

Report on the Strategic Plan 2014-2018 Highlights and Achievements

The aim of this section is to report on progress made by ILGA-Europe towards achieving its strategic objectives under its 2014-2018 Strategic Plan. This report covers work carried out between November 2016 and October 2017.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 1 – Achieve full equality and effective enjoyment of human rights without discrimination based on sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression and sex characteristics, with particular attention to the following issues: (1) asylum; (2) bias-motivated violence and hate speech; (3) education); (4) employment; (5) family; (6) freedom of assembly, association and expression; (7) health; and (8) legal gender recognition.

Distilling ILGA-Europe’s advocacy work into a series of neat paragraphs becomes more challenging with every passing year. The sheer volume of activities makes listing them all a daunting task (for readers and the environment!). But also because the backdrop that our advocacy work takes place against is changing – all the time. This is something that ILGA-Europe has adapted to during our twenty years as advocates. However, the reasons we pursue one activity, as opposed to another, in order to achieve legal, political and social change for LGBTI people in Europe might not be so clear to those outside the walls of our Brussels office. That is why this annual exercise of self-reflection is useful for the staff and board.

This is the space where we can share our strategic thinking with you, our membership. The content that follows is our attempt to lead you through our thought processes, explaining why we take a particular approach, as well as share more detail on where ILGA-Europe is as an organisation, and where we plan to travel to over the next few months.

European Union

For many years, working directly with the European institutions was the main focus of ILGA-Europe’s advocacy plans. While our staff still make the familiar route from our office to the Parliament, Council and Commission in Brussels, we have known for several years that this is not the only approach we can and should use. With the European Union constantly in a state of flux, ILGA-Europe regularly re-assess our focus. We examine where EU action currently has the strongest added-value and are actively engaging with the institutions on these specific areas. By adopting this approach, we can advance equality – even at a time when opportunities for new European-level legislation are more limited.

This said, there has been one important legislative process which we have focused our attention on over the past year: the EU’s revision of its **legislation on asylum** which will have a huge impact on LGBTI asylum seekers. Using our knowledge of how laws around reception conditions and decision-making are currently being put into practice, ILGA-Europe actively worked with members of the European Parliament, EU Commission and EU governments officials to make sure that the experiences of LGBTI asylum seekers are taken into consideration in the revision process and that the future revised EU legislation fully ensures their protection.

Unfortunately, in the current political context, opportunities to set new legal standards through EU legislation are very rare these days. Pushing through the long-awaited EU non-discrimination law or calling for EU-wide hate crimes legislation do sound like wishful thinking at the moment. But even if the EU is not adopting as many new laws as it did in the past, it has adopted strong standards over the past two decades. Now, it is important that those laws are effectively implemented. With this aim in mind, ILGA-Europe are increasingly encouraging EU Commission officials not only to monitor the transposition of EU standards into national law, but also to be proactive in developing tools to **support national policy-makers on the practical application** of these laws. For example, we are currently doing this in relation to the implementation of the Victim’s Rights Directive (and we expect to do more of it next year in connection to other existing EU legislation). We are also engaging with EU institutions in finding new ways to use EU leverage to advance policy changes, such as facilitating peer exchange between national governments. In June, for example, the Commission-organised education seminar in Lisbon gave national policy-makers an opportunity to exchange good practices on how to combat bullying based on

sexual orientation, gender identity/expression and sex characteristics. Civil society organisations brought their expertise to the discussion, with governments in attendance. We are working to support more events like this, especially ones focused on closing gaps in anti-discrimination and LGBTI-phobic crimes laws at national level.

Beyond our work on legislative reform and monitoring, we are always looking for ways **to integrate LGBTI equality** into the day-to-day work of the EU institutions. This is part of the work we do in connection to the EU's List of Actions published in 2015; a document that provides a framework for the Commission's work on LGBTI equality. In 2017, we provided an evaluation of the first year of implementation of the List of Actions. We set out concrete steps that we'd advise the Commission to put in practice to increase the Actions' overall impact, making them more relevant to the lived realities of LGBTI people. We are also participating in a number of different working groups and forums which give us the opportunity to bring up LGBTI issues in a number of areas. Through the "*Working Group on promoting citizenship and the common values of freedom, tolerance and non-discrimination*", we are able to bring good practices on education from our members to discussions with government officials. As a member of the EU HIV Civil Society Forum, we continue to build up our collective thinking on the myriad of relevant issues for the LGBTI community discussed in that dedicated space. We also actively support the work of the "*High-Level Group of governmental experts against racism, xenophobia and other forms of violence*". In 2017, ILGA-Europe contributed to the Commission's code of conduct on countering online hate speech; a public commitment from Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft and YouTube aimed at preventing the rise of hatred online. We coordinated the feedback from member organisations involved in the monitoring exercise around the code of conduct and are now looking into strengthening the engagement of NGOs in this process.

As in recent years, ILGA-Europe continued our successful engagement with the EU in relation to its **external policies**. Our advocacy and monitoring programme related to the EU enlargement strategy continued this year with regular contribution to the annual progress reports, in conjunction with our members in Turkey and the Western Balkans, and in cooperation with ERA, the LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey. Part of our role is also to ensure direct contacts between national LGBTI groups and Commission officials, including through study visits in Brussels. We also continued to raise issues in the framework of the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood Policy through annual Human Rights Dialogues and Association or Cooperation councils when possible. We worked closely with local activists on ad-hoc advocacy, such as mobilising European institutions to respond to proposed constitutional changes in Georgia which would ban same sex marriage and the evolving political and human rights situation in Turkey. We monitored developments, liaised with members on the ground and kept Commission officials informed at all times. In addition to providing training for staff in the EU's external action services and development cooperation directorate, we also contributed jointly with COC Netherlands to the mid-term review of EU's Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, especially in relation to the implementation of the EU's LGBTI guidelines.

And above all, one goal remains our top priority: making sure that the EU protects the human rights foundations on which it was built. In this respect, one important function that ILGA-Europe play is that of a watchdog, ensuring that the EU keeps its word and implements its range of equality laws and policies. (The very instruments we helped to shape nearly two decades ago.) In 2017, this task is becoming increasingly difficult, as the political landscape continues to shift. For instance, we engaged with the EU institutions on the situation in Poland, providing briefings on the situation for LGBTI activism. ILGA-Europe also organised a meeting for some Polish member organisations with Commissioner Jourova's cabinet, as part of our ongoing advocacy calling on the EU to be more outspoken about human rights violations within its own borders. We also engaged extensively with the Commission to ensure an adequate response to the European Citizen's Initiative entitled *Mum, Dad and Kids* aimed at pushing back on equality advances for LGBTI families in the EU. We worked to ensure that the Commission clearly communicated the fact that the initiative had failed to reach the required threshold of one million signatures, following several cases of misinformation in different countries about the supposed success of this Citizen's Initiative.

