



# STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

2024-2029



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# NAVIGATING EXTRAORDINARY CHANGE

Over the past two decades we have made, contributed to, and seen so much progress: enormous leaps forward in legal protection of the human rights of LGBTI people; remarkable shifts in public attitudes supporting LGBTI people across the region; an empowering surge of visibility of LGBTI people across parts of society; a multitude of free and affirming Pride marches and other public events taking place every year; a growing diverse and impactful LGBTI movement driving change in every country; and a significant increase in political support at many levels of governments for LGBTI human rights and equality across Europe.

We enabled the growth and strengthening of LGBTI movements in Europe and Central Asia – something to celebrate again and again. As an organisation, ILGA-Europe has grown in capacity, sustainability and resilience, having learned about our strengths as well as our weaknesses, and harnessed many opportunities to develop our work and be more targeted and effective. And yet, this Strategic Framework was developed in a time of with multi-layered and interconnected geopolitical, social and economic challenges.

In a time of weakening of commitment to rule of law and democracy, and a rise of authoritarian political regimes, LGBTI rights have become a pawn in bigger political struggles for power in Europe and across the world. LGBTI communities have been, time after time, put at the forefront of public discourse by political leaders who aim to distract from corruption and other human rights violations, dismantle democracy and secure their own power.

The polarisation of political discourse has been making it increasingly difficult to do the important work of raising awareness and building alliances across society. The increased hatred, both online and offline, has significantly increased the vulnerability of our communities and movements. And our movements have been becoming more fragile – with so many points of pressure, reduced funding, migration of activists, restrictions on operations of civil society, challenges to well-being and sustainability of both individuals and

organisations, and increased threats to safety and security. And, due to the broader challenges brought about by armed conflicts, other humanitarian crises and austerity measures, other forms of inequalities have been impacting the lived experience of LGBTI people: socio-economic insecurities, mental health and related barriers, migration and asylum policies, the aging of populations.

As one of our members said in a consultation process: “With war and the COVID pandemic, we learned that a large number of people are left out of structural support. The LGBTI community stepped in because we could not leave people unattended.”

We need to continue to equip people to do this while working on the longer-term structural solutions. Layered on top of these and newer developments, such as AI and climate change, the impact of which on LGBTI communities is yet hard to fully understand.

As ILGA-Europe came to the end of our previous strategic period (2019-2023), one thing became very clear to our team: we have experienced and adapted to extraordinary change over those five years, and so have the LGBTI movements in Europe and around the world, along with the world around us.

What’s more, we can say we adapted and developed in a way that spoke to our values, our nuanced understanding of the context and possibilities, and our commitment to serving the LGBTI movement by playing the unique roles we are created to play. The need for all of us to be ever more strategic and thoughtful in how we work, who we work with, and how we use our energy and resources felt greater than ever.

In a fast-paced and rapidly-changing world, we need to continue to adapt the way we work, to stay on top of developments and ahead of the curve of change, to integrate ongoing learning to fit with the changing the realities.

# ILGA-Europe Strategic Framework 2024-2029

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Dealing with constant shifts in our environment requires us to be able to make decisions in the moment, and to be prepared for the changing demands that they bring. We have a desire to be even more flexible and strategic in our choices.

We want ILGA-Europe to be even more resilient, able to respond quickly and strategically, and stronger in our response and impact. In the current political and social context in Europe and Central Asia, in which human rights and democracy are under so much pressure, this need for making the best use of our strengths feels more urgent than ever.

We also acknowledge – and celebrate – the fact that the movement has grown so much, not only in size but also in capacity.

This means that, at ILGA-Europe, we can continue to build relationships and cooperation with the many organisations who build progress just as well, or better and differently, bringing added value. This is an important realisation because, as much as we would like to, we are reminded – almost on a daily basis – that we can't be everywhere and we can't meet every need.

Knowing that there are so many new actors within and around the LGBTI movement and that so many organisations now have the capacity to do incredible work makes a significant difference in how the ILGA-Europe team thinks of its role. As we began the work of strategising for the next five years of ILGA-Europe's work, we took a moment to reflect on what we are uniquely placed to do for and with our membership and the overall LGBTI movement. We understand that our role is to harness the knowledge and capacity that exists in the wider movement and to make sure it's amplified. Our role is to explore, provide thought leadership, and create standards.

Our role is to have this unique overview of everything that's going on, and to connect those with expertise and resources, whether they're in LGBTI movement or from other parts of society, to increase the overall ability of LGBTI activists to bring about change for their communities.

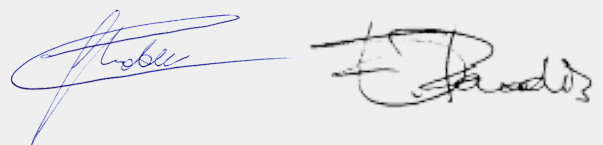
Having learned from the past, for this new strategic period we decided to continue with a tool that offers us guidance but accounts for the ever-changing world we live in, and allows us to adapt quickly, to be agile, and to understand that different parts of the work are completely

interconnected. Instead of a strategic plan with defined themes and priorities (which could rapidly become irrelevant or misaligned with the shifting needs of the movement), we designed a second Strategic Framework that maps out the breadth of the work that needs to happen for meaningful change, and which situates ILGA-Europe within a broader ecosystem of actors.

