We Need To Talk About Democracy

ILGA-Europe's Communications Guide for LGBTI Organisations

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This is a live resource, and we welcome your input! Let us know if you try the guidance out, and share your comments and insights by emailing us at svetlana@ilga-europe.org

A note from ILGA-Europe

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 movement 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, and human rights cannot be separated from the conditions that allow people to claim and defend them. This guide is about recognising and naming that role, while offering ways to speak about democracy that take people's doubts and concerns seriously.

This guide is part of ILGA-Europe's wider work on democracy. We fund strategies developed by LGBTI organisations, back organisations that keep space open for people to organise and act together in repressive conditions, and bring movement evidence into European rule-of-law and democracy debates. We also connect organisations across borders to get 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.

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, test and make your own.

Your role in democracy matters more than ever

At ILGA Europe, we know the pattern by now. Anti-LGBTI policies and narratives are being used as a gateway to dismantle freedom of assembly, freedom of association, freedom of expression, and the rule of law. LGBTI organisations in Europe and Central Asia have responded by taking cases to court, building coalitions, training activists, organising grassroots responses and supporting people to vote. This happens online and offline: in campaigns and posts, in community meetings and conversations, and in the slow building of trust. This is democracy work, and it always has been.

Naming it that way does this work justice and creates new possibilities for alliances, broader public support, as well as recognising that defending LGBTI rights and defending democratic systems are part of the same fight.

ILGA-Europe wrote this guide for LGBTI organisations that want to make this shift in their communications work clear.

This is not a guide to depoliticising LGBTI advocacy. It is a guide to recognise the key role LGBTI movements play in defending democracy, offering ILGA-Europe's strategic recommendations and political analysis, as well as messaging insights from the campaigning expertise of our Democracy Lab's eight partner organisations: Campaign Against Homophobia (Poland), Center for Social Group Development (Kosovo), Il Cassero LGBTQIA+ Center (Italy), Ljubljana Pride Association (Slovenia), MozaiQ (Romania), Sarajevo Open Centre (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Single Step Foundation (Bulgaria), and the LGBTI Support Centre (North Macedonia).

The guidance and ideas we share in this resource are a starting point meant to be tested and experimented with - we know that each context is different and that what works for one organisation might not work for another. We hope that these practical ways to talk about democracy inspire you to try out something different and discover new best practices for your communications work.

How to develop your messages

1) Naming your role as a democratic actor

LGBTI organisations are already democratic actors. You organise people around shared interests and experiences. You create spaces in which people can act collectively. You defend freedoms of association, assembly and expression. You document how institutions use power, challenge abuses and demand accountability. You help people understand and exercise their rights, participate in public life and influence decisions that affect them. Not every organisation will do all of these things, and not every activity has the same democratic function. A useful starting point is to look at the work you already do and ask yourself: what does this make possible in a democracy?

You can start by mapping your existing activities against different types of democratic functions. For example:

- **Participation and organising:** bringing people together around shared interests, developing leadership, building constituencies, supporting people to participate in public and political life, vote, engage decision-makers, or stand for office.
- **Civic freedom:** defending the ability of people and organisations to associate, assemble, speak, protest, organise and communicate freely.
- **Accountability and limits on power:** monitoring institutions, documenting abuses, using courts and other accountability mechanisms, scrutinising public decisions and demanding remedies.

- **Representation and political contestation:** articulating interests and demands, bringing experiences that are ignored or marginalised into political debate, challenging policies and competing visions of society.
- **Public knowledge and debate**: producing evidence, challenging disinformation, contributing expertise and creating conditions for informed public discussion.
- **Solidarity and collective power**: building relationships across communities and movements and strengthening people's capacity to act together in defence of wider interests.

Challenge: 'Naming our work as pro-democracy makes us look political.'

Political, yes. Partisan, no. *Playing a political role as an LGBTI organisation is not the same as being partisan. You already do political work every day, and it does not require supporting a specific party.*

Some ways to make this distinction clear:

- **Name the democratic function of your work.** Further to saying that your work seeks to advance LGBTI rights, explain what else it does: for example, enabling people to organise, protecting freedom of association, scrutinising public power, strengthening accountability, or facilitating political participation.
- **Show how democracy works in practice.** Speak about specific democratic principles rather than about democracy in the abstract, and connect these principles to people's actual ability to organise, participate, disagree, protest, seek justice and hold those in power accountable.
- **Apply your principles consistently.** If you engage in political campaigning, hold every party to the same standard, and show that you are evaluating each against the same criteria.
- **Be concrete about power and accountability.** Talk about the specific decisions that have been taken, who took them, and their impact on people's everyday life.