Beyond policy and political action, ILGA-Europe are pushing the European Commission to lead by example when it comes to cultural change. Over the last year, we actively engaged with the Commission on the development of its own internal diversity and inclusion policy. As one of the largest employers in Brussels, if we can encourage the Commission to be more open and inclusive, it can certainly set a positive and influential example for other workplaces to emulate. This is why we joined forces with Workplace Pride to provide extensive input on good workplace diversity practices to officials and connecting them to private sector leaders on LGBTI workplace

equality. This connection led to strong public commitments at Workplace Prides international conference by Commissioner Oettinger, who is responsible for human resources within the Commission.

Council of Europe

During the past year, our working relationship with the Council of Europe has continued to strengthen and show its great potential. Our coordinated efforts with the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Unit around their technical assistance have proven useful to progress conversations between policy-makers and LGBTI organisations in very practical ways. For example, this was evident in Portugal, Georgia and Cyprus regarding the reform of legal gender recognition legislation, or in Lithuania supporting training police forces regarding LGBTI hate crime, and through working with local authorities on action plans in Albania and Montenegro. We also provided input for a training manual for police forces regarding LGBTI hate crime developed by the SOGI unit, and actively participated in the first-ever LGBTI Roma event, which was organised by the unit. The CoE's Parliamentary Assembly offered several opportunities to put issues on the agenda – such as the upcoming report on the human rights of intersex people that we worked on together with OII-Europe, which will be the first such resolution of its kind from an international institution. We also engaged extensively with several Council of Europe bodies in response to human rights situations emerging throughout the year, including the crisis in Chechnya.

High on our agenda with the Council of Europe is the upcoming review of the Committee of Ministers recommendations in 2018-2019. These recommendations might be non-binding, but they were the world's first intergovernmental agreement on application of human rights standards to LGBT people and are one of the few instruments we have in Europe to hold governments from across the region accountable to periodic reporting. This will be an important piece of work in 2018. This being said, while there is a lot of potential contained in the Council of Europe's institutional mechanisms, ILGA-Europe is quite concerned about the lack of capacity and support for this work. Without resources, the potential that exists to have strong and effective monitoring mechanisms on LGBTI human rights and to provide direct support to governments will likely go unfulfilled.

Strategic litigation

Looking back at the past few years, it is clear that the role of ILGA-Europe in relation to standard-setting for LGBTI rights in Europe has significantly evolved. One area where we continue to have a unique part to play is our work with European courts, especially the European Court of Human Rights, leading on **strategic litigation**. ILGA-Europe can proactively contribute at all stages of the litigation process. We continued to meet with staff at the Council of Europe on the ongoing implementation of several historic cases from the European Court of Human Rights. In relation to future litigation, we worked with partner organisations to submit written comments for multiple potential third party interventions. Providing practical assistance is also part of our remit – as we advised lawyers in Turkey and Bulgaria on legal gender recognition campaigns and a marriage equality case respectively. In July, alongside our partners TGEU, we organised an expert meeting on litigation for trans rights; an event that brought 14 experts from NGOs, law firms and the world of academia together to strategise on trans-specific cases before the European Court of Human Rights and the Court of Justice of the EU.

And this work does not even detail the actual third party interventions that we have been involved in during 2017. The broad list of topics covered by our litigation work emphasises the power contained within strategic litigation. As a term, it may sound formal and dry, but taking cases that not only help individuals but serve a broader public interest is a very powerful part of the modern LGBTI activist toolkit. In the past years, we have submitted our comments in eleven cases before the European Court of Human Rights, involving deportation of LGBTI asylum seekers, bans on donor insemination for lesbian couples, parental rights, legal gender recognition, and unlawful detentions and hate speech. Since the last annual conference, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that requiring sterilisation as part of legal gender recognition violates Article 8 of the European Convention. This judgment, handed down in April 2017, was a case that ILGA-Europe, TGEU and Amnesty had submitted a third-party intervention in 2015. Also, since Nicosia, we have prepared briefing documents on the *Coman* case (relating to the lack of recognition of same-sex marriages contracted in another EU member state), a case which is now referred to the Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU).

Our conversations with national governments

There are several constant questions in the mind of the ILGA-Europe team: *Where is change actually happening? Where does our action have a real added value in instigating political and legal change?* Like it or not, the opportunities for law-making don't exist in Brussels or in Strasbourg like they used to. This has led to a progressive pivot in our approach to European advocacy: from having European institutions as primary targets, we are increasingly establishing our role as a broker between civil society and governments at national level. This means that, more and more, we work as a facilitator between different stakeholders: member organisations, intergovernmental institutions, governments, other NGOs, relevant practitioners and experts, among others.

We see that we have an increasing role to play in accelerating change in several countries. We do so by organising multiple gatherings of like-minded States and strengthening benchmarking exercises. Not only do these events enable the exchange of good practices but they also create a positive dynamic amongst decision-makers towards improving their respective track-records on LGBTI equality. They also give us opportunities to call for explicit commitments from governments on how they will continue to do the work. One very relevant example for ILGA-Europe is the annual intergovernmental Forum to mark IDAHOT, a key date in our advocacy diary for several reasons. The Forum is a unique space for governments to make commitments publicly, and for ILGA-Europe and our members to hold them accountable. That's why we work to ensure that the Forum is a practical event, one where we present **our benchmarking tool Rainbow Europe** in the presence of several European ministers. This year, for the first time, a ministerial debate followed ILGA-Europe's presentation of our Rainbow Index, during which ministers made public commitments based on their ranking on our map. We also actively work with the host government to provide input on the programme, as we did this year with the Belgian government. We played a key role in organising the first panel on intersex at the forum, engaging with the organisers to make sure intersex people's issues would not be discussed without the presence of OII-Europe. We also led the workshop on intersectionality, another first for the event. Given the current concerns about the shrinking space available for NGOs to do their work, we are working hard to preserve the IDAHOT Forum as a space for LGBTI civil society to have a direct line to national governments.