This Strategic Framework examines and expands on the roles ILGA-Europe will play over the next five years, where the organisation has a unique value to add and where we're uniquely placed to play those roles. It's about how and where we complement others rather than reinventing the wheel or replicating what is already being done very well.

It's about our need for flexibility and adaptability in a rapidly evolving landscape, rather than focusing on specific thematic priorities or specific countries. The Strategic Framework is also about identifying core pieces of change that need to take place in society more comprehensively and more holistically. It allows us to have a clearer vision of the different functions which different actors perform towards creating change.

While building on the previous Framework, the current document expands on our growing understanding of the ecosystem and strategies, and more clearly defines what we hope to achieve under each pathway: empowered and inclusive LGBTI communities, strong and growing LGBTI movements, and laws and policies recognising and protecting LGBTI people's human rights. It also puts much more focus on working, as a movement, towards deeply-rooted social acceptance and inclusion, and towards fair, just and equal societies and economies. Finally, the Strategic Framework re-affirms our commitment and mandate to work with and for the LGBTI movement in all its diversity.



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# A FEW WORDS ON THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

Taking our cue from the movement and ensuring active participation and input of members in the design and planning of our work has always been core to how ILGA-Europe operates. For a membership-based organisation the role of members is of utmost importance. Not only because members are the ones approving ILGA-Europe's next five-year strategy, but mostly because their perspective and insights ensure that ILGA-Europe continues to remain as relevant for LGBTI activists as possible, even as the organisation grows and changes.

Our staff team works with LGBTI groups and organisations across Europe and Central Asia on a daily basis. We're in touch about changing national political landscapes and the threats and opportunities that arise from that. We provide advice and coaching on engaging change actors, building alliances, developing members' strategies and approaches. We train and facilitate peer learning on a wide array of issues – and through that grow our own understanding of needs, capacities and priorities. We intervene when emergency support is needed. We connect activists to decision-makers on the international level. And we provide financial resources, most often paired with coaching and other types of support.

All of these ways in which we work allow us to get a grasp on trends, priorities, areas of interest, and limitations groups and organisations in the region face.

But in the strategic planning process, it was important to us to create more focused opportunities to engage members in the thinking about the next five years of our work, to make sure that the strategic choices we make as an organisation are aligned to the needs of the movement.

This is why the ILGA-Europe Board and staff team created as much space as possible (keeping in mind existing capacity and resources) to hearing from members.

We launched from **a one-day meeting with Board and staff** in March 2023, to identify the main questions to focus on in the review of our Strategic Framework. We agreed on the need to use this planning process to deepen our collective thinking and future work under Pathways 4 (Social Acceptance and Social Inclusion) and 5 (Intersectionality and Structural Inequalities) of the current Framework.

With the support of a consultant, we followed with **a first-round consultation of members** via an online questionnaire (April 2023), aimed at gathering input on the current state of play for LGBTI organisations in relation to working towards social acceptance and social inclusion, and to addressing larger structural inequalities in society. 54 organisations took part in the consultation (from 29 countries, and three regional and sub-regional organisations).

Then, on 2 and 3 June 2023, staff, board and representatives from member organisations came together for a **Strategic Planning Session** in Brussels, bringing together over 60 people to dive deeper into what our ecosystem looks like, what are the paths to influencing change, who from our movements and communities thrives or survives in light of socio-economic and structural inequalities, and what roles different actors can play in shifting these realities.

After this meeting, the Executive Director and board drafted the proposed Strategic Framework 2024-2029. The proposal was shared with all members mid-August, and open for feedback until mid-September. No formal comments from members were received but the ILGA-Europe team did further work on improving clarity of the text based on informal questions and feedback received.

The final proposal was then shared with members for discussion during a final workshop and for approval by the membership at the 2023 Annual Conference in Ljubljana (25-28 Oct).

# A FOUR-STEP PROCESS

## **1: Membership Consultation**

Via an online questionnaire (April 2023), aimed at gathering input on the current state of play

## **2: Strategic Planning Session**

Bringing together over 60 people in Brussels to dive deeper into what our ecosystem looks like

## **3: Getting Feedback**

Proposed draft Strategic Framework shared with all members for feedback

## **4: Approval**

Final proposal shared with members for approval at the 2023 Annual Conference

# ILGA-EUROPE'S ROLE AND MANDATE

What became very clear from the members' inputs is our mandate to act and work in areas where we have unique access due to our nature as a regional network; to make use of our broad overview and provide thought leadership, drive strategic thinking, inspire and enable members to engage in different fields or in new ways; and to act as a convener. What is more, through insights and conversations on what members see as priorities, members re-confirmed our role to elevate the voices that are marginalised, under-represented and particularly vulnerable. A number of particular themes emerged in relation to our role and mandate:

- Trans and gender-nonconforming people, intersex people, BIPOC, migrants, sex-workers, refugees and asylum seekers were named among the most vulnerable and marginalised in our movement, indicating a need for ILGA-Europe to contribute to the capacities, empowerment and organising of these communities and groups that represent them.
- Over three quarters of members specified that they engage on "broader social justice" issues within their work for LGBTI communities, clearly showing that connectedness of the two is of much importance in our movement.
- Nearly all respondents of the survey mentioned they would engage more on social acceptance and inclusion if they had more capacity, naming a need for ILGA-Europe to grow resources in this area.
- Growing polarisation of discourses has been named in many conversations, and with it the need to develop spaces for openness, learning, respectful exchange, meeting people where they are and bringing them along, while being mindful of the contours of freedom of expression. ILGA-Europe's role was indicated as that of a bridge-builder.
- Beyond that, many and more emerging trends and issues were named, with a clear indication that it is our role to map, assess, and provide thought leadership for the movement: the impacts of AI on our communities and societies, including democracy; navigating new ways of accessing and consuming information; impacts of digitalisation; impact of migration; humanitarian work of organisations; addressing old and new forms of hate speech; impact of climate change and what can organisations like ours do about it; and, finally, the ever-lasting pressure on scarce resources, which pushes organisations to choose between immediate gaps and problems, and longer-term impact on structural change.