Questions for your team

- How do we currently describe our work?
- What would need to change in our communications to be seen as a democratic actor?
- Which of our existing activities already defend democratic functions, and do we talk about it clearly? How could we make our democracy work more obvious to our audiences?
- How and through which media platforms can we explain why democracy work matters in a way people can relate to?

2) From inclusive democracy to democracy as a structure

Making democracy more inclusive through LGBTI visibility, representation and participation is valuable and has been central to LGBTI movements' strategies for good reasons. Even at a basic level, being seen is a precondition for someone's rights to be taken into consideration. This approach has served the movement for years and brought major achievements, including increased equality. However, with democratic systems being actively eroded across the region, visibility and inclusion are not a sufficient safety net, as institutions, civic freedoms and checks on power that make our participation possible are themselves being weakened. In some contexts, greater visibility can also mean greater exposure to political targeting when that safety net is eroded. Visibility and inclusion therefore need to sit alongside a broader concern with how power is exercised, constrained and contested. Experiment with broadening the conversation from *who is included in democracy* to also asking *what democracy needs in order to function*. Talk about the conditions that allow people and organised groups to participate, challenge power and seek accountability, e.g. independent courts, media, elections and civic space.

Challenge: 'Are we moving away from fighting for LGBTI rights?'

No! LGBTI organisations do not have to choose between defending LGBTI rights and defending democracy. When we protect civic freedoms, challenge abuses of power, defend independent institutions or resist the closing of civic space, we are acting as democratic actors in our own right. This is part of our political role and not just another tactic for securing a specific win.

3) Show that rights are for everyone

Research on how people think about rights[1] found that rights are not something people easily relate to, sometimes even perceiving them as protections for specific groups rather than for everyone. One reason is that people do not readily connect human rights to their daily lives. So, in your communications, **try leading with what democratic freedoms make possible in people's lives,** rather than the right in the abstract. For example, what does the right to organise make possible? How does voting make a difference?

People relate to rights in very different ways, so each perspective requires a slightly different approach.

For people who feel rights are irrelevant: validate the struggle and show what is possible

Some people feel the system has never delivered on its basic promises. Their basic needs are not being met, and rights talk feels remote and irrelevant to their daily lives. *"It will happen to you too"* has limited reach here, as this group does not immediately think of themselves as having anything to lose. Start with what they already know: the experience of being ignored, unprotected, or failed by institutions. Then show them what people have been able to change by organising and claiming their rights, with concrete positive examples of what has been achieved in the past, and what more we can do.

For people who feel rights have already been achieved: talk about what we have to lose

Some of our partner organisations told us that many people do not think of rights as hard-won achievements, because they have mostly had the privilege of their basic freedoms being honoured. Rights feel like the *"natural state of things"*, and they tend not to notice discrimination other people might be experiencing. This makes a loss of those rights hard to imagine until it is already happening for them too. With this audience group, show what they have to lose when democratic systems break down. Tell them that rollbacks rarely stop with the groups targeted first, but do not rely only on "you could be next": show why a system that can selectively withdraw rights and protections is itself dangerous, and talk about how the current state of things is already affecting people. A dose of worry earns its place here, but keep it specific and sparing, one or two lines about what they might be losing rather than a full doomsday scenario.

For people who see rights as special treatment: reframe rights as equality

For people who think of rights as special treatment, as privileges only meant for some, or something extra at someone else's expense, experiment with reframing rights as equality. Talk about human rights as something everyone deserves, but not everyone is equally able to exercise. Acknowledge that many people are already struggling to get their basic needs met, and that equality is about everyone being able to live with dignity and security, e.g. a wage that gets you to the end of the month, a home you can afford, quality healthcare when you are ill, and not being discriminated against for who you are.