A few more words about our Rainbow Europe project are necessary - as a lot of analysis of the project has taken place since we last met in Nicosia. In the past year, ILGA-Europe started a detailed reflection process, asking how we can improve the tool's benchmarking potential even more. Given that in many countries we are moving beyond legislation, it is becoming clear that there is a need to expand our set of indicators to include implementation of laws. Our Map and Index will be even more useful if we can measure if laws are really leading to changes in public policies and in practice for LGBTI people. This will help researchers, journalists and local NGOs assess whether governments are starting to 'walk the talk'. We are consulting with members and other partners to improve the tool even more for IDAHOT 2018.

Focusing on advocacy work at national level

As a membership organisation, it is our responsibility to monitor national level situations and to identify where support is needed – whether it is support to push through a new law and to bring about political change, or support to respond to backlash and opposition. Our role is never (and can never be) about strolling into conversations at national level and taking the lead in any advocacy campaign. At the same time, we do see that we can make a clear contribution to the advocacy carried out by LGBTI activists at national level. Our position allows us to map out where knowledge on a topic really lies, where expertise exists, where lessons have been learned within our ever-expanding network of members and LGBTI activists across Europe. We also see it as our role to **facilitate transfer of knowledge** between activists from different countries, to link them up with new partners, and ensure sharing of expertise, thus enhancing the capacity of LGBTI organisations to effectively advocate and mobilise for legislative reforms. We can also help accelerate change by connecting different political actors.

Over the last year, ILGA-Europe provided **strategic advice** and joined members around strategic activities in a number of countries. For example, in Macedonia, we sought to support new opportunities for re-alignment with the EU integration process and broad change in the country as the Social Democrats came into power after an extended political crisis. So we took part in meetings with newly elected politicians committed to establishing an LGBTI Intergroup in the Macedonian parliament, and collaborating to bring about change for LGBTI people in the country. We worked closely with LGBTI organisations in Belgium on analysing proposals for a new law on legal gender recognition and building a strong case for self-determination towards their government. In Greece, we assisted activists campaigning for legal gender recognition by reaching out to Greek members of the European

Parliament who could swing the vote on the legislative proposal. In Portugal, we enabled direct contact between the Portuguese government and OII-Europe, as a way to ensure that policy-makers are able to build on the good practice set by Malta and include intersex protection in their upcoming legal gender recognition reform.

Our ***Creating Opportunities*** project is a perfect example of this strategic approach in action. Now in its third year, the programme was born with flexibility in mind. It is designed to provide support for our members to turn unexpected political developments into opportunities for political and legal change, when access to strategic campaign advice or financial resources can be limited. During the past twelve months, Creating Opportunities has supported organisations in 15 countries by providing expertise on campaigning and advocacy tactics, making small grants, and linking our members up with facilitators or trainers with specific knowledge. In 2017, we provided 6 grants to support projects such as awareness-raising campaigns on civil partnership litigation in Georgia and on increasing visibility of Roma groups during Prague Pride, and advocacy campaigns in Greece on legal gender recognition.

With many elections being cited as having the potential to affect LGBTI equality in 2017, we turned some of our attention to how to turn **national elections** into opportunities for the LGBTI movement. More and more of our members are rethinking how to approach national elections and involve the rights of LGBTI people in the election debate, as was the case in France and in the Netherlands. Through Creating Opportunities, we have therefore started to provide support to members to do this work. Albanian activists received a small grant for their *“Think Politically – Stronger Together”* project, which encouraged the LGBTI community in Albania to actively participate in the 2017 election process. Trans groups in Germany were also linked up with media experts to counter negative, transphobic press before the federal elections, and build the capacity of trans activists around media and public relations work. We are also hosting a live chat on Voting Rainbow - LGBTI equality and election campaigns for activists who have worked through their own recent elections to share tactics and exchange strategies.

Unfortunately, some of our action does focus on responding to potential backlash, as is the case in Romania where the Constitutional Court approved a citizen’s initiative to hold a referendum on adopting a restrictive definition of family. In addition to joining in a strategic session on messages and campaigning with our member organisation and a number of other Romanian non-discrimination organisations, Creating Opportunities is supporting a campaign on family diversity to contribute to a positive public discussion on the topic. We are leveraging our engagement with the EU institutions to get EU-level support from European parties and MEPs to complement national campaigning. We have also been monitoring anti-gender movements and looking into how to support campaigning and narratives to counter this trend over the next year.

Spotlight on Chechnya and Azerbaijan

This year the European LGBTI movement was faced with two major crisis situations that have seen no equal in our continent during ILGA-Europe’s history. The shocking and heart-breaking developments in Chechnya and Azerbaijan have required significant international mobilisation to support victims and ensure sound investigation. In terms of advocacy, we responded to the situation by leading on putting pressure on European institutions and governments to take action. At first, we called for strong diplomatic mobilisation on the Russian (and Chechen) authorities to stop the detentions and torture, and to ensure the safety of people. Very quickly, our work also involved providing support towards the coordination of the relocation of victims from Chechnya to safe, undisclosed locations outside of Russia. Sadly, as we are finalising this report, we find ourselves in repeating some of the same steps in relation to the crackdown against the LGBTI community in Azerbaijan. (Read more on our work on Chechnya under Objective 2)

A shift in our thematic advocacy approach

In our current Strategic Plan, we mention eight thematic priorities that ILGA-Europe will pay specific attention too. And we have to say that the way in which we contribute to making progress under each of these themes has significantly changed over the past four years, which makes the revision of our strategic plan next year very timely.

Indeed, we see our role evolving for a number of reasons, from the fact that focus of many organisations is shifting from legal change to political and social change, to the fact that so many of our members are becoming experts in their own right. In this context, our role is becoming more to help connect the dots on the advocacy

map. We do so by linking members in Europe with other partner organisations that could boost their work, building and sharing knowledge about good practices, and facilitating strategic partnerships in targeted areas. In short, acting as an equality multiplier is now a big part of ILGA-Europe's work.

