

Message from the co-founders

East meets West 2020 or how to turn a challenge into an opportunity!

Dear friends of East meet West,

The year 2020 is for most people a year to quickly forget and turn the page without looking back. Indeed, after a promising start we were hit by the COVID19 pandemic, a virus that changed our lives more than we could ever have expected. No more personal contacts, **no more hugs nor kisses**, no more freedom to go where we wanted. Suddenly all the plans we made had to be reviewed. Also East meets West was confronted with this new reality. On-site visits and meetings were no longer possible and what with our yearly key activity, the Annual East meets West Conference? The two of us decided to jump in the cold water and have the **1st of its kind in Europe** fully online Conferences and show this way the LGBTIQ community not to lose their drive, but just change the tool to use. And it was a huge success as we never reached more people and we made a link to countries we never reached before. But we were not the only ones who successfully managed to rethink their activism. In this Newsletter you will find numerous reports of new approaches of our activism. In our view, COVID19 pandemic brought also new light on **sustainability**. We learned that it is possible to get despite shops closed full new-born equipment within 24 hours and give already used products a second chance.



But COVID19 pandemic was not the only challenge we were faced with, just think about the officially supported, even organized, **hateful actions against our community** in Poland or the hypocritical political party policies propagating fake and discriminatory values in Hungary, just to mention a few. Although we know such opportunistic movements will eventually explode in the face of their promoters, it is important we keep the international attention on such inhuman situations and keep repeating LGBTIQ rights are human rights!

We want this East meets West 2020 Newsletter not only to be the biggest ever but also to be a message full of pride for the way all of us dealt with the 2020 challenges and at the same time **offer a positive outlook 2021**, a year of hope for all those who still suffer from stupid bigotry and shameful discrimination. Take the time to go over the many reports in this Newsletter and get inspired!

You can count on us!
Ludo & Pavel

How to navigate through EmW Pages?

As these EmW Pages want to cover LGBTI Social as well LGBTI Business topics, we added a small hint allowing you the navigate easily through the Pages:

And if you see a [link](#), it is not only safe to click. It will provide you more reading to the topic.

-  **EmW Social Topic**
-  **EmW Business Topic**

The 2020 East meets West Conference

CONNECTING THE DOTS

🔗 The doors of the first virtual 2020 East meets West Conference Room is now for some time closed, but the spirit of **CONNECTING THE DOTS** lives further! We are still very much overwhelmed by the reactions received during and after the online conference. There have been so many new contacts made when we shared our inspiration with the world. Our speakers were really amazing and they deserve once again a great applause.

For us two, Pavel & Ludo, it was really an amazing day and **we again wrote history**. Not only by running a 9-hour program on June 12th and having more than double the size of our usual audience, but most importantly, by meeting our ambition of **CONