



# Alyn Smith

MEP for Scotland

## Love is Love: LGBTI News Valentine's 2016

Hello, and welcome to my Valentine's Day newsletter! It has already been a year since I gave an update on my work around LGBTI issues, it felt like time for another catch up.

The past 12 months have been full of historic moments for LGBTI people - perhaps most notably the USA legalising same-sex marriage - but more change is needed. I am committed to tackling LGBTI issues through my work in and out of parliament; as well as being an MEP for Scotland, I am a member of the Parliament Intergroup on LGBT Rights and a trustee of LGBT Youth Scotland.

### Tunisian anti-gay laws

Whilst in Tunis with some parliamentary colleagues in October, I urged Tunisian Justice Minister Mohamed Ali Ben Aissa to immediately release a 22-year-old man, who goes by the name Marwen, sentenced to a year in jail after an anal exam which judges ruled "proved" his criminal sexuality. Marwen's sentence has since been reduced, but more young men in Tunisia have since been arrested under the same laws.



### Turkey

I also discussed LGBTI rights in Turkey with Figen Yuksekdag, co-chair of the Turkey's Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), which represents one of the more progressive

voices in terms equality and employs

a 10% quota for the LGBT community and a 50% quota for women when fielding candidates.

### LGBTI in the EU

Last month I welcomed the European Parliament's resolution calling on EU Member States to voice their support for LGBTI people at the United National Human Rights Council. In a resolution adopted in Strasbourg, EU Member States' leaders were urged to stand up to unfair and restrictive legislation, such as the infamous Foreign Agents law in Russia. Read more at:

[alynsmith.eu/lgbti\\_rights\\_to\\_get\\_support\\_at\\_un](http://alynsmith.eu/lgbti_rights_to_get_support_at_un)

### LGBTI outside the EU

The European Parliament voted to emphasise the rights of minorities in the European Neighbourhood Policy. The ENP is how the EU works with its southern and eastern neighbours, and is a key part of the EU's foreign policy. This vote highlighted the need to focus on strengthening and consolidating respect for diversity and the rights of minorities, including the rights of LGBTI people.



### Charity sky dive

In the summer, I plunged to earth in free fall - reaching speeds of 120mph - in a tandem sky dive over Scotland with my partner, Jonathon. We took the challenge to raise money for LGBT Youth Scotland, and we managed to raise hundreds of pounds for a great cause. You can see a video of my efforts on YouTube:

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=36ThMzIVq3Q](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=36ThMzIVq3Q)

I look forward to continuing to fight for positive change in LGBTI issues on behalf of the people of Scotland and abroad. If you've got any comments or suggestions, please get in touch at the usual address: [alyn.smith@europarl.europa.eu](mailto:alyn.smith@europarl.europa.eu)

Yours aye,



# Equal Marriage

It has been just a little over a year since same-sex marriage laws came into force in Scotland - a historic moment and a wonderful achievement for our country.

The Bill was a milestone for the SNP, fulfilling our 2011 manifesto promise of holding a consultation into same-sex marriage and bringing equality to the people of Scotland. The consultation process resulted in over 15,000 responses from across the country. The Bill then passed with 105 votes to 18, demonstrating great cross-party support. Soon after, our First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, had the privilege of acting as a witness at one of the first same-sex couple marriages in Scotland.



Last year I was also delighted to see the 2015 ILGA-Europe report which named Scotland as the best country in Europe for LGBTI equality, slightly ahead of the rest of the UK, and I am proud of the SNP's record in achieving this milestone.

The Scottish Government has also shown specific recognition to transgender people by directly funding a transgender rights project, the first such move in Europe. Scotland also has its own standalone Gender Reassignment Protocol and has introduced hate crime legislation that now protects LGBTI people.

In the last five years, seven EU Member States have passed laws legalising same-sex marriage, taking the total to 11. However, there is still a lot of work to do in ensuring the same equalities can be brought to LGBTI people across the EU and beyond.



in our first  
of **nine months**  
**Equal Marriage**  
**Scotland** celebrated  
**573**  
new **marriages**  
and another  
**1137**  
couples  
chose to  
convert their  
**civil partnerships**


Several nations introduced bans on same-sex marriage and discrimination against the LGBTI community worldwide is still continuing. Over 70 countries still outlaw homosexual activity, and in eight of those the death penalty can be enforced.

As a member of the European Parliament's Intergroup on LGBT rights, I work alongside parliamentary colleagues from across the continent to tackle inequalities and promote the rights of LGBTI people. In my foreign affairs work, I am often given the chance to raise these issues with countries who have a long way to go to equality, and I feel confident that we are moving in the right direction.

## Stay informed

It's easy to keep in touch about my work on your behalf and on developments in the European Parliament:

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