# Irish civil society calls for National Action Plan Against Hate at Europe's largest LGBTI conference

Press Release, Legal Protection, ILGA-Europe Annual Conference, Ireland

> With hate rising against minority groups across Ireland, civil society groups will come together today at ILGA-Europe's Annual Conference in Dublin to call on the Irish government to take urgent action.

Representatives of communities affected by hate across Ireland came together in Dublin today to highlight with urgency how rising hate is damaging communities and harming society, and needs to be addressed with urgency.

The cross-societal group called on the Government to develop and implement a comprehensive, fully resourced National Action Plan to Combat Hate to address the growing impact of hate and polarisation across Irish society.

Hosted by LGBT Ireland and Outhouse as part of the ILGA-Europe Conference, the press conference brought together representatives from community organisations and voices from communities affected by hate, including LGBTQI+ people, Travellers, racialised communities, and women, alongside human rights expertise.

The speakers warned that criminal law alone cannot address the growth of hate, polarisation and hostility in Irish society. The organisations called for a coordinated, whole-of-government and whole-of-society response that moves beyond criminal law to address the root causes of hate, prevent harm and strengthen the resilience and cohesion of communities.

They proposed a National Action Plan to Combat Hate, to address the root causes of hate, through prevention, education, community investment and measures that strengthen social cohesion. It should deliver a coordinated national response to address online hate, misinformation and disinformation, including effective accountability for online platforms. Crucially it must be developed and implemented in partnership with affected communities, and grounded in and aligned with international human rights law and standards.

Speaking at the press conference, Anne Byrne, CEO, LGBT Ireland, said:
"Hate does not belong to one community, and neither can the response. Communities across Ireland are experiencing different forms of hate and hostility, but all are feeling its impact and harm. We all share a common interest in building a society where everyone can live safely, participate fully and belong.

"This is a moment for Ireland to show leadership. Through education and investment in communities, alongside effective laws and accountability, Ireland can be a beacon for community, connection and action against hate."

The organisations participating in the press conference called on Government to move from recognising the growth of hate to taking meaningful, coordinated action, and work with the communities most affected to build a safer, more inclusive and resilient Ireland.

Corrinne Hasson, Executive Director, The National Women's Council stated:
"The National Women's Council fully supports the call for an Action Plan to combating Hate. We need the Irish Government to take our voices seriously and show real leadership in tackling the growing hate and extremism.

This Action Plan must be based on the expertise and experience of survivors. It must include clear actions to hold social media companies and perpetrators to account and ensure equality, including gender equality, and digital literacy are a core part of our school curriculum.

We need to challenge the zero-sum discourses that are out there and instead provide a positive, inclusive vision for a society that cherishes and promotes difference and diversity."

.Chaber, Executive Director, ILGA-Europe, said:
"From our work across Europe and Central Asia, we know that rising hate and polarisation do not only harm the communities they target. They also weaken democracy itself. When people are afraid to voice their concerns, stand up for others and participate in public life, and when difference is portrayed as a threat, the space for democratic participation and solidarity shrinks for everyone.

"Tackling hate is therefore not only about preventing individual acts of harm. It is about protecting the conditions that allow diverse democracies to thrive: equality, civic space, participation and the ability to live openly without fear."

For LGBTQI+ people, recent homophobic and transphobic assaults have highlighted the real-world consequences of a wider environment of hostility and hate. Across communities, hate can create fear that extends beyond individual victims, affecting safety, dignity, wellbeing, belonging and people's ability to participate fully in public life.

"LGBTQI+ people, no different to anyone else, want to be able to live openly, freely and without fear. Rising hate is harming LGBTQI+ people, and harming society. We need a response that brings communities together, addresses the causes and drivers of hate, and protects the rights and dignity of everyone." Anne Byrne added.

The organisations highlighted that criminal justice approaches are only one part of an effective response. While the Criminal Justice (Hate Offences) Act 2024 is an important step in ensuring hate-motivated offending is recognised and addressed, it cannot by itself prevent hate from taking root or address the wider conditions that allow it to spread.

The organisations also emphasised that Ireland's response must be principled, proportionate and human-rights compliant. Tackling hate must protect, rather than undermine, the rights, civic space and democratic participation that underpin an inclusive and socially cohesive society. Protecting communities from hate must go hand in hand with protecting equality, freedom of expression, civic space and democratic participation.

Liam Herrick, Chief Commissioner, Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission said:
"The growing problem of hate in Ireland, including homophobic and transphobic hate, requires a coordinated, whole-of-society response.

We need political leaders to show courage and leadership in confronting hate, rather than legitimising divisive narratives. We need an education system that equips people to recognise prejudice and challenge harmful narratives, alongside the digital and media literacy skills to navigate an online environment where misinformation, disinformation and hate can spread rapidly.

The answer cannot be limited to criminal justice measures. We need a sustained response that tackles the conditions in which hate can flourish and supports the communities experiencing it."