In this Strategic Framework, the two things that are not changing are the core functions of ILGA-Europe. Firstly, that we are a leading advocate with the European level institutions, and secondly that we play a central role in building capacity and building the movement in Europe and Central Asia.

However, in these and all other respects, we continue to evolve and be self-critical about where we're at. There is inherent learning and questioning in the culture of ILGA-Europe, something that always makes us ask ourselves, how can we have as much positive impact as we can for real people? In that, we acknowledge our positionality and our primary goal to drive towards a vision of a world where rights and equality are inviolable and the lived experience of LGBTI people reflects that truth. But much like movement strategies are interconnected and need to complement each other, the lives of LGBTI people are affected by policies and attitudes that do not directly name SOGIESC – those on migration, asylum, economic inequalities, racism, employment, housing, and many more. ILGA-Europe thus needs to engage in these both to represent the realities of LGBTI people, and to, whenever we can, do our part and contribute to larger pieces of social and systemic change.

# WHAT IS THE LANGUAGE WE USE?

It is important to mention the reflections and conversation we had within the strategic planning process about the language we use, especially that to describe the movements, communities, people, issues and rights we work for and towards. We know there is power in shared identities. The words we use to describe our identities and experiences carry weight, allow us to define the contours of our interests and struggles, build visibility and representation, give us tools to communicate in short-hand what experiences and realities we are referring to and build a shared understanding of the change that needs to happen, within and outside of our movement.

We also see how the language of our movement develops, and how vastly different it can be across the 54 countries we work in. For the purpose of this document, ILGA-Europe choose to use the language of LGBTI to refer to our communities, movements and issues. We do so while remaining aware of the limitations of this abbreviation. Indeed, we acknowledge that this acronym or term does not capture the diversity and complexity of experiences, issues and identities of the communities. We also acknowledge and respect the many other terms that individuals and communities use to identify themselves and describe the work they do.

At the same time, as an organisation engaging with a vast landscape of people across the region – activists, allies, policy makers, private sector, service providers, funders, governments, institutions, media and public opinion – we need to be able to name our communities in a way that keeps us truthful and understood, and in a way that reflects, as closely as possible, who we are and the work we do. While within our movement, and within our membership, we clearly see groups focusing on or representing queer, pan, ace and aro, NB – to name a few – communities, and we strive to ensure their interests are seen and their needs are met by our work, we also must acknowledge that ILGA-Europe should use language that it has full legitimacy to use, and that is LGBTI.

The term SOGIESC is also used in this document. As it is most commonly used by international organisations and in relation to laws, policies and frameworks, we are therefore also using it when talking about advocating for different types of standards to describe grounds and characteristics of people, rather than communities as whole.

This said, throughout our work, ILGA-Europe finds it crucial to be honest and true in reflecting about what we do, with whom, for whom, and how. While in the framework overall we opt for LGBTI and SOGIESC, in our on-going communications you will continue seeing a diversity of language used as we adapt the terms depending on circumstances – especially where it is about respecting the language which individuals and communities use to identify themselves.



**This Strategic Framework will guide the work of ILGA-Europe's board and staff over the five-year period from 2024 to 2029. It will provide the basis for the annual work plans developed by staff and approved by the board.**



**Each year, ILGA-Europe staff and board will report to members at the Annual Conference on activities and progress across the Strategic Framework.**

# OUR VISION AND MISSION STATEMENTS

## ILGA-EUROPE'S VISION IS OF:

Societies in which all people – with their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics – are enabled to live a fulfilling life as who they are, in safety, and empowered to make choices at all stages of their lives; societies which are just and fair, where the diversity of people is celebrated and where everyone is free to fully participate.

## ILGA-EUROPE'S MISSION IS:

- 1)** To act as a regional voice in Europe and Central Asia for the rights of those who face discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, including those who are at particular risk due to intersecting factors, such as gender, race, ethnicity, religion/faith, socio-economic status, ability, nationality, HIV-status and age (among others).
- 2)** To achieve equality, inclusion and social justice for lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex (LGBTI) people and to ensure protection from human rights violations, discrimination and violence based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics in Europe and Central Asia by instigating legal, political, institutional and social change in the region.
- 3)** To empower LGBTI organisations and groups, and their allies, to advocate for the effective enjoyment of human rights by everyone irrespective of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression or sex characteristics, and to advocate for full LGBTI equality and inclusion in all aspects of society, paying particular attention to those who are marginalised and under-represented people within the LGBTI communities.