Message formulas to test with each audience group

- **Rights as irrelevant:** name the experience of being failed by the system → show what fighting for rights has already achieved → tell what it could mean for them → call to action.
- **Rights as already achieved:** talk about what everyone deserves → make clear what there is to lose when democratic systems break down and why selective withdrawal of rights matters in itself → call to action.
- **Rights as special treatment:** start from the common struggle with a relatable everyday example → say everyone deserves the same protections → call to action

[1] Talking about Rights, Tamsyn Hyatt and Angeliki Lampropoulou, FrameWorks UK, 2026

4) Lead with values, with relatable language

For many people in our communities, the word ‘democracy’ either sounds empty or brings feelings of mistrust and disillusionment. Many have lived through elections that did not bring the change they hoped for, with corrupted systems that offered rights on paper but not in practice. In several contexts, democracy might also be perceived as either already delivered (so why argue for it?) or as an external, foreign imposition. All of these perceptions close people down, so try to avoid starting your messages with the word democracy, and lead with what democracy means in people’s lives: their ability to have a say, organise with others, challenge power and expect fair treatment. You can then make the connection to democracy explicit where it is useful.

What to say instead of ‘democracy’

Instead of starting with the abstract term, try talking about:

- **Safety and dignity**: the conditions for people to live without fear of being targeted, fired, outed, or attacked for who they are.
- **The right to have a say**: taking part in the decisions that shape your neighbourhood, your school, your city. Decisions that affect your life should involve you.
- **Accountability**: those in power should answer for their actions.
- **Equality**: everyone deserves the same treatment, the same chances, and the same protections, with systems that work for everyone, not just those at the top.
- **Civic freedom**: the ability to organise, speak, gather, and challenge decisions.
- **Community power**: people organising together, building collective power and acting for their communities are part of how democracy works.
- **Helping your community**: being useful to the people around you, being part of something bigger, and seeing that what we do together makes a difference.

There is also other ‘NGO’ vocabulary that tends to alienate people e.g. anti-rights, democratic backsliding, rule of law, civic space. These terms mean something inside the movement and not always much outside it.

Some swaps to try out:

- Rule of law → fair rules that apply to everyone.
- Civic space → the ability to organise and speak your mind.
- Democratic backsliding → specific people stripping away protections everyone relies on for their freedoms.

Questions for your team

- How does our target audience relate to the word ‘democracy’?
- What matters most to our audience?
- What values speak to them, and what might those values look like in practice?
- If you remove the word ‘democracy’ from your message, how else can you get what you wanted to say across?
- Where do our audience’s everyday experiences already connect to questions of power, participation, accountability or freedom?

5) Connect everyday experiences to systemic change

Talking about democracy works when it connects to something people can feel and relate to.

- **Explain how people acting together can shape decisions and institutions**, and make a difference more broadly. A law can be rewritten, a policy dropped, a government voted out. Say what part people and communities play in that, and what it takes to get there.
- **Connect legislative changes to everyday life impact**. Use examples that show how political and institutional decisions, including legislative changes, influence people's daily experiences, from access to public services and fair treatment under the law, to opportunities to organise, participate and have their voices heard.
- **Point to the moment things tend to go wrong,** then trace where the relevant decision or power sits, who can be held accountable, and how people can act to change it.

Message formula to test:

Relatable everyday experience → the systemic level decision or power behind it → what can change that decision → call to action.

6) Name the problem clearly

We are not arguing that democracy is working as it is. Many people in our communities have seen institutions fail them repeatedly, and in several countries the experience is decades of transition, corruption, and unfulfilled promises. Pretending the system works, or that participation leads reliably to change, will lose people immediately. Acknowledge its failures, then be specific about why they happen: where institutions are failing, whose choices contribute to that failure, and where power is being concentrated or left unaccountable.

7) Frame democracy as collective power

Frame democratic participation as collective power.

- **Share examples of progress made through collective action:** how things were before, what change happened and how, including what the next steps are, using your own country's history.
- **Talk about losing the ability to contest and constrain power**. We are not arguing that democracy as a system works perfectly. We are saying that democracy should protect people's ability to organise, contest decisions, hold power accountable and shape the conditions of their lives. Authoritarian actors are trying to take those possibilities away. Talk about what that means e.g. decisions about your life made by people you can never vote out, no court to turn to, no way to organise, challenge them or seek remedy.
- **Build confidence in democratic action by showing the power of coming together, in different forms**: voting, protesting, organising, advocating, attending a community meeting, supporting a neighbour through a legal process. Make sure your audience sees themselves reflected and taking part in decisions and spaces that shape their lives.
- **Talk about the power of helping each other:** People stay involved when they are taken seriously and can see that what they do makes a difference to the people around them.

