

Why our Equality Fundraiser was an essential moment of queer solidarity

[Blog](#), [Equality Fundraiser](#), [Fundraising](#), [Ukraine](#)

After two years of not being able to be together in person, our friends and allies joined us for an evening of solidarity this year, with all funds raised going directly to organisations helping LGBTI people affected by the war in Ukraine. Here's why we need support more than ever.

Did you know that the entirety of the budget in the whole world going to LGBTI work from government institutions and foundations is less than what one anti-LGBTI organisation in the United States spends in a year? Often this money is spent to exert influence in Europe and Central Asia.

Hard to believe, right? As our Executive Director, Evelyne Paradis said in her welcome speech at the ILGA-Europe Equality Fundraiser on June 28 in Brussels: "Those who want to see LGBTI rights, gender equality, reproductive rights wiped out are being funded beyond the scope of our imagination."

While ILGA-Europe works tirelessly in collaboration with and on behalf of organisations across 54 countries in Europe and Central Asia to combat those forces, this year our annual fundraising event was dedicated to fundraising to support the work we are doing with and for LGBTI people impacted by the war in Ukraine. All ticket and bar sales and other funds raised on the evening, will go to directly support organisations in the frontlines.

If you have any experience of living in Brussels, you'll know that sunny weather can never be guaranteed, even at the height of summer. Luckily, for the evening of our fundraiser, the first in-person event we've been able to hold in two years, the sun was well and truly out. Usually known as the European Equality Gala, this year we reinvented the event a little, mindful that while the war continues in Ukraine, it is not a time for huge celebrations. With a comfortable and cool new venue, the dress code was casual, the atmosphere was relaxed and with the support from our sponsors DIAGEO, visit.brussels and Google, we had a proper night of solidarity, complete with entertainment from DJ Melissa Juice and the fabulous queer choir, Sing Out Brussels!

At the beginning of the war in Ukraine, there was a mass mobilisation of fundraising as well as a great focus from the media. At ILGA-Europe we recognised from the beginning, that the response needed was going to be [a marathon, not a sprint](#). However, media are not so interested in marathons. As news cycles have moved on, so has the focus on the needs of those caught up in the conflict, and the donations aren't being made in such abundance anymore.

We have continued to work hard ever since to directly support LGBTI people caught up in the conflict, and the organisations that are helping them, while keeping up with our usual work across Europe and Central Asia. We stepped up our support of working for the betterment of LGBTI people in Ukraine and beyond.

Much of this work takes place behind the scenes, for instance:

- We have given 240K in grants to support organisations that are providing shelters, access to basic necessities and medication, psychological support to people in Ukraine and those who have left the

country.

- We've been working with colleagues in other LGBTI organisations to organise shipments of medications and hormones to trans people in Ukraine.
- We've been bringing the needs of LGBTI organisations to the attention of larger funders, mobilise foundations and connecting LGBTI groups to funding opportunities
- We've been advocating with EU institutions and governments for the safety, health and wellbeing of LGBTI people caught up in the conflict and those fleeing Ukraine
- We've been breaking new ground by working directly with UN agencies on the ground to develop some of the first LGBTI specific guidelines for humanitarian agencies
- We've been connecting groups working to support refugees to exchange information and expertise to make sure as many people as possible are taken care of

That's why moments like the ILGA-Europe Equality Fundraiser are needed. Sadly, recent events like the hate-motivated killing of two people and injury of several others outside a gay bar in Oslo, the mass arrests of participants at Istanbul Pride, and the turn-back on abortion rights in the US, have reminded us that the work for equality is never done.

But, as our Executive Director reminded us on the evening: "Our movement has great power, great resilience, and the ability to stand up for and care for our fellow human beings."

Let's continue to do that work together, on behalf of our fellow human beings. A heartfelt thank-you to all people who were at our fundraiser, helping us to continue our vital work, and even if you couldn't join us, remember you can support our work all year long through our [donations page](#).

Here are some of our favourite moments from the ILGA-Europe Equality Fundraiser 2022:



EU Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli: "We should be all advocates for LGBTI rights and visibility". Credit: Ivo Popov



EU Ambassador for Gender and Diversity, Stella Ronner gave an inspirational speech. Credit: Ivo Popov



Belgium's Secretary of State for Equality, Sarah Schlitz joined us. Credit: Ivo Popov



MEP Kim van Sparrentak. Credit: Ivo Popov



MEP Brando Benifei. Credit: Ivo Popov



A moment of the evening. Credit: Ivo Popov



And we danced! Credit: Ivo Popov