# **PATHWAY 1 – EMPOWERED AND INCLUSIVE LGBTI COMMUNITIES**

The first pathway towards achieving our vision is having empowered and inclusive lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and intersex communities.

## **What do we mean by “empowered and inclusive LGBTI communities”?**

When coming together around shared identity, experience and/or purpose, LGBTI people who experience exclusion, oppression, discrimination and violation of their human rights start to bring about changes in their lives. The ability of LGBTI people, including those who are underrepresented and/or marginalised, to come together, connect and support each other, organise and do activities together is a significant path to empowerment of individuals to take control, to participate in society and to decide for their own lives.

All forms of community activities and organising are ways to support LGBTI people to escape isolation and receive support when they are in need, to develop self and collective awareness, to be empowered in themselves and hopefully to have better lives.

Community organising includes a broad range of different types of activities that people undertake in their communities, to meet the needs of people in those particular settings.

Providing legal and psychological services; organising social, sports and cultural events; running peer discussions and artistic groups; and running shelters, are all ways to reach out to and engage with LGBTI people. All community organising is context, culture and also time specific. What we mean by LGBTI community or communities and the language we use to describe community can also be different from context to context.

Community organising is a foundation for activism. Bringing people together allows activists to collect knowledge about the needs, experiences and interests of those who they represent. It also helps identify what societal changes are needed and thus gives direction to the collective work.

Community organising can empower people to take action. It also works the other way around: the more LGBTI people are aware, engaged, and mobilised, the more LGBTI individuals, groups and organisations are empowered and enabled in their work towards change. Our actions as a movement have proven to be stronger when they are grounded in and representative of LGBTI people’s realities. This includes if the communities are actively involved in actions that concern them.

Community building and organising is particularly important for those LGBTI people who are further marginalised – perhaps because of their socio-economic status, age, race, mental and physical dis/ability, and nationality, among others.

Through community work, the many different intersections of identities and realities amongst LGBTI people can be more visible and better understood. Community organising plays a central role in making sure that nobody is left behind and in making explicit and concrete our solidarity with others who are also oppressed, disempowered and excluded.

## What is ILGA-Europe's role over the coming five years to progress on this pathway?

- Build and share analysis of trends related to community organising across the region, in particular on its role in challenging political environments, in enabling outreach to under-represented and/or marginalised parts of the LGBTI communities, and in ensuring access to basic needs.
- Provide support to strengthen the capacity of LGBTI activists, groups and organisations to engage in community organising, in particular looking at the value of building deep connections between community and organised activism.
- Provide support to strengthen the capacity of LGBTI activists and groups in building inclusive community spaces which leave no one behind, in particular by ensuring meaningful and active participation of underrepresented and/or marginalised voices from LGBTI communities.
- Provide support to underrepresented groups within the LGBTI communities who are self-organising (including by facilitating access to resources) and be a facilitator of peer learning and exchange of experiences to help amplify this work.
- Provide support to ensure the sustainability of groups who are anchors for their communities in high-risk and repressive contexts.
- Amplify the messages of community visibility events, including Prides, and provide support to creating enabling environments where needed.
- Create and facilitate spaces for the movement to have conversations about community practices that contribute to trust, accountability and participation.
- Create and facilitate safe and inclusive spaces for discussions of different needs and experiences within LGBTI communities to build a better understanding and foster solidarity across LGBTI communities in all their diversity.

## Over the next five years, ILGA-Europe will work towards the following changes:

- More knowledge is available to the broader movement on community organising work of LGBTI groups and organisations, in particular in relation to outreach, engaging with and empowering LGBTI communities.
- Underrepresented and marginalised communities are meaningfully represented, have voice and agency within LGBTI community spaces, as well as having their own community-led spaces.
- There is growing support and resources available and accessible towards organising for those within our communities who are more marginalised.
- Community organising is recognised as a foundation for empowerment, solidarity and participation for LGBTI people, and is receiving the necessary support and resources, in particular for LGBTI people who live in repressive contexts and for marginalised LGBTI people.
- Community visibility events take place in a safe and supportive context, and are important moments for LGBTI people to take their rightful place in the public space.
- There is strengthened solidarity within LGBTI communities which enables the movements to react to threats and to respond to opportunities with a united and strong voice.
- There is renewed acknowledgment of the role of community organising in bringing people together over the long term in a way that they work with each other and feel empowered to participate in the movement, shape its agenda, take part in other social and political processes.

## **PATHWAY 2 – STRONG AND GROWING LGBTI MOVEMENTS**

The second pathway towards achieving our vision is the need to have strong and growing LGBTI movements driving change.

### **What do we mean by “strong and growing LGBTI movements”?**

LGBTI movements are at the heart of what is driving change for LGBTI people at the political, legal and social level in our societies. Whenever progress and positive change happen, they are made possible by consistent efforts of many different organisations and groups playing their part along with their networks of support. Our movements can bring change if people and groups have sufficient resources, diverse knowledge, strong skills, and reliable structures to organise themselves. And if they have the tools and support needed to adapt and to renew themselves.

A growing and strong movement is a movement where diverse organisations complement each other’s strategies, approaches and tactics to deepen understanding of diverse realities of LGBTI people, cater to these realities and needs of LGBTI people in all their diversity, organise a wide range of communities and allies, consistently advocate for legal change, and grow social acceptance and inclusion.