Message formulas to test

Acknowledge where democracy and its institutions are failing → name the decisions, structures and actors behind that failure → talk about losing democracy as losing collective power → share a win people made happen together → call to action.

8) Prepare your defences in advance

Many attacks are predictable, so plan for them in advance.

- **Know the dominant narratives -** Anti-gender movements systematically use democratic language, parental rights, popular sovereignty, academic freedom, to position themselves as defenders of democracy against LGBTI advocacy. Make sure to know the main narratives used in the context of your work so you can develop and consistently communicate your own framing of rights, power and democracy, rather than only responding to theirs.
- **Be clear about the values and democratic principles you are standing for**, and express them in ways that are concrete.
- **Map what could go wrong with a campaign**, put sensitive materials past a legal eye, and keep your "receipts".
- **Practise how to respond to external attacks and crises.** We recommend taking a look at IPPF's Face the Fire: A DIY toolkit to help activists role-play scenarios and prepare for anti-rights communications threats, as well as at our article on managing communications under opposition attacks[2].
- **Put protection protocols in place for anyone involved**, being clear about what you can do to keep people safer, and how you can support them.

9) Use moments of outrage to build understanding and action

People tend to pay more attention when they are angry about something unjust. An attack, a court ruling, a politician's statement: these moments can create attention and a shared sense of what is wrong. When they do, use that opening, then build on it:

- **Make the systemic link:** people need to understand this is not an isolated incident. Connect it to the broader pattern, and show how it calls for systemic change.
- **Keep the momentum going**. Have a set of key messages you plan to share across the year, and use each crisis moment to show how it connects to your overall ask.
- **Always include a call to action.** This allows people to understand the role they can play and how we can change things together.

10) Show progress, even when you haven't won yet

Not every story has a happy ending. Sometimes the most important thing is to share what people did in a difficult moment: who organised, who showed up, who stood with whom, what new alliances were built, or what people refused to accept. These moments can be worth celebrating even when the bigger change has not happened yet. They show people that they are not powerless and that change is built through many collective actions and accumulated steps, not only through laws and policy wins. Ask yourself: What happened here that shows people have the power to shape what comes next?

[2] Please note this material is marked as sensitive and is accessible only to verified users.

Do's and Don'ts

DO	DON'T
Speak about democracy through values (equality, freedom, participation) and its concrete functions: courts, elections, the right to organise, free media.	Assume people have a common understanding of or a positive relationship to the word democracy.
Connect democracy to everyday life e.g. work, housing, healthcare, safety.	Talk about democracy as a philosophy or lead with it as an abstract ideal.
Talk about rights as protections for everyone.	Frame rights as special protections for some groups.
Acknowledge mistrust and disillusionment before making the case to fight for democratic functions.	Lean into distrust and disillusionment without offering a way forward.
Lead with what democratic rights and freedoms allow people to do, e.g. have a say, organise, challenge power and shape decisions.	Talk about hope on its own, or use fear as the primary motivator.
Talk about democracy as connection, belonging, and the power of coming together.	Appeal to solidarity in the abstract sense, without showing what it looks like in practice.
Use “we”, “our communities”, “our shared future”.	Talk about LGBTI people as if we are outside the wider democratic “we”, or imply that LGBTI rights are separate from wider questions of power, freedom and participation.
Use moments of outrage and crisis to connect immediate injustice to wider questions of power, democracy and collective action.	Only talk about crisis without connecting it to the broader message you are fighting for.
Be specific about the actors, decisions and structures driving restrictions on rights and civic space.	Treat democratic failure as either an abstract “system failure” or simply the fault of individual bad actors, without showing where power and responsibility sit.
End every message with one concrete thing to do.	Close on analysis and leave people with nowhere to go.

How Might We Talk About...

The principles in the previous section apply across your communications. The following section puts them into practice in some of the most common moments where LGBTI organisations speak about democracy.

Elections

Elections are one of the ways people can influence who holds power, hold decision-makers accountable, and shape public choices.

Test framing elections as:

- **A shared tool of accountability:** who holds power, and who answers for what they do with it.
- **Collective power:** one important way of shaping who makes decisions, alongside organising, advocacy, protest and other forms of participation.
- **The right to have a say:** everyone should have an equal say in choosing who governs and in holding them accountable.
- **Shaping shared priorities:** connect elections to the questions your audience already cares about, from access to quality healthcare to affordable housing and work opportunities.