This means that the story of how we have advanced thematic priorities this year is more about how we have contributed to the following:

a) Facilitating and disseminating data collection and good practice gathering in the areas of health, education and combating violence. Through the EU co-funded health pilot project, we and our project partners gained a better understanding of the specific health inequalities experienced by LGBTI people. The project has developed tools for medical professional to reduce the inequalities, including a training manual for health care professionals on LGBTI health needs. In relation to combating hate crimes, ILGA-Europe contributed to the UNIFORM project aimed at addressing the ongoing problem of underreporting. We were happy to lend a hand to this project, one that was aptly led by member organisations, which sought to connect public authorities and victims of hate crimes, and to improve reporting by creating a reporting website and app. We took a similar supportive role in a project led by a number of LGBTI NGOs and GLSEN on developing a survey instrument to map the school climate for LGBTQ students in Europe.

b) Strengthening thematic expertise among LGBTI organisations: over the past year, we paid particular attention to the needs to enhance skills and knowledge in the areas of asylum and health. Together with TGEU, we are organising a peer learning seminar for LGBTI groups on providing support to LGBTI refugees later in 2017. In addition, we are working to make links between activists and decision-makers, through a roundtable between public authorities and LGBTI NGOs (organised jointly with TGEU) to strengthen our advocacy efforts, both on national and European level. Unfortunately, developments over the past year have only reconfirmed that the LGBTI movement across the region needs additional resources to fully meet the needs of LGBTI asylum seekers. So we expect to do a lot more in this area in the coming years. In 2017, we also held a capacity-building seminar for members from 13 countries, jointly organised with the European Aids Treatment Group. The two-day training not only identified the barriers that still prevent LGBTI activists from fully addressing the rise of HIV and STIs, but also sought to empower them to keep their work on health going.

c) Building strategic partnerships for change: While alliance-building has always been core to ILGA-Europe's way of working, we continue to expand our reach beyond traditional human rights and equality allies. For example, together with NELFA, we organised a networking meeting with EU level children's rights and family NGOs to explore how to strengthen inclusion of LGBTI children's rights and the right of children in rainbow families in their own work. Mainstream asylum organisations are also on our radar, as potential partners to support our advocacy on EU legislation but also in relation to expertise on responding to concrete needs of asylum-seekers. ILGA-Europe have also steadily increased our cooperation with LGBTI equality platform Workplace Pride as part of our increasing engagement with private sector. Through our partnership around their annual conference which was held in Brussels this year, we were able to connect a growing number of our members with companies and to advance the conversation on how private sector can play a role in driving more change for LGBTI people. We are increasingly seeing how these corporate connections don't just have knock-on effects for staff in the individual companies we engage with, but can also have a widespread implication for other employers too and support progressive change in the way companies treat customers or service users. We are also exploring how corporate actors can leverage their influence with policy-makers.

While our action in several thematic areas is evolving, ILGA-Europe's role is sadly not changing in others. While we would have hoped that the need to work for freedom of assembly, of association and of expression would decrease within the timeframe of our strategic plan, the opposite has happened. It has become ever more important for ILGA-Europe to advocate for fundamental freedoms, as we witness the backlash experienced by our members across Europe in various forms – increased security threats, ever-increasing administrative or financial burdens, attacks on offices or community spaces.

All these difficulties are symptomatic of the broader threat that is **shrinking space for civil society**, an issue that ILGA-Europe has prioritised in our advocacy and our alliance-building. We actively participated in the work of Civicus (World Alliance for Citizen Participation) on monitoring this trend and developing effective narrative to support advocacy at regional and global level. As part of our efforts to support our members in tackling the manifestations of closing space, we contributed to building the resilience of our activists at local and national level through our physical monitoring presence at nine Pride events, security trainings in Hungary, and

strategising meetings with activists in Turkey. In the last year, ILGA-Europe highlighted the particular issues faced by Pride organisers in Europe through our **#PrideWatch2017** social media campaign. Monitoring Pride events is also one of the ways in which ILGA-Europe tracks the phenomenon of shrinking space across the region. One of the key aims of PrideWatch was to use Prides as a visible indicator of how well democracies are functioning. In 2018, we plan to build on the lessons we learned from the first year of the campaign, expecting the needs to (unfortunately) still be there.

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2 – Enhance the capacity of ILGA-Europe (members, board, staff) to achieve political, legal, institutional and social change by:

A – Strengthening the capacity of ILGA-Europe to lead on LGBTI equality in Europe through: (1) strengthening ILGA-Europe’s capacity to adapt and respond effectively to changing environments; (2) reflecting and integrating the diversity within the LGBTI population across ILGA-Europe’s work; (3) consolidating ILGA-Europe’s capacity to advance the rights of intersex people.

B – Strengthening the European LGBTI movement through: (1) strengthening the organisational capacity of LGBTI organisations to achieve change; (2) strengthening the capacity of LGBTI organisations to engage nationally on key European level policy developments and implementation; (3) enhancing the capacity of LGBTI organisations to recognise and reflect the diversity within the LGBTI communities

Creating change by building capacity – that’s the ultimate goal of strategic objective 2. However, there are many considerations underlying this objective that continually guide our work on movement building. When we talk about ILGA-Europe’s own capacity to lead on LGBTI equality, we have to ask ourselves where we can add the most value. And when we look at ways of strengthening the European movement, we need to ensure that our communities across the region are ready to respond to national developments as aptly and strategically as possible. Simply put, our movement building work always comes back to adapting to needs – from the day-to-day needs of our individuals members or the long-term future of the entire European movement.

The capacity of LGBTI organisations to adapt (both ourselves and our members) is not a corporate buzzword, it’s a practise that is only growing in relevance when we consider the closing space for civil society groups, growing security threats and an organised backlash against the LGBTI community in the broad European region. Thankfully, ILGA-Europe have been able to adopt several different approaches within our movement building initiatives, allowing us to cover a wide range of activities that deliver the most impact for our members. The activities can be summarised under three broad headings:

- **Investing in skills:** this approach seeks to build on the movement’s existing skills, develop new techniques, and assist our members with pieces of broad strategising work. Our work on values and message frames, centred on the strategic communications project, is one tangible example of this.
- **Building allies:** This fundamental part of ILGA-Europe’s work is all about linking up activists who ordinarily might not have met, but can combine their expertise to empower LGBTI communities all over Europe. This approach drives a lot of our intersectionality work, as we seek to deepen the understanding between the LGBTI movement and other human rights and social justice campaigners; and
- **Increasing resilience:** Writing long-term advocacy strategies is a sensible practise, but it might all be in vain if LGBTI organisations are not supported to be sustainable. This is particularly true for our members who are operating in countries where the authorities are openly hostile to LGBTI equality. That is why ensuring the sustainability of our members – through security trainings, for example – is an irreplaceable part of our movement building.

All three of these approaches have increased in relevance in recent years, but they are applied alongside our more traditional techniques, like documentation of human rights violations, supporting campaigns initiated at national level, and other specific projects with a dedicated geographic focus.

