

# Who was at the ILGA-Europe Equality Fundraiser?

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A night of celebration and solidarity brought together a diverse array of supporters committed to advancing LGBTI human rights

On 4 July 2024, Brussels was abuzz with excitement as ILGA-Europe hosted its annual Equality Fundraiser. One of the best parties of the city's summer season, the event featured an array of special cocktails, sumptuous food, live performance, and dancing with one of the most popular DJ's on the Brussels queer scene. This gathering wasn't just a social affair; it was a crucial fundraiser in support of ILGA-Europe's vital work towards LGBTI freedom and equality. As we celebrated, we were reminded that achieving equality requires collective effort so that everyone can live freely and safely. At the heart of this event were almost 200 diverse supporters and allies committed to the cause, showcasing the strength and unity within our community.

## **Pro-bono legal support: Cleary**

One of the standout supporters of the evening was Veerle Van Hoorebeeck from Cleary, a law firm that has recently partnered with ILGA-Europe to provide pro-bono legal assistance. Veerle expressed Cleary's desire to make a tangible difference to LGBTI people's lives through supporting our work, saying: "We love working with ILGA-Europe. We started recently, providing pro-bono lawyers, and we'll look for more future pro-bono projects with which we can support the work. We feel we can really make a difference that way."



Veerle Van Hoorebeeck (right) posing with our Communications and Media Officer (left)

This partnership highlights the critical role of legal support in advancing LGBTI rights and the impact of professional services in driving social change.

**Institutional partnership: DG JUST**

From the EU institutions, Susanne Knoefel from the Department for Justice at the European Commission emphasised the importance of collaboration between member states and civil society. “ILGA-Europe is one of our really trusted interlocutors in working together on LGBTI rights, she said. “And it’s all about working hand in hand. So, we work hand-in-hand with member states and with civil society, in particular with ILGA-Europe. I’m here tonight to support, but also to have fun!”



Susanne Knoefel

Susanne was one of many guests attending from across European Commission departments, demonstrating support and commitment to working together with LGBTI civil society to strengthen LGBTI rights across Europe.

**Corporate ally: Google**

Corporate support also played a significant role in the success of the fundraiser. As Steve Loh from Google, long-time headline sponsor of the event, said: "I represent the Pride Chapter at Google, so my idea is to look at how I can help ILGA-Europe in other aspects. We can go beyond just one fundraising event, create a bigger reach, provide a space, and learn from each other. That's what I'm looking forward to."





Steve Loh

Google's ongoing support is a great example of how companies across sectors can extend their influence and resources to support the LGBTI equality movement.

**Civil society alliances: Mental Health Europe**

Margi Marchetti from Mental Health Europe highlighted the intersection of mental health and queerness, addressing the ongoing challenges faced by LGBTI people. "We are going through discrimination, microaggressions, and harassment every day," they explained. "The way we learn how to cope with it and the way it affects our self-esteem and even our ability to dream about our lives, that's a big chunk of our identities. It has an impact on our mental health."



Margi Marchetti

Mental Health Europe was one of several civil society networks attending the event, in a wonderful demonstration of solidarity and building alliances around intersecting issues.

**Trade Union solidarity: Rainbow Network of Dutch Trade Union FNV**

From the trade union sector, Jolanda Van Gool and Patrick Van der Pas represented the Rainbow Network of the Dutch Trade Union FNV. They stressed the significance of solidarity in their work. “We think solidarity is very important. So that’s why we came to Brussels to show our support for equality and LGBTI rights. We have a rainbow checklist for workers’ rights, that’s where we have the most impact, on the collective bargaining agreements,” said Jolanda.

Patrick added: “We think it’s important to collaborate with other organisations elsewhere, but also with trade unions, just practicing solidarity. We need to stand for the human rights of the workers in the workspace. And put that first instead of business.”



Jolanda Van Gool (left) and Patrick Van der Pas (right)

This commitment to LGBTI rights within the workplace highlights the critical role of trade unions in advocating for inclusive and equitable labour practices.

**Political representation: MEP Carolina Morace**

Newly elected MEP and former footballer from Italy, Carolina Morace, shared her personal connection to the cause. “I am married to a woman for almost ten years and these are my people. I can understand what we went through in our lives. I used to be part of a sports squad and I know how important it is to have a team behind you. I want to be a part of a team here, to represent the rights of everybody. In Europe, some countries are in better situations, while others are in bad situations. In Italy we are in a very bad situation right now. The government doesn’t represent everybody and I think that I can be a voice of people who don’t have a voice in Italy.”





Carolina Morace (right) posing with her wife Nicola Williams (left)

Carolina is one of the 164 elected MEPs who signed ILGA-Europe's Come Out 4 Europe pledge to protect and advance LGBTI human rights in the new parliament. We look forward to working closely with them all to ensure that LGBTI rights remain high on the political agenda.

#### **A resounding success**

The ILGA-Europe Equality Fundraiser was a resounding success, not just in terms of funds raised, but in the solidarity and commitment shown towards our vital work for LGBTI safety, equality and freedom by our diverse supporters. From law firms and EU institutions to private sector companies, civil society groups working on a range of issues, trade unions, and policy-makers, the evening was a testament to the collective effort required to advance LGBTI human rights.

Each supporter, in their unique way, contributes to our shared goal of achieving equality, ensuring that every person can live in freedom and safety. Together, we are stronger, and together, we will continue to fight for a better, more inclusive world. If you weren't able to come to the fundraiser, you can still support our work by [making a donation](#) – and stay tuned for announcements about next year's event!