This means that organisations need to:

- Reach and engage diverse ranges of LGBTI people and empower them to act, participate, and lead.
- Build and consistently follow solid strategies, while being capable to act and adapt in real-time, making sense of the changing context and addressing emerging opportunities and risks.

- Have strong, clear and agile structures and practices that uphold their organising, agenda-setting and open lines of accountability and communication between them and LGBTI communities.
- Develop deep and lasting relationships with each other and with allies.
- Attract reliable and fit-for-purpose resources and use them effectively.
- Have strong skills and strategies to fulfill their missions: organise communities, nurture social acceptance and inclusion, push legal changes, and continuously improve their understanding of and ability to act on diverse realities of LGBTI people.
- Value and actively contribute to movement development, i.e. make sure that the whole is bigger than the sum of its parts by supporting mutual awareness, connections, exchange and cooperation in the LGBTI movement.

### **What is ILGA-Europe’s role over the coming five years to progress on this pathway?**

- Build and share analysis of the immediate and long-term needs in terms of resources, knowledge, skills, connections and other capacity across the LGBTI movements in Europe and Central Asia, and identify strategic solutions to fulfill these needs.
- Support LGBTI organisations in Europe and Central Asia in developing areas of work, knowledge and skills that are important for them and the LGBTI movements in the region overall to thrive and be successful over the long term, as well as to adapt and act in real time.

- Specifically, support the development of knowledge, skills, connections and strategies:
  - to work on social acceptance and inclusion;
  - to build bridges across diverse types of activism and to develop alliances and networks across different movements and sectors of society;
  - to improve organisational and collective resilience, wellbeing and safety;
  - to strengthen organisations themselves and their ability to evolve – their structures, culture, connection with and accountability towards communities, and organising practices; and
  - to expand the reach of organisations, as well as their ability to engage and empower diverse ranges of people and develop strategies that are inclusive of these diverse and intersecting realities.
- Provide funding that strengthens the work of the LGBTI movements by resourcing both long-term strategies and immediate responses to new opportunities or threats, and diverse strategies and forms of organising in order to reach diverse communities, allies and parts of societies.
- Mobilise resources for the LGBTI movements – both financial and non-financial – for long term sustainable work as well as for real-time needs, and strengthen the ability of LGBTI organisations to mobilise resources, including through engagement with private philanthropy, private sector actors and community supporters.
- Ensure that the LGBTI movements in Europe and Central Asia are connected and have spaces and resources to develop collective analysis of the developments and the state of the movement, to exchange knowledge and experience, to identify needs and gaps, and to practice solidarity.
- Support emerging European and Central Asian networks and sub-regional coalitions, under-resourced parts and strategies of the movement, and LGBTI organisations serving as hubs and resource to others in the movement.

## **Over the next five years, ILGA-Europe will work towards the following changes:**

- LGBTI organisations grow and diversify their networks of support and communities; have strong organisational structures and practices that support their long-term continuity and ability to adapt; thanks to meaningful community engagement and empowerment, there are knowledgeable and skilled people in the organisations and around them who take leadership roles; and there are strong organisations across the movement that serve as support and resource for others in the movement.
- The movement's toolkit of strategies and practices to work on social acceptance and inclusion and on socioeconomic justice has grown and expanded and supports intentional, strategic, and effective work in this direction.
- There is increased cohesion and solidarity across the LGBTI movements in the region, which manifests, among others, in collaborative actions to propel LGBTI rights or respond to emergencies, transfer of knowledge and skills between organisations, support from bigger organisations to under-resourced parts of the movement to access resources, shared commitment to self-reflect on ways to strengthen the movement, and continuous collective exploration of strategies to grow social acceptance and inclusion and integrate socioeconomic inequalities into the movement's work.
- There are strong alliances between LGBTI and other social justice movements that manifest as joint efforts towards social acceptance and socioeconomic justice, and joint responses to emergency developments or immediate opportunities across Europe and Central Asia.
- There is an increase in funding provided to the LGBTI movement over the longer term.
- There are new resources and types of stakeholders contributing to the movement e.g. corporate sector, and they are doing so in ways that support sustainable organising.

# **PATHWAY 3 – FULL PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS OF LGBTI PEOPLE IN LAW AND POLICIES**

The third pathway towards achieving our vision is having laws and policies which recognise, protect and promote the human rights and equality of LGBTI people at local, national, regional and international levels.

## **What is the role of “laws and policies recognising and protecting LGBTI people’s human rights” in our overall vision?**

Law and policy are cornerstones for equality. Laws that affirm and promote equality are essential tools to safeguard human rights and dignity, especially against abuses of power. They are tools to hold those who perpetrate discrimination accountable, whether private individuals or public authorities. Laws can also address historical and systemic injustices by contributing to a more level playing field for marginalised and disadvantaged communities. While laws and policies on their own are not enough to ensure equality, laws do set the foundation for long-term advances toward a fairer and more just society and can drive positive social change.

These are all reasons why working for legal and political change at local, national, regional and international levels has been such a significant focus of LGBTI activism over decades, and why it continues to be. It is about ensuring that:

- Strong legal standards and instruments exist to protect the human rights of LGBTI people and ensure equality for LGBTI people in practice.
- Public policies ensure that laws and rights are effectively implemented to make a real change in the lives of LGBTI people, and public authorities work with all relevant actors in society to meet this objective.