The second pillar of ILGA-Europe’s work – our commitment to empowering the LGBTI movement – was often the most visible aspect of our push for political, legal and social change. Our calls on our advocacy goals generally get

heard at roundtables, seminars, and in meeting rooms. While these discussions are usually not televised, our efforts to enhance the capacity of our members were typically clear to see. Whether this was photos from capacity building workshops, videos from community events, or reports from a field trip, this strategic objective was easy to share.

However, ILGA-Europe and our members are now facing a growing challenge – how to fully reflect the breadth of work being done while, at the same time, ensuring complete security of the LGBTI community. In 2017, we had to ask ourselves that question on multiple occasions. As our ability to publicise our work decreases simultaneously, our provision of trainings on **security, well-being, and safety** issues increases. These training sessions have both short – and long-term relevance – they can be organised and rolled out quickly, providing a rapid response to members in need, and such knowledge contributes to the overall sustainability of the movement.

Overall, our security and wellbeing trainings continue to be a central element of our work with members in countries like Russia and Turkey where the external threats have been clearly documented. However, as ILGA-Europe begin to engage with new members (especially in Central Asia), we are aware that this will be on our agenda for years to come. So please rest assured – there is more going on under the second strategic objective heading that can be included in these pages, and we are highly aware of our responsibility to protect activists working in hostile environments. Such work is not only about security, it is also about identifying new ways of creating change. Organising spaces where activists can strategise or talk about how they stay ‘healthy’ as an organisation are perhaps the most critical activities we organise today.

Happily, there is still much to talk about! And it’s not just about what we say, but increasingly it’s *how* we say it that matters. No piece of work illustrates this piece of learning quite like **our strategic communications** project on values and framing. Our close collaboration with the Public Interest Research Centre (PIRC) has created an extensive database of frames – an in-depth collection of the arguments and messages used by both equality advocates and opponents. This has also provided a detailed base on which to build the Framing Equality toolkit. This unique message framing methodology kit for LGBTI activists has just been published in October 2017 – and that is not all that we have produced. It has been produced together with another toolkit on message testing. As part of the project, we have been able to share PIRC’s expertise with more of our members through communications trainings. A regional training on strategic communications has just taken place in Brussels in mid-September, with additional sub-regional training for activists from specific countries in Europe.

The learning on strategic communication and messaging is being steadily integrated with all other elements of ILGA-Europe’s work, especially our ongoing support of members through projects like Creating Opportunities. This reflects the fundamental thinking that lies behind all our strategies for movement building – we must be as responsive to our members needs as possible, remaining flexible within the changing political environment, and ultimately ensure that the LGBTI movement’s work is sustainable for the work of future generations of activists. **Creating Opportunities**, as we have already mentioned under Strategic Objective 1, is one tangible way to make sure our members have the flexibility they require to work effectively. Threats and opportunities at national level that are identified through our advocacy and monitoring work, can be combatted by building a stronger LGBTI movement. Through Creating Opportunities, the themes of campaigning on legal gender recognition and election campaigns were addressed directly in 2017. Activists from a select number target countries came to Brussels for a training on LGR campaigns; elections and LGBTI equality will be discussed at an upcoming live online chat that will exchange tactics and good practices.

Another key approach in making sure that our equality successes endure is by partnering up with strong allies. **Building alliances** is part of the very DNA of ILGA-Europe. We cannot bring the change we want to see alone. LGBTI activism is inextricably linked to other social justice and human rights movements. Our communities can learn so much from listening to the struggles of others, by sharing strategies and by receiving mutual support from other movements, as well as from groups of professionals, or simply our own families and friends. Several of ILGA-Europe’s programmes use this method of combining activism tools and regranting initiatives to bolster the movement in countries where LGBTI equality is actively opposed. In many cases, we look to partners from other human rights movements for support, going beyond the very obvious allies to make links with partners in all walks of life – from medical professionals and artists, to journalists and parents groups.

Our understanding of the **LGBTI community organising** that is going on across Europe continued to grow in 2017. Launched this year was our online interactive resource on community organising – called *Organising for Change*. This document pulled together lots of lessons learned around community organising and gathered expertise from the movement. The resource combined all that to create a tool that will help LGBTI activists develop plans for their own community organising – as an individual and as organisations. ILGA-Europe also launched a community organising scheme in March that specifically focuses on the work of LGBTI activists in Bulgaria, Cyprus, Greece, FYR Macedonia, Kosovo, Romania, Slovakia and Turkey. Through a mix of re-granting, peer support and coaching, this scheme aims at strengthening LGBTI communities' mobilisation – especially around human rights work. Part of this work seeks to link community organising to mobilisation activities and intersectionality. Organising to create change is hard work and it can take time – and ILGA-Europe will support our members and individual activists as they undertake this inspiring task.

Another way in which ILGA-Europe can support the movement is by elevating the voices of all our communities. One key condition to building a sustained movement is ensuring it is inclusive at local, regional, national and European level. We are at our strongest collectively when we are including the voices of many, not a select few. Our Board and Staff Working Group on Diversity take this work very seriously, particularly as we finalise the preparations for Warsaw 2017. Our Annual Conference is where many of our **diversity** initiatives are at their most visible. At all stages of the events, ILGA-Europe are working with access for all in mind. Our scholarship (and recently introduced partial scholarship) scheme aims to enable more groups to participate at the conference. As an example, this year the involvement of Roma activists at the conference was proactively supported. The conference programme is just as important, with each workshop and panel planned to build the most inclusive agenda possible. Social activities are also shaped to allow conference participants to relax in the best way for their own wellbeing – including everything from childcare facilities and a quiet room for reflection. This year also a pan-European Working Group started looking at how to ensure diversity and an intersectional approach are also integrated in our governance documents and structures.

But our very public, visible events such as the Annual Conference are not our only concern. Improving our work on **intersectionality** is something that we must work on every day. From scheduling our social media posts, to planning the content of our latest campaign, to finalising training sessions – all our conversations need to give visibility to as many as possible. In order for our advocacy calls for equality for all to be taken seriously, we need to hear from as many perspectives as possible in our movement building work. In 2017, our attention zoomed in on the experiences of LGBTI people from ethnic and racial minorities. We launched the *Turn on the Lights* social media campaign to start a conversation about race and ethnicity within the LGBTI communities, along with an edition of our *Destination Equality* magazine on the issue. We also carried out a consultation with member organisations to examine the needs and challenges faced by LGBTI people of colour or of ethnic minority background. This is a conversation that the Diversity Working Group will be taking forward, as ILGA-Europe and our members explore how we can more effectively tackle racism and xenophobia in the LGBTI communities. The other issue we chose to shed light on is mental health and well-being within LGBTI communities through our upcoming *Come Out for Mental Health* social media campaign, aimed at opening up the conversation on this issue which is still all too invisible within our movement.