How to address common objections

"My vote doesn't change anything." Acknowledge the frustration first, then show where electoral outcomes have changed what decisions become possible, using historical examples and a diverse range of wins achieved over time.

"They are all the same." Make politicians' positions visible and trackable through voter information tools, a voting meter that matches someone's priorities to party positions, candidate pledges, and scorecards.

"Politics do not interest me." Start from the fact that politics is not only about parties or politicians: it is also about decisions over resources, rights and the conditions of our lives. These decisions affect our day-to-day life. Elections are one moment when people can influence who gets to make those decisions.

Message formula to test

The objection in their words → what is true about it → what different electoral outcomes can change, with a concrete example → one thing to do before election day.

Elections

While some politicians may all sound the same, their voting records tell a different story. Some vote for affordable housing, shorter waits to see a doctor, better schools. Others vote to cut all three, and against equal treatment for LGBTI people too. Look up how yours voted, and use your vote to get the future you want.

Tested and refined with Democracy Lab partners, July 2026

Pride and Protest

Protest has been central to the history of Pride. Over the years, it has become harder to bring people together around this: there is tension between Pride as a celebration and Pride as a moment where we fight for our rights. Experiment with finding the right balance in your communications, especially when talking about attacks on Pride. Authorities refusing a permit, pressing charges against an organiser, or banning a march altogether can restrict the freedom to assemble, organise and express political demands in public, so make that democratic dimension clear. At the same time, acknowledge the important role that cultural events, parties and festivals play in our movement's work. This is often the first time people might engage with your organisation, and how people often find a sense of belonging, community, and strength, so we want to avoid treating these in-person moments as a lesser version of activism. One way to combine the protest and celebration frame in practical terms is to develop a political manifesto with a clear call to action, alongside communications about your plans to celebrate. The manifesto can make your political demands explicit, while your wider communications show how protest, celebration, visibility and community building all form part of Pride's public and political role.

Frame Pride as:

- **Celebration:** celebrating openly creates belonging and claims public space for LGBTI people; in hostile contexts, that can itself carry political meaning.
- **Freedom of assembly:** restricting Pride is a restriction of freedom of assembly. When authorities decide that one group cannot gather, march or protest, they weaken the same freedom everyone relies on to organise, dissent and be heard in public.
- **The power to be heard:** restricting Pride is restricting your power to have a say, to express your needs or disagreement with the government.
- **Keeping politicians in check:** protesting is one way people hold power to account between elections.

Tips for talking about Pride as a protest

- **Test whether the word protest works** for you before you build a campaign on it. Some of our partners found that calling Pride a protest brought more hate speech online and offline, and less people showing up on the day.
- **Say how Pride is attacked, in specific** e.g. banned marches, refused permits, criminal charges against organisers, impossible security demands.
- **Say what Pride calls for**, including the specific changes LGBTI communities are demanding and the democratic freedoms at stake.
- **Point at the decision-maker responsible for a ban**, rather than the government in general. Be clear about who made the decision, while also naming any laws, institutions or wider structures that enable it.
- **Be straightforward about the risk people take by showing up**, and pair it with safety tips and clear press protocols. Telling people the truth about risk is a key part of mobilising.
- **Check out the guidance** in *How to Talk about Protest Today, NEON 2026*.

Challenge: ‘Protesting doesn't work’

Many people in our communities do not believe protest changes things. They have seen marches end without results, in contexts where institutions do not respond to public pressure. Address this directly rather than glossing over it, before offering hope and evidence of what protest can contribute as part of wider organising and political change. Mentioning other movements' achievements can also help to show protests still have the potential to be effective, e.g. women's suffrage, the protests that won us the five-day week. You also want to make sure to talk about Pride and what it stands for across the year, so that you build hope, understanding and momentum over time.

Message formula to test

What taking to the streets has won us in the past → what we march for now (incl. celebration) → who is taking what away and how → call to action.

Pride

Taking to the streets is how ordinary people have made their lives better: the eight-hour workday, women's right to vote, free weekends. We march for Pride for the same reasons: to celebrate how far we have come, and to demand dignity, safety and freedom for everyone. Politicians who ban marches, refuse permits or drag organisers to court are taking away one of the most powerful ways people have to ask for change. March with us on [date], and help defend it.