- Public authorities and law enforcement actors have a duty to and are fully equipped to effectively contribute to the respect for human rights and equality for all LGBTI people through their actions in all sectors of life.

To do this work, civil society actors need to have an environment that enables them to speak freely, to assemble and organise safely, to have access and to be able to share information in a transparent and secure manner, and to have access the necessary means to function. This is why part of the work of the movement is to be defending democracy, rule of law and fundamental freedoms. In addition, recognising that LGBTI people are impacted by a number of economic, social and political issues that are not LGBTI-specific, more attention is placed on how LGBTI organisations and their allies can contribute to legal and policy change on broader socioeconomic justice issues.

## **What is ILGA-Europe’s role over the coming five years to progress on this pathway?**

- Build an analysis of trends related to political opportunities and challenges for the LGBTI movements in Europe and Central Asia, and take a lead in bringing knowledge and expertise together to develop strategies for the movements to continue to advance legal and political change across the region.
- Advocate with European-level institutions towards adoption and implementation of laws and policies which create new, or reinforce existing standards for LGBTI equality at the regional level; have an impact on national level; and collect good practices for policy-makers.

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- Develop and implement benchmarking of legal and policy standards on SOGIESC, to strengthen the movement's ability to hold governments and institutions accountable on their commitments and actions to make human rights and equality for LGBTI people a lived reality.
- Increase visibility and knowledge of issues of concern for LGBTI people underrepresented in laws and policies, including by facilitating meaningful participation of representatives from underrepresented communities in political and policy-making settings at the regional level.
- Actively contribute to standard-setting and to strengthening legal protection on SOGIESC issues through strategic litigation with European courts and monitoring of implementation of European case law.
- Build and/or strengthen alliances at the regional level with organisations and institutions which work – both through advocacy and strategic litigation – to uphold human rights, democracy, rule of law, and defend the role of civil society and human rights defenders.
- Accelerate change by making sure that legal and political wins in one country are transferred across Europe, through supporting peer learning and good practice sharing among governments, and by sharing learning amongst LGBTI organisations to support national advocacy and campaigning.
- Support LGBTI organisations in responding to human rights violations and negative political developments in their country by mobilising institutions and governments to play their role in protecting the rights and safety of LGBTI people.
- Raise awareness with governments and institutions of the impact of other forms of inequalities on the lived experience of LGBTI people (such as socioeconomic status, age, race, gender, mental and physical dis/ability, nationality, among others), including by advocating for more gathering and dissemination of disaggregated data on intersectional inequalities.
- Contribute advocacy with European-level institutions on the adoption and implementation of laws and policies which address broader social justice issues and structural inequalities which impact the lives of LGBTI people.
- Mobilise broad political support within regional institutions for LGBTI human rights and equality through awareness-raising and campaigning activities at European level.

## **Over the next five years, ILGA-Europe will work towards the following changes:**

- European institutions continue to advance the recognition and protection of LGBTI human rights through their laws, policies and practices, especially in relation to rainbow families, legal gender recognition, protection against violence and hate, rights of intersex and non-binary people, anti-discrimination protection, and conversion practices.
- European institutions are actively integrating LGBTI issues in their work, and holding themselves accountable and evaluating their actions in a meaningful way.
- Political support for LGBTI human rights and equality is strong and growing at European level and among national governments.
- There are robust and strategic responses from institutions, governments and civil society allies to anti-LGBTI laws and policies across the region.
- LGBTI perspectives and interests are better integrated in the design and the delivery of humanitarian support by European and international institutions, as well as by national governments.
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- LGBTI perspectives and interests are better integrated in policies that advance fair, just and equal societies and economies at European level.
  - Institutions and governments ensure that laws and policies are effectively implemented and translate into real change for LGBTI people, including by ensuring there is the political support and resources needed.
  - The voice of LGBTI civil society is heard, valued and respected by European institutions and governments, and participation in policy-making processes is consistent, relevant and meaningful.
  - Significant development of legal precedent in the European Courts that contribute to advancing how LGBTI rights are included in European human rights framework.
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# PATHWAY 4 – DEEPLY ROOTED SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE AND SOCIAL INCLUSION

The fourth pathway towards achieving our vision is “Deeply-rooted social acceptance and inclusion of diversity related to sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics in societies”.

## What do we mean by **social acceptance and social inclusion**?

Beyond laws and policies that recognise, promote and protect people’s rights, there is the lived experience of how an LGBTI person feels accepted and included in society across aspects of their life.

Achieving social acceptance and social inclusion is a long-term journey as this involves deep change of attitudes, behaviours and deep-seated practices. It is necessary to work on both acceptance and inclusion, as they are complementary. Acceptance and inclusion are also not static and can change – both positively and negatively – over time. Acceptance and inclusion can look differently in different contexts and for different parts of the LGBTI community. We can however name some core features.

**Social acceptance** is often understood to happen at the level of norms and values, behaviour and cultural change. It speaks to a sense of belonging, to feeling connected to the wider society, to feeling safe and comfortable everywhere when being yourself, to feeling free from having to fit certain norms.

Social acceptance is observed at the interpersonal level, it happens in relationship with other individuals. Acceptance is also deeply connected to context and is rarely universal; one can feel accepted in one group or in one circumstance, and feel excluded elsewhere.

