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Europe/International

Borderland Prize 2025 for German-Dutch Pride initiative

Award for innovative cooperation between Bocholt and Oost Gelre

The cross-border cooperation between the association "Bocholt Pride e.V." and the Dutch initiative "Achterhoek Pride" was awarded the Borderland Prize on 11 December 2025.

At the Borderland Conference in Sittard, the jury honoured the joint commitment, which strengthens the visibility of the LGBTI+ community in the rural border region and connects communities on both sides of the border. The project, which is endowed with 5,000 euros, is considered a role model for social integration between the two countries.

Representatives of the initiative received the award from Nathanael Liminski, Minister for Federal and European Affairs, International Affairs and Media and Head of the State Chancellery of North Rhine-Westphalia, and Andries Heidema, Commissioner of the King of the Province of Overijssel. The Borderland Prize is regularly awarded to projects that promote co-operation between North Rhine-Westphalia and the Netherlands in an innovative way and are active in the areas of culture, business or social affairs.

This year's award was submitted by the neighbouring Dutch municipality of Oost Gelre together with the association "Bocholt Pride e.V.". The cooperation started in spring 2025 with the aim of systematically promoting queer visibility and inclusion throughout the border region. While "Achterhoek Pride" was organised for the fourth time, the initiative actively involved neighbouring German municipalities such as Bocholt for the first time in 2025. This was preceded by the founding of the association "Bocholt Pride e.V." in March 2024 to give the local community a voice.

"This award shows that diversity knows no boundaries. We are proud that Bocholt, together with the Achterhoek, has set a clear example of respect, openness and solidarity", said Deputy Mayor Gudrun Koppers, who attended the award ceremony in Sittard as a representative of the city. "The Borderland Award is a wonderful recognition of the work of Bocholt Pride and Achterhoek Pride", said a delighted Thorsten Jansen, Chairman of Bocholt Pride e.V. "Our joint commitment shows that an inclusive society is alive - especially in places where visibility and community are not a matter of course."

The award-winning project has left a visible mark through concrete opportunities for encounters. Joint activities have created lasting contacts between the Dutch and German queer communities, helping to break down prejudices and reduce isolation. Highlights of the collaboration included the first Christopher Street Day (CSD) in Bocholt in August 2025 and the cross-border exhibition "We are P-ART of Culture", which was on display at LernWerk Bocholt and in Borken. These events made it clear that diversity is a social value that should not stop at national borders.

The jury recognised the project as a special role model for Europe, as it breaks social taboos and establishes an inclusive network in a rural structure where offers for LGBTI+ people are otherwise rather rare. The combination of a cross-border focus and a strong volunteer structure makes the project unique.

The focus is now already on the coming year: the next Borderland Conference of the state of North Rhine-Westphalia and the Netherlands will take place in

Bocholt in December 2026. Around 600 interested parties from cross-border cooperation are expected to attend this event in the European city, and preparations are already underway by the steering group.



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Borderland conference recognises cooperation between Bocholt Pride and Achterhoek Pride.