Strengthening our connections with regional networks within our membership is a critical part of our movement building actions. Our relationship with Transgender Europe – TGEU is getting stronger by the year, as we continue to closely coordinate with them on trans advocacy strategies and benchmarking exercises like Rainbow Europe. The growth and development of OII-Europe's work on intersex equality means that there are increasing opportunities for our organisations to work together. We were able to facilitate a two-day financial management training for OII-Europe in June, as part of the organisation's continual development. ILGA-Europe were honoured to be invited to many events organised by our partners, moments in their history that we were very proud to be able to support. For example, in July ILGA-Europe staff ran a workshop on community organising and empowerment at IGLYO's first ever Activist Academy. We also attended the annual conference of the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups and the Intersex Forum in Amsterdam, as well as events coordinated by rainbow families involved in NELFA and the parents of LGBTI people by supporting the strategic development and creation of the European Network of Parents. Being part of so many diverse events with different parts of the LGBTI community is really enriching for ILGA-Europe- in a professional and a personal sense.

Readers should not panic, as we are not planning to list all the events we are part of! However, a few should be mentioned specifically:

- The Annual Conference 2016, with over 450 participants, and more than 70 programme spaces, discussions, pre-meetings, consultations, etc.
- Capacity-building seminars, trainings and workshops on: campaigning, message framing, community organising; strategic communication; fundraising; financial management; advocacy on HIV; security; strategic planning; wellbeing; strategic litigation; hate crimes reporting; migration and supporting asylum-seekers.
- Study and advocacy visits to the Council of Europe and the EU institutions.
- Coaching/mentoring on organisational management and development.
- Documentation of good practices
- Grants to strengthen work with allies; general capacity strengthening grants; urgent advocacy and security grants in the framework of the Dignity for All programme and various grants to support other documentation activities.

ILGA-Europe's **regranting** initiatives are also closely linked with our movement building work, as our approach is not focused on funding alone, but on combining financial resources with additional capacity building. This holistic approach has seen our regranting work steadily expand, with targeted calls launched this year for specific in-country work across the region. We are conscious that the scenarios faced by LGBTI activists can differ greatly and that mobilising resources takes time, in particular when it comes to ensuring that activists have the necessary means to respond to emerging priorities. With this dynamic existence in mind, ILGA-Europe are planning a large-scale assessment of funding needs across the European LGBTI movement in late 2017. The exercise will not only bolster the case for the need to support LGBTI equality activities in Europe, but also assist funders in pinpointing gaps and potential opportunities.

As mentioned earlier, it is clear that the human rights situations in Chechnya and Azerbaijan are possibly the greatest challenge faced by both ILGA-Europe and the wider movement in recent times. This is in large part due to the fact that much of the needed response is humanitarian in nature, something that our movement had to rapidly learn to do given the stakes. The Russian LGBT Network quickly responded by coordinated in-country support for victims, an effort that ILGA-Europe supported through all possible means, from activating responses from international organisations and facilitating international mobilisation efforts, to the creation of a fund to support the relocation of victims. At the time of writing, ILGA-Europe is in the process of identifying ways to support victims of the Azeri crisis. These developments are already prompting a reflection about the new knowledge and skills that the movement might need to build to be equipped to respond to such situations. Indeed, while the initial response to the unprecedented violations revealed the immense solidarity and resourcefulness in the movement, it also shed light on the multiple gaps in our collective capacity to respond to emergency situations (both in terms of humanitarian responses and relocation/reception of refugees).

When the needs of our movement are listed in this activity report, the task facing us all can seem a bit overwhelming. In order to approach the task of capacity building in the most practical way possible, ILGA-Europe need to carry out a needs assessment exercise of our own. In order to energise and engage as many activists as possible, what do ILGA-Europe need? How can we be the best version of ourselves as an organisation?

Resource mobilisation is a constant issue for ILGA-Europe in order to sustain our work. During the past year, the numbers in our staff team reached 20 people for the first time. This of course hints at the fact that some of our team are in newly created positions – and ILGA-Europe have their first ever dedicated Fundraising Manager. It also means that we have to look at how we do our work in an expanding organisation to ensure we remain effective and have undertaken a review this year to enhance our management and governance structures.

With the fundraising manager position, **fundraising** can become more and more integrated in our daily work. Discussions on how to raise funds in creative and effective ways are becoming a standard item on our agenda, as opposed to one-off discussions around high-profile events such as the European Equality Gala. (Incidentally the third edition of our Gala took place in June, having firmly cemented itself as part of the Brussels social calendar. The room was once again filled with supporters who gathered to hear speakers tell stories of the impact strong allies can have; we also counted three EU Commissioners on the guest list in 2017!). Fundraising will remain a critically important task for ILGA-Europe in the immediate and medium to long term. We will need to reach out to potential donors, small and large scale, to ensure that we can raise enough unrestricted funds to ensure continuity of our EU grant and to build reserves for crisis situations, such as the now emerging situation in

Azerbaijan. As with the rest of our work, we will bring our learning on fundraising to our wider membership, including through workshops like the one we held this year on fundraising for strategic litigation jointly with KPH.

Another major factor that will determine how sustainable ILGA-Europe is as an organisation is our own security processes – especially when it comes to **digital security**. As a membership organisation, we have a responsibility to protect the data of all members as well as ensuring the security of our staff. In 2017, we have taken steps to increase our security infrastructure. This involved a full-scale security audit and several changes to ILGA-Europe’s IT systems. Staff have received additional training and travel/security policies have been updated to more accurately outline the necessary steps while travelling in countries deemed to be ‘at risk’. This review of how and where we work has also led ILGA-Europe to explore the possibility of using new tools to share learning with our members, such as digital tools, webinars, or an online learning platform.

Like many of our members, ILGA-Europe are always in ‘planning mode’, trying to adapt to the shifting civil society landscape we find ourselves in at the moment. We (just like all LGBTI organisations) are susceptible to changes in funding opportunities and political shockwaves. This makes 2018 even more important – as it offers the organisation several chances of renewal.