Tested and refined with Democracy Lab partners, July 2026

Working with other movements

Many of the democratic struggles LGBTI movements are part of are shared with other movements. Rule of law, judicial independence, press freedom and freedom of assembly are foundations that organisations working on housing, labour rights, disability, environment, anti-corruption and more also depend on. You do not need to agree on the full agenda to work together and defend them - having enough values and goals in common is a good place to start. Working together can also connect different constituencies, knowledge and forms of collective power, and help movements respond to threats that none can face as strongly alone.

Tips for building coalitions

- **Research potential collaborators before you reach out**. Understand what drives them and what they need, then look for where your concerns, interests and strategies genuinely meet.
- **Identify the structural threat you share**, and be specific about it: the same permit refusals, funding restrictions or legal harassment used against you might already be affecting different movements, or create powers and precedents that can be used more widely.
- **Find a minimum agreement**. An ally does not need to share your full agenda in order to act with you on a specific democratic issue. Be clear, however, about the principles or red lines that cooperation cannot compromise. Decide one thing you most need each other to agree with, and build from there.
- **Build a wider range of voices around the issue.** Teachers, doctors, trade unions, business associations, other movements and civil society groups may speak from different experiences and reach different constituencies. Work with them to develop and communicate a shared argument in their own voice, without treating LGBTI organisations as less credible messengers, and without instrumentalising partners’ credibility or asking them to speak beyond what is authentic to their own work and communities.
- **Be clear on which level of cooperation you are proposing**. Showing up at each other's protests, co-signing a statement and building a joint campaign are different asks.

Questions for your team

- Which organisations in our context could be good to collaborate with on shared democratic struggles?
- What would be the minimum agreement needed to take action together?
- What are the “red lines”? What are the principles and values that you cannot compromise on?
- What are the strengths that each organisation can bring to the table? What could we learn from each other?

Take the first steps

Narrative shifts take time and resources. Anti-gender movements have been building their frames for decades, with funding, message discipline and coordinated efforts. Starting small still makes a difference, especially when done alongside a long-term commitment to this work.

Simple first steps you can take

- **Bring this guide to a team meeting** and evaluate what tips you think could work in your context.
- **Take one message you are about to publish and edit it** following some of the principles here.
- **Ask two or three people from your target audience how the message lands for them** before you post it. This can be informal, with friends and people from within the community.
- **Run a small messaging clinic with your team to finalise the message**. This can look like a quick working session, where you put one draft message in front of everyone, each person writes down privately what works for them and what they would change, and then you compare notes and rewrite it together. One useful question to ask: if this appeared on my feed, would I stop scrolling? How would I feel seeing this?
- **Facilitate a small focus group or a survey with members of your target audience**. Connect with other organisations to support you with outreach, for example, youth organisations if you are trying to reach young people.
- **Reach out to one organisation working on a different issue and have a conversation without a campaign ask**: what pressures are they seeing, where do they see shared stakes, and what could you learn from each other’s work?

A Longer Shift

Changing how we talk about our work and about its role in democracy is only a part of what this moment asks of us as LGBTI organisations. For us at ILGA-Europe, the deeper underlying question is how we act on this role in bringing people together, supporting collective power, and influencing how democracy evolves.

This, of course, takes more than thoughtful communications. It needs applying democratic principles within our own organising: who gets to take part, whose knowledge counts, how decisions are made, how power is shared and how we answer to our communities. It means building relationships with other movements that last beyond a joint statement or a moment of crisis or opportunity and showing up for other causes we share. It also means being honest about the institutions and systems we engage with as advocates: where they are failing people, what trade-offs are part of working with them, and when access to decision-makers does and does not lead to change.

This longer shift is built through repeated choices: which causes we show up for repeatedly, which relationships we keep nurturing, what knowledge we pass on and help spread, who has the chance to participate and lead, and what forms of collective power we resource and amplify.

LGBTI movements have long created community, public presence and collective power where isolation and silence were expected of us. We can carry that experience into wider democratic life: keeping open the space for people to be different, voice demands, organise and act together—and widening the circle of those who can take part, build a shared vision for how we live together, and have real power over the decisions that affect their lives.

— **ILGA-Europe**

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