



In Prague, June 28<sup>th</sup> 2019

Dear friends and fellow LGBTI activists,

On behalf of the organising team and local host organisations – Prague Pride and Proud – I am thrilled to welcome you to Prague for the 23<sup>rd</sup> ILGA Europe Annual Conference.

2019 is an important year for the LGBTI community worldwide and in the Czech Republic. These days we celebrate 50 years since the Stonewall Riots, which marks the beginning of the LGBTI emancipation movement worldwide. Looking from the perspective of those 50 years we have managed to come a long way. Let's use the opportunity of our gathering to celebrate our unity and our achievements. And what better place to celebrate than Prague? Not only is our city super beautiful and our beer delicious but also, more importantly, this year it is 30 years from the Velvet Revolution, which marked the beginning of LGBTI emancipation and awakening of civil society in our country. 30 years ago Czech and Slovak LGBTI people had hardly any rights guaranteed in legislation and the Czechoslovak society certainly did not make us feel welcome. But thanks to the tireless work of previous LGBTI activists on whose shoulders we are standing today, we are in the midst of a discussion on marriage equality with 61% of Czechs supporting it with the potential to become the first post-communist country with the freedom to marry for same sex couples including full parental rights. There is no better time for you to come to Prague and join us in this exciting moment, your presence will most certainly help to encourage political commitments before voting in the Parliament.

This year's conference theme is "Stronger Together" – what a fantastic theme to choose to celebrate the above mentioned anniversaries, because if we did not rise together 50 years ago we would not be able to do what we do now. Many challenges we are facing are shared by other civil society groups. Like us they feel the results of populist and hostile rhetoric on their skins. Those challenges, however harsh, are also presenting the great opportunity to find new allies and to work in harmony in order to effectively address common threats.

We are looking forward to interesting and fruitful discussions but even more we are excited to show you Prague. Prague is much more than the Charles Bridge and Old Town Square. For our social programme we are bringing you to hidden gems – places popular with LGBTQI locals.

So pack your stuff and come to Prague, because one of the best ILGA Europe Annual Conferences ever is about to begin!

Czeslaw Walek  
Chairman of Prague Pride