We Need to Talk About Democracy

ILGA-Europe's communications guide for LGBTI organisations: Speaking about democracy as communities that already shape it.

Report, democracy, Strategic Communications

Across Europe and Central Asia, the conditions that allow people to organise, develop a shared vision, speak out and hold power accountable are under growing pressure. In some places, they are being dismantled openly; elsewhere, they are being weakened more quietly, while precarity and institutional failures leave many people doubtful that democracy has much to offer. This guide grew out of conversations across our movements about what this time asks of LGBTI organisations and how we talk about our role.

Our starting point at ILGA-Europe is clear: LGBTI movements are not standing outside democracy, asking to be included in it. Through organising and advocacy, our communities already shape democratic life. This guide is about recognising and naming that role, and about speaking about democracy in ways that take people's doubts and concerns seriously.

We know that every context is different, and what works for one organisation might not work for another. So we invite you to treat the ideas in this guide as a starting point to test and experiment with. We hope you will recognise your own work in these pages, see more clearly the democratic role it already plays, and find language and ideas that you can adapt and make your own.

This guide is one part of ILGA-Europe's wider work on democracy. We fund strategies developed by LGBTI organisations. We back organisations that keep space open for people to organise and act together in repressive conditions. We bring movement evidence into European rule-of-law and democracy debates. And we connect organisations across borders so they can build new skills, test approaches and share what they learn. Alongside this, we are asking what the democratic conditions we want to create require of ILGA-Europe and our movement; how we enable participation, share power and practise accountability.

Across our work, and in this guide, we want what we stand for, how we organise and what we communicate to reinforce one another.

This guide was created together with ILGA-Europe's Democracy Lab grantee partners: Campaign Against Homophobia (Poland), Center for Social Group Development (Kosovo), Il Cassero LGBTQIA+ Center (Italy), Ljubljana Pride Association (Slovenia), LGBTI Support Centre (North Macedonia), MozaiQ (Romania), Sarajevo Open Centre (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and the Single Step Foundation (Bulgaria).

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This is a live resource, and we welcome your input. If you try the guidance out, share your comments and insights with us at svetlana@ilga-europe.org.