

Working from home: How the ILGA-Europe staff are striving forward!

[Blog, Covid-19](#)

Check out these top tips from our management team as they tell their personal stories of suddenly finding themselves working from home.

As with many in these unprecedented times, the staff of ILGA-Europe are working from home for the foreseeable future. However, we're not working alone. Through messaging apps, video-conference software and e-mails, we're staying connected, holding meetings, taking care of each other and even sharing virtual lunches!

Just because the world is consumed by what's happening with Covid 19, it doesn't mean that the work stops. At ILGA-Europe we continue to work in solidarity with our member organisations across 54 countries in Europe and Central Asia, we are committed to doing the work, and we are finding new ways to do it! Here, the members of our management team share their personal stories of working at home, and give some genuinely great tips!

Evelyne Paradis, Executive Director



Evelyne Paradis,

Executive Director at ILGA-Europe

In the current context, I keep reminding myself how fortunate and privileged I am to be able to work from home. Not only because I have a comfortable house and a well-equipped space to work from, but also because it means that I have a job that allows me to continue to work in a moment when so many are losing their jobs.

This doesn't mean that the sudden and drastic shift to going fully remote is not affecting me at all. While being so incredibly grateful for all the technology available nowadays that allows us to stay connected and talk with each other, it requires an adjustment in terms of how we communicate and organise ourselves in the ILGA-Europe team (and I am as always so impressed by our team and how we rise to the challenges!). For me, the big adjustment this week has been to figure out how to work while being present and taking care of my eight-year-old, who's also quite at a loss with all the changes in the world. We're slowly figuring out our new rhythm!

If I had a piece of advice to give, it would be first to create a routine for yourself — whatever works best for you — and try to keep to it. It helps calm the mind and set boundaries between work time and leisure time. And more importantly, don't expect to be doing as much as you would in the office. In regular circumstances, most of us will not be as productive, or productive in the same way, when working remotely every day. So, we need to be good with ourselves about what we expect to do these extraordinary times.

Overall, I am forcing myself to look for opportunities in these unprecedented times, such as opportunities to slow down, to think and do pieces of work I feel I never have enough time to do. Finding the silver-lining and setting my mind to think about everything that can be learned from the current situation helps me to keep my spirits up.

Katrin Hugendubel, Advocacy Director



Katrin Hugendubel, Advocacy Director at ILGA-Europe, in her home office these days.

Working from home, I am not alone. There are four of us, which is great. You don't get lonely, yet sometimes...

As we learned schools would be closed, we made plans over the weekend, schedules that would keep us all busy, healthy and sane. At dinner of day one, we were all very proud. We made it work together, we took care of each other and even had fun. And I got work done.

It's the afternoon of day two and I am moving around frantically, as there is yet another Zoom call with my colleagues, and the internet connection is unstable. Kid One did not have enough lunch and wants biscuits (which I just hand over — it's not a time for principles). Father and Kid Two are arguing downstairs over how to clean the floor. Kid Two attempts to rope me in as a judge. All this while I am trying to follow a Zoom conversation that is repeatedly disconnecting.

The phone battery is running low, the charger is in the other room and Kid One just hit a new record with the Rubik cube that I should appreciate. I am finding it harder and harder to follow the conversation and stay engaged.

Oh, the zoom 40-minute time limit is up—we need to reconnect yet again.

My tip for working from home? **Stay kind with yourself and others, don't force it — and if you can, get a room**

of one's own with a good wifi connection!

Björn van Roozendaal, Programmes Director



Björn van

Roozendaal, Programmes Director at ILGA-Europe

Early in the week, I started drafting a daily schedule for myself, to create some structure. I try to begin the day with a walk outside and then have breakfast, after which I work for the rest of the morning. The best thing about working from home is to have my own coffee and to be able to take my daily shower at whatever time suits me best. Around midday, I cook lunch for my boyfriend and myself and relax a bit, after which I work for the rest of the afternoon. With my gym, we agreed to continue our regular classes, albeit on Zoom.