ILGA-Europe will embark on a new five-year **strategic planning** process in 2018. As our current strategic plan comes to a close, it is obvious that new tactics are needed to continue to push for change with greater success in the coming years. ILGA-Europe are proud of the role we play alongside our members, as part of the overall European LGBTI movement. One challenge our strategic review process must not shy away from is how to best prioritise. In order to create the most change for LGBTI people, where do we need to target our work in the next five years? This type of self-reflection will also be necessary as our constitutional review process unfolds. Talking about organisational structure may not sound exciting to everyone, but ILGA-Europe can only be as sustainable as the framework we define for ourselves. Planning for 2018 has already begun on this topic, as the ILGA-Europe team have been reflecting on the core values and beliefs we carry with us on a day-to-day basis, guiding us personally, as well as lighting our way as an organisation.

Report on Governance Activities of the Executive Board

Introduction

As the main acting body representing the member organisations of ILGA-Europe, the Executive Board provides overall direction to ILGA-Europe, acts and makes decisions in line with ILGA-Europe’s vision, mission and values and in the framework of its constitution and policies laid down by the European Regional conference between conferences, in particular in line with the strategic plan agreed by members.

In accordance with article E.5.d of the Constitution, the Executive Board of 2016-2017 herewith presents a report on its activities from October 2016 till November 2017 to the European Regional Conference.

Board set-up and functioning

At the 2016 Regional Conference in Cyprus, five Board members were elected, four of which (A.Chaber, Costa Gavrielides, Joyce Hamilton, and Brian Sheehan) were re-elected for a second and third term respectively in office, and Olena Shevchenko for her first time on the board. Together with the existing five members, the composition of the new Board was set for the new mandate and a division of positions followed as presented in the table below. In addition to the Board members, Konstantina Kosmidou and Antonio Mihajlov were elected as Reserves.

The board convened on five occasions since the 2016 Annual Conference in Athens (in third column, number of attendance to meetings per member):

- 22nd October 2016, Nicosia

- 9th – 11th December 2016, Brussels
- 3rd – 5th March 2017, Brussels
- 19th – 21st May 2017, Brussels
- 31st August – 3rd September 2017 Brussels
- 1st November, 2017 Warsaw

Report on Governance Activities of the Executive Board

NAME	POSITION	TERM	TERM SERVED	CURRENT MANDATE ATTENDANCE
Joyce Hamilton	Co- Chair	2016 – 2018	Third	5 meetings
Brian Sheehan	Co-Chair	2016 – 2018	Third	5 meetings
A. Chaber	Treasurer	2016 – 2018	Second	5 meetings
D. Flemington	Co - Secretary	2015 – 2017	First	5 meetings
Micah Grzywnowicz	Co-Secretary	2015 - 2017	Second	4 meetings
Costa Gavrielides	Member	2016 - 2018	Second	4 meetings
Yuri Guaiana	Member	2015 – 2017	Second	5 meetings
Olena Shevchenko	Member	2016 - 2018	First	5 meetings
Vladimir Simonko	Member	2015 - 2017	First	5 meetings
Dragana Todorovic	Member	2015- 2017	First	4 meetings

In the past year, the Executive Board organised its work in the following sub-committees covering different areas of responsibilities and working groups on issues that required further development in the work of ILGA-Europe:

NAME	MEMBERS
Finance sub-committee	Joyce Hamilton, Brian Sheehan, A. Chaber, Vladimir Simonko, Dragana Todorovic, Costa Gavrielides
Employment sub-committee	Joyce Hamilton, Brian Sheehan, Darienne Flemington, A. Chaber, Costa Gavrielides, Vladimir Simonko
Governance sub-committee	Micah Grzywnowicz, Yuri Guaiana, Olena Shevchenko, Darienne Flemington
Diversity Working Group	Micah Grzywnowicz, Yuri Guaiana, Darienne Flemington, Costa Gavrielides, Olena Shevchenko
Constitution/Governance working group	Joyce Hamilton, Micah Grzywnowicz, A.Chaber, Darienne Flemington, Costa Gavrielides, Brain Sheehan

I. Overall direction and priorities

One of the main highlights undertaken by the Board was the preparation of the process to revise the ILGA-Europe’s Strategic Plan 2014 – 2018 as we are entering the last phase of its implementation period. The

discussion focused on designing a consultation forum to engage members in the process and create a space for interactive as well as constructive exchange.

II. Organisational management and development

The Executive Board have looked into the possibility of creating a risk management document, which would map potential risk areas for the organization as well as ways of preventing and/or addressing them. The Executive Board saw the need of providing such a tool to be able to better respond to potential crisis situations.

In order to further contribute to innovative ways of expanding ILGA-Europe's fundraising strategy, the Executive Board agreed to introduce a Voluntary Membership Fee, which would be a way to stimulate and appeal to member organisations to contribute to strengthening the European movement by donating an extra amount on top of their annual membership fee, relative to their capacity and budget. This idea will be introduced and consulted with the membership at the Annual Conference in Warsaw.

In addition, to further strengthen the Board's understanding and effectiveness as a responsible employer, the Board has participated in a strategic training programme that was followed up with a refresher three months later. This has enabled the Board to recognise the various strengths of individual members in order to maximise input into the overall leadership. Bearing in mind that the IE Board members are all volunteers and wear many hats, this has been a timely and important training to ensure we can maximise on our skills and knowledge on behalf of the membership of ILGA Europe.

III. Work on policy and programmes

In its duties to provide overall direction to ILGA-Europe and oversee the implementation of the strategic plan (as adopted by the Zagreb Regional Conference for the period of 2014 – 2018) and annual work programme, the Executive Board has engaged in discussions with the Executive Director (and where relevant, other staff members) in relation to key advocacy priorities and the development of organisational policies.

When it comes to policy work, the Board focused on the development of a few policy documents. One of them was a policy paper on intersex. The discussion was based on Maltese Intersex Demands (2013) and held in the context of broader positions of ILGA-Europe so that the official policy paper on intersex of the organisation would be in line with guiding principles agreed on by intersex activists as well as general positions of ILGA-Europe.

Due to the fact that ILGA-Europe is increasingly working with fundraising from different actors, the Executive Board identified a need to revise a policy on corporate engagement. The goal is to develop a new policy to define how the staff and Executive Board interact with the corporate sector, in particular when deciding whether to accept public and/or financial support from a corporate or private entity. It has been an interesting and important process in the light of an ever-growing organisation.