Bringing about social acceptance is about working towards behavioural and cultural change. It’s about changing hearts and minds. Examples of indicators of social acceptance include:

- Everyone in society has effective access to accurate and inclusive information and knowledge about SOGIESC, and the lived realities and history of LGBTI people in all their diversity.
- LGBTI people are seen as valuable actors who can contribute to the development to their immediate communities and to societies at large (e.g. in politics, art, music, film & TV, sport, media).
- Public opinion is supportive of openly LGBTI people in all sectors of society, and it is reinforced by opinion leaders – especially politicians, faith leaders and media – who have a positive, respectful and constructive discourse.
- There is a range of positive and welcoming public and online spaces, and multiple sources of public support and solidarity for LGBTI rights exist.

**Social inclusion** refers to changes in how structures and institutions in society – whether public or private – have practices that are inclusive of LGBTI people and respond to their needs. Social inclusion implies action aimed at changing systems and practices at a more structural level. Social inclusion requires to work with different actors across society on changing how they work and how they define their purpose to make sure it is inclusive.

Building alliances and partnerships is essential to achieve this objective. Social inclusion also implies active participation of LGBTI people in society who have a voice and agency in decisions that impact their lives. Examples of indicators of social inclusion include:

- LGBTI people, in all their diversity, are enabled to participate at all levels of responsibilities of government and justice, and take active part in all domains of public life (civil society, politics, art and culture, sports, etc.)
- Influential actors in society actively contribute to social inclusion through their actions, especially in the field of education, employment, access to health and housing, law enforcement, etc.

## **What is ILGA-Europe's role over the coming five years to progress on this pathway?\***

- Identify trends in public discourses and narratives around LGBTI people and SOGIESC issues with the goals of amplifying positive messages from a regional perspective and using our leverage to give visibility to voices and issues which are underrepresented.
- Monitor trends in public discourses that feed prejudice, division and hatred with the goals of equipping LGBTI organisations to counter hateful speech and negative messages, and of advocating for relevant public authorities and private sector to take effective measures against incitement to hatred and disinformation both offline and online.
- Provide support and share learning to strengthen the capacity, knowledge and skills of LGBTI groups and organisations to inform and to shape public narratives, including through public awareness-raising campaigns, work with media and social media.
- Establish partnerships with actors who shape public opinion and narratives (such as media associations, social media platforms, politicians) to reinforce the positive role they can play on informing, educating and fostering dialogue, at European and national levels.

- Provide support and share learning to strengthen the capacity of LGBTI groups and organisations to be successful at creating change in social attitudes and behaviours.
- Build and/or strengthen strategic partnerships with professional sectors at the European level (such as health/mental health professionals, teachers, employers, business, trade unions, journalists, humanitarian actors) towards setting and implementing LGBTI-inclusive standards in their sector, and contributing to strengthening their own capacity to ensure their practices are fully inclusive of LGBTI people.
- Working to translate European-level partnerships with professional sectors and LGBTI organisations at national and sub-regional levels to contribute to LGBTI inclusion in different sectors at those levels.
- Provide support to LGBTI groups and organisations to be successful at equipping people and organisations in different sectors of society (e.g. professional sectors, arts and culture, sports, faith leaders, etc.) with the knowledge and tools needed to be genuine allies and mainstream LGBTI issues in their sector and beyond.

*\*A number of these roles are connected to ILGA-Europe's roles on enhancing movement capacity under Pathway 2, and will be supported by our donor advocacy and mobilisation of more longer-term funding for the movement.*

## **Over the next five years, ILGA-Europe will work towards the following changes:**

- Coverage of LGBTI issues by media outlets is inclusive and diverse, based on accurate information and contributes to constructive and respectful public conversations.
- Respectful, inclusive and supportive narratives and discourse by political actors and opinion leaders are amplified, while a wide range of actors in society stand up to prevent and challenge hateful speech (especially anti-trans speech).

- More allies and supporters are equipped to navigate the public discussions in a way that builds bridges rather than further polarises and divides.
- Expressions of public support and solidarity for LGBTI communities (e.g. public gatherings, statements, funding) are clear and strong, especially in circumstances of backlash.
- Social media platforms are increasingly more inclusive and safer for LGBTI people, especially for trans and non-binary people, and racialised LGBTI people.
- Public opinion polls show an increase of public support for LGBTI people in all their diversity and better understanding of LGBTI people's realities in a growing number of countries.
- There is consolidated knowledge, analysis and tools on effective social acceptance and inclusion strategies among LGBTI organisations who are increasingly influencing public perception and changing behaviours in a sustainable way.
- LGBTI organisations and allies are able to effectively counter anti-LGBTI narratives at national, sub-regional and regional levels.
- More LGBTI organisations have good relationships with professionals in different sectors (housing, education, health, business, law enforcement, etc) through which they make sure that professionals actively contribute to social inclusion of LGBTI people through their work.
- LGBTI people can increasingly rely on public authorities or professional institutions properly fulfilling their role in providing services that meet their needs, while LGBTI organisations and groups see the need for them to step-in to fill gaps in service provision for their communities.

# PATHWAY 5 – FAIR, JUST AND EQUAL SOCIETIES AND ECONOMIES

The fifth pathway towards achieving our vision is that LGBTI people live in “Fair, just and equal societies and economies”.