Beyond that, my boyfriend and I also have agreed that I need to take calls in a separate room so that I won't disturb him.

Our team has agreed on fixed moments to check-in with each other — twice a week with the whole team, and regularly with each other. We also agreed to use WhatsApp more often for work and non-work chats. Not only is it important that we keep each other posted about work issues, but since many of us are originally not from Belgium, we also want to take care of each other during these strange times. Building this structure into each day is important for me **so that I can protect some boundaries between work and my private life during these times.**

Brian Finnegan, Communications Director



Brian Finnegan, Communications Director at ILGA-Europe

Last Friday, when Brussels suddenly told us schools, cafés and restaurants would be closing, I made the stressful decision to take a flight to my home country of Ireland. My mother is in her eighties and with an underlying condition, and I wanted to be there to take care of her, not stuck in Belgium if the next news was that the borders were closing.

So now I'm working from the West of Ireland, where outside my window a fine rain falls on a mountainside, the house is heated by a turf fire, and St. Patrick's Day this year was historic because the pubs were closed.

Working from home for me is an exercise in self-discipline. In my office, I can concentrate and keep up with the business and busy-ness of the comms team. At home, I keep thinking I should get up and make coffee, or see what's on TV, or pick up my book. I keep having to remind myself that I am working and it's no less busy.

It's only been three days and I miss my colleagues. My team and I meet every morning on Zoom and along with organising our work, we reassure each other. It's a strange time for us all, and the need for human connection is great, especially if you are living alone. Video calls will have to suffice for face-to-face connections, and I'm glad to have it. You can't see people smiling via email. We've also set up a virtual office in Slack, and slowly I think our entire team will get used to communicating in real-time there.

My tip for working at home is to get away from the desk (or the kitchen table) for five minutes every half hour. **Walk around the room, open a window and breathe in some fresh air, make a coffee — just do something to make you move.** And plan some treats for when you finish your day, like a Netflix binge, a classic movie, or a long call with a friend. I'm having wine-time with a gang of friends on Friday evening on Zoom! Give yourself little things to look forward to.

Chaber, Financial Director



Chaber, Financial Director at ILGA-Europe, and Dzikus

Just to state the obvious: working from home can be boring and isolating, even for introverts. In my case, I just moved to a new apartment and haven't yet finished painting or unpacking, so living and working among boxes can be frustrating. The other day I spent 45 minutes digging through stuff to find an extension cable so I could have my laptop plugged in without having to jump over the cord every time I move. The cat being insistent on attention all the time is not entirely helpful either, even if cute.

However, home-working can also allow you to do things you otherwise can't enjoy daily. One of my highlights was taking a group call from my balcony, sitting in the sunshine and eating ice cream (purchased responsibly earlier while maintaining #socialdistance). Another perk is watching Harry Potter movies over coffee or cigarette breaks — one of those things lasts roughly the entire day if you watch ten minutes at a time.

I guess, above all else, the key point is to give yourself a break and allow some time to adapt. It's a crisis situation and it might last a while. Open yourself up to re-thinking what you do, along with how you do it. **This is a chance for us to grow and to refocus our attention where it really matters and where it is possible to move forward for the benefit of our communities and movements.** We'll not only get used to it, we will get great at it.

Anna Shepherd, Partnerships Manager



Anna Shepherd, Partnerships Manager at ILGA-Europe, and her furry assistant

I'm usually not a fan of working from home, so I've been surprised how painless transferring to remote working has been. Virtual meetings have been smooth and connections work well. There's a lot of uncertainty surrounding everything at the moment, like not knowing whether events planned for later in the year will have to be cancelled or not, and a lot of re-prioritising and planning to do.

However some pros of working from home so far have been learning and trying out new virtual tools, finally having timepieces of work that require thinking and research, and spending the day with my furry assistant (or manager, if you ask him), Oliver the cat. My top tip for working at home? **Make a schedule that you more or less stick to every day**, to help keep a boundary between work and other life even when in isolation.