greenland. It was established in 2013 by the Greenlandic Parliament.

IPPS does not deal with individual cases or complaints but works proactively at a general level. In 2024, IPPS, together with the LGBTI organisation *Sipineq+*, released *'At være LGBTQIA+ i Kalaallit Nunaat'* (*Being LGBTQIA+ in Kalaallit Nunaat*) the first publication of its kind. The aim was to highlight the LGBTI situation in Greenland and raise awareness of rights that are secured for all Greenlanders today, such as the right to health, the right to equal treatment and the right to non-discrimination.

The Greenlandic report notes that there are particular challenges linked to the right to health for LGBTI people. The lack of resources and the treatment received within the healthcare system, as well as vast geographical distances, lead to vulnerability for LGBTI people. A concrete example of this lack of resources is that it is currently not possible to receive gender hormone treatment in Greenland, which has significant consequences for the individual.

The report *At være LGBTQIA+ i Kalaallit Nunaat (Being LGBTQIA+ in Kalaallit Nunaat)* also highlights the lack of data on the circumstances of LGBTI people in Greenland as a major obstacle. The report therefore draws largely on major international surveys and small, specific studies on LGBTI people who belong to an indigenous population. To gain a better understanding of the conditions and challenges faced by LGBTI people, and to enable comparison with the rest of the population, the report's authors recommend that questions regarding sexuality and gender identity be included in the nationwide population surveys. The report emphasises the need for Greenlandic data in this area, so that strategic action plans for the LGBTI community can be drawn up based on the Greenlandic population.

In 2025, IPS, Sipineq + and the Centre for Public Health in Greenland received external funding for a nationwide survey on the health and well-being of LGBTQIA+ citizens in Greenland. The forthcoming survey builds on the ongoing national population survey and will make it possible to compare the health and well-being of LGBTI people with that of the rest of the population.

Civil society

The LGBTI organisation Sipineq+ was founded in 2023 and has grown in recent years to become the main LGBTI organisation in Greenland. Prior to this, LGBT+ Greenland was the organisation pushing these issues, but it is no longer active. Sipineq+ currently has a board of nine members and plays a key role in organising Nuuk Pride, serving as a meeting place for LGBTI people and actively campaigning for LGBTI rights in Greenland.

Sipineq+ is one of the co-producers of *At være LGBTQIA+ i Kalaallit Nunaat (Being LGBTQIA+ in Kalaallit Nunaat)* and has contributed concrete examples of experiences of being an LGBTI person in Greenland and which rights they consider to be particularly under threat.

The Nordic Institution in Greenland (NAPA) is involved in LGBTI issues in various ways, primarily through Nuuk Pride. In 2025, they organised the event '*Pride in Perspective*'. They also support organisations working on LGBTI issues by providing meeting venues for groups such as Sipineq+. In 2012, NAPA published the book '*Gay Greenland*', which contains 61 portraits of what was then considered a minority in Greenland.

Nordic cooperation

To date, no fund projects with an LGBTI focus, in which any Greenlandic actor participates, have been financed by the Nordic Gender Equality Fund and the Nordic LGBTI Fund.

Concluding remarks

The starting point for this mapping was the recognition that knowledge of, and opportunities to work with, the rights of LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland requires a better understanding of the conditions and circumstances in the different areas. This report highlights local structures and organisations, as well as opportunities to expand and strengthen Nordic cooperation on equal rights and opportunities for LGBTI people in the Nordic region.

The report shows that the development of legislation, policy documents and local organisations varies between the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. Åland has largely followed Finnish legislation and has relatively strong legal protection. There is an LGBTI action plan drawn up by the provincial government and several established structures for addressing these issues. In recent years, Greenland has taken important steps, including new anti-discrimination legislation and the establishment of an independent equality board. However, challenges remain in both Greenland and Åland, particularly in healthcare and access to gender-affirming treatment. The Faroe Islands have implemented several rights reforms through legislation in recent years, but still lack several fundamental safeguards, such as anti-discrimination legislation, policies and responsible public institutions in this area.

The report shows that there are significant gaps in access to statistics and systematic knowledge regarding the living conditions of LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. This makes it difficult to design targeted interventions, monitor progress and ensure that the work meets the needs of the target group. Without a knowledge base, it becomes difficult to identify needs, prioritise initiatives and monitor the impact of policies and projects. An important next step is therefore to strengthen the collection of statistics and experience-based knowledge regarding the living conditions of LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. Hopefully, Greenland's ongoing project on health data can contribute to this.

Civil society organisations play a crucial role

A common feature of the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland is that civil society plays a crucial role in driving progress forward. All three countries have LGBTI organisations that, in various ways, have been instrumental in changing legislation, establishing strategies and action plans, and, not least, in supporting LGBTI people.

The report confirms the picture that actors from the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland participate in Nordic cooperation and in projects funded by the Nordic LGBTI Fund to a lesser extent than actors from the rest of the Nordic region. This means that both local actors and Nordic cooperation are missing out on important experiences and perspectives. At the same time, the data suggests that low representation should not be interpreted as a lack of commitment, but rather as a consequence of limited resources, administrative vulnerability, local resistance and difficulties in managing larger projects within small organisations. Here, the Nordic institutions play an important role as enablers and partners to local LGBTI organisations.

By studying legislation, policy and key players, we can gain an insight into the actual living conditions of LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland. However, the stories of queer lives and the informal social structures remain hidden. The hope is that the targeted call for proposals for the Nordic LGBTI Fund, which requires projects applying for funding to include stakeholders from Greenland, the Faroe Islands and Åland, can make a difference. There is also an opportunity here for more comprehensive work to make collaboration and funding opportunities more accessible, relevant and tailored to local conditions. In this way, Nordic cooperation can be better equipped to promote equal rights and opportunities for LGBTI people throughout the Nordic region.

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Following the publication of the report, it emerged that some of the Faroese sources were out of date and did not reflect the rights reforms introduced in recent years. Consequently, the factual information has been verified by experts from civil society and the government.

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About this publication

Rights and opportunities for LGBTI people in the Faroe Islands, Greenland and Åland

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TemaNord 2026:523

ISBN 978-92-893-8483-4 (PDF)

ISBN 978-92-893-8484-1 (ONLINE)

<http://dx.doi.org/10.6027/temanord2026-523>

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Cover photo: Martin Zachrisson/Norden.org

Published: May, 2026

Updated: September, 2026

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The Nordic Council of Ministers is the official body for inter-governmental co-operation between Åland, Denmark, Finland, the Faroe Islands, Greenland, Iceland, Norway and Sweden.

In 2019, the Nordic prime ministers presented a vision of the Nordic Region as the most sustainable and integrated region in the world by 2030. The work of the Nordic Council of Ministers is designed to pursue that goal by making the Nordic Region green, competitive and socially sustainable.

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