## What do we mean by working towards fair, just and equal societies and economies?

LGBTI people’s lives are not only impacted by how laws and societies recognise, protect and value them on the basis of their sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics. Structural oppression based on socioeconomic status, gender, race, dis/ability, age and other intersecting factors also affect LGBTI people’s access to rights, services, resources and participation. When adopting an intersectional analysis, the structural nature of harm and oppression becomes apparent, and we see that LGBTI people and communities are affected by larger social justice issues, such as racism, sexism, and economic inequalities.

This is about why, as a movement, we have to look at how we can be part of addressing structural inequalities within our societies beyond what are considered specifically LGBTI issues (for example marriage equality or legal gender recognition). While more capacity, knowledge and resources are needed for LGBTI organisations across the region to do more on broader issues of social injustice, everyone can play a role depending on their resources, capacity, context and mandate.

At the core, it is about thinking differently – from focusing on “LGBTI rights” to the broader human rights of all LGBTI people for example – about seeing how issues are interconnected and integrating this thinking throughout our practices and actions.

At the community and organisational levels, it is about asking ourselves whose lives and experiences are at the centre and whose are considered peripheral in telling the story of the LGBTI realities and needs, and in organisational decision making (Pathway 1). At the organisation and movement levels, it is about embracing a long-lasting learning journey and committing to questioning our own priorities, practices, analysis and politics (Pathway 2). In advocacy, alliance-building and campaigning, it is about how we as activists, organisations and movement use our own leverage and influence to contribution in support of other equality and socioeconomic justice issues (Pathways 3 and 4).

In practical terms, it is about contributing to changes such as:

- LGBTI people, in all their diversity, have real and equal access to education, employment, housing, health care, social security, financial and social services to fulfil their full potential and provide for their own and their families’ living.
- LGBTI movements are closely connected to human rights, social justice and environmental movements, which stand in solidarity of each other, recognising that struggles are interconnected.
- There are effective laws, policies and practices at all levels of society to ensure equality related to other structural factors that influence the lives of LGBTI people (such as socioeconomic status, age, race, gender, mental and physical dis/ability, nationality, among others).
- Governments and private sector actors prioritise policies and actions to combat structural inequalities and social exclusion – especially those rooted in gender, race, socioeconomic status, nationality and dis/ability.

In consultations with members, a number of economic, social and political issues that particularly impact the needs within LGBTI communities at this moment in time were identified. These include: migration and asylum policies, access to safe and affordable housing, mental health, sexual and reproductive health and rights, access to medication, and sex work. These larger policies and structural issues are named as having an impact on the lives of LGBTI people who experience intersecting forms of oppression because of their socio-economic status, age, race, gender, mental and physical dis/ability, nationality, among others. The intention is not that ILGA-Europe nor LGBTI organisations take a leading role on these larger policies and structural issues, but it is to strengthen our collective ability to contribute to the work in these areas wherever possible.

## **What is ILGA-Europe's role over the coming five years to progress on this pathway?**

- Share knowledge within the movement to contribute to deeper awareness and understanding about the impact of other forms of inequalities on the lived experience of LGBTI people (such as socioeconomic status, age, race, gender, mental and physical dis/ability, nationality, among others).
- Strengthen ILGA-Europe's capacity to integrate an intersectional approach across its work by continuing to learn and question its own priorities, practices, analysis and politics.
- Facilitate necessary dialogues within the membership and wider movement to address structural inequality and power imbalances within communities, movements and societies, and to discuss how inequalities are reflected in organisational structures and practices.
- Strengthen capacity of LGBTI organisations and groups to integrate an intersectional approach in their practices and their work through supporting learning, networking and exchange of practices.

- Provide support to LGBTI organisations and groups to develop or adopt alternative approaches in their work to address the impact of intersecting factors on their communities.
- Mobilise resources to support LGBTI organisations in doing more work related to structural inequalities in their community, organisations and society, including by engaging with donors on how their own practices contribute to reproducing inequalities.
- Provide support to LGBTI organisations on advocating and campaigning on laws and policies that respond to needs of LGBTI people impacted by intersecting inequalities.\*

*\*This will be done in conjunction with similar work in ILGA-Europe's own policy and advocacy work at European level (See Pathway 3)*

- Strengthen alliances with social justice organisations at the European level to work jointly to advance shared political goals related to socioeconomic justice at European level.
- Provide support to members in creating alliances with social justice organisations and fostering solidarity at national level.
- Facilitate ongoing reflection on the impact of our movement's work on economic inequalities, gender, racism, climate change so our movement continues to be part of larger changes in our world.

**Over the next five years, ILGA-Europe will work to contribute to the following changes:**

- There is greater awareness and understanding within ILGA-Europe and the broader LGBTI movements of how structural oppression based on socioeconomic status, gender, race, dis/ability, nationality, and other intersecting factors affect LGBTI people's access to rights, services, resources and participation.
- Good practices of how LGBTI organisations can effectively address structural inequalities are shared and widely accessible within ILGA-Europe, the broader LGBTI movements and with allies.
- More LGBTI organisations have the capacity and resources to engage in joint advocacy and campaigns for social justice and economic empowerment of LGBTI people.
- LGBTI perspectives and interests are better connected in larger socioeconomic and political narratives.
- There are stronger alliances with organisations working on social justice at European level, which also contributes to strengthen solidarity and cooperation between our respective members at national level.
- More funders are committed to providing resources needed to LGBTI organisations to work on structural inequalities.