Moreover, the Executive Board continued the discussion and policy development on sex work. The process included also consultations and capacity building with the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe. The Board developed a process towards the adoption of a position on LGBTI sex workers in 2018, which will include a workshop at the Warsaw Conference.

Finally, 2017 was an important year for the further improvement of Rainbow Europe. Due to ever-changing landscape in Europe when it comes to laws and policies, there was a need to change some of the criteria, which are used to calculate countries ranking. The whole Executive Board was consulted on the proposed changes brought forward by the staff members so that the updated Rainbow Europe would better reflect the realities on the ground.

IV. Staff affairs

We are very fortunate to have a highly skilled, dedicated and passionate team who work effectively and efficiently to drive forward change and implement our strategic plan. The team has grown again this year, and we would like to take this opportunity to offer our sincere thanks to them for their hard work on behalf of ILGA Europe members and their commitment to our shared vision and goals.

As a responsible employer particular attention was placed to make sure that ILGA-Europe's staff have high job satisfaction levels. The Executive Board is particularly motivated to make sure that optimal working conditions exist with high attention to management style and organisational culture. The Executive Board actively participated in the recruitment process during early 2017 as well as contributed to development of job descriptions for new staff positions, such as a Fundraising Manager.

ILGA-Europe is an Equal Opportunities Employer. It aims to ensure that all full-time, part-time, potential employees and other individuals receive equal treatment. The Staff Manual is being updated to include best practice initiatives as well as to indicate Belgium Law requirements (to be completed late 2017 – early 2018). The Staff Manual illustrates policies that enhance current legal requirements making ILGA-Europe a good employer. The Equal Opportunities Policy is included in both the Board and Staff Manuals. ILGA-Europe promotes gender and equality mainstreaming actively promoting equality in all policies and actions.

V. Internal structure

One of the main priorities for the Executive Board is always governance and issues related to internal structure and communication. These included further development of roles within the board to make the Executive Board's work as efficient as possible, creating a new online space to archive internal documents as well as enhancing internal communication. Moreover, there is an on-going process of improving governance processes and routines. These can be found in the Governance Manual, which is updated on a regular basis.

VI. Expanding membership

The boards of ILGA, ILGA-Asia and ILGA-Europe had been approached by representatives of the LGBTI movement from various Central Asian Republics asking to move their membership from the Asian Region of ILGA to the European Region of ILGA. At the ILGA World conference in Bangkok, the membership agreed that the Central Asian region covering Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan - could become members of ILGA Europe. The main reasons why ILGA-Europe felt confident and positive about this transfer was that the five Central Asian states are: Members of OSCE, the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe, making it possible for ILGA-Europe to use this body for advocacy; and that historically, culturally and linguistically they form part of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Former Soviet Union Countries) which are part of the European Region. For the time being, ILGA-Europe is not communicating widely about this development out of security concerns for activists and organisations in the region, but is exploring funding possibilities for programmatic support.

VII. Annual conference

The Board has actively supported the Staff in the preparation of the conference, in particular in the adoption of the conference theme, developing the theme, approval of the conference programme, identification of keynote speakers, and selection of scholars. Each Board member will be assigned a list of duties to perform during the event.

The Executive Board and particularly the Co-secretaries took active part in preparations of the Annual General Meeting to support the staff and ensure a smooth governance process.

Due to the fact that Annual Conferences have been growing with each year, the Executive Board devoted some time to discuss organisational capacity to organise larger conferences, which included among others focus on human resources and financing.

VIII. Focus on diversity

With a growing interest and feedback following the Annual Conferences in Athens (2015) and Cyprus (2016), the Executive Board prioritised its work on diversity. There is a Diversity Working Group (DWG), which is composed of a few members of the Executive Board and a few staff members representing each of the Departments. The idea behind the structure of the DWG is to mainstream diversity within the organisation but also to make best use of expertise existing within the staff and board members.

The DWG used to meet once a year, but now meets prior to each board meeting in order to do more work in person and to create a routine around diversity work.

The focus was not only to enhance preparations of the Annual Conference in general terms, but also to make other activities organised by ILGA-Europe more accessible – to this end there is now a bespoke Diversity Fund that members and/or individuals can donate to.

IX. Representation

Over the past year, ILGA-Europe has been invited to many occasions, LGBTI events and NGO or government conferences. Board members have represented ILGA-Europe on some of those occasions, particularly where most impact was anticipated and a European LGBTI perspective was deemed necessary.

Special effort was made to co-ordinate the visits with ILGA-Europe staff to minimise costs as much as possible meaning, unfortunately, that it was not feasible to have representation to all requested events.

Executive Board members attended the following events:

Gala: Chaber, Brian, Joyce, Micah, Yuri

Prides: Kiev: Olena, Joyce

Istanbul: Olena

Tallinn: Darienne, Vladimir

Skopje: Staff

Madrid: Joyce

European Lesbian Conference, Vienna: Joyce

X. Current issues and ongoing work

Based on the resolution to the Cyprus conference (2016) from TGEU, the Board has initiated a process of engagement with pan European Experts to establish the levels of understanding amongst the membership as well as to canvass expectations and desires of the membership regarding the makeup of the board.

Broadly speaking TGEU asked the board to look at ways that would make the constitution and standing orders more diverse and inclusive. To this end the Board formulated a simple survey monkey in January seeking wide views on the composition of the board, and the election process. This was followed up with a supplementary survey monkey in August. Early analysis indicates that the membership needs clarification around the board function and a better understanding of the Governance responsibilities of the Board and Governance processes to engage in as members during the Annual General Meeting. This work is in progress and in addition to the

ongoing dedicated External Diversity/Governance working group, there will be a Town Hall meeting in Warsaw to attract as many input and good ideas for improvement as possible.

The Board has ensured that there are good links, and open communication with the IE board subcommittee on diversity. They are different roles but may have some cross over and we are mindful that the External Diversity Working Group does not re-invent the wheel.

The Governance subcommittee has been working on the implications of the ILGA World proposals regarding the replacement of the Secretariats with Committees and will make connections with the well-established Pan European organisations that identify with the Secretariats. To this end we have also established a closer working arrangement with the IE representatives on the ILGA World Board.

In order to carry out an efficient program of work, members of the board and IE staff have 'met' via Skype and other mechanisms between meetings as appropriate. This has enhanced our ability to work together, and improved communications. It has been a very busy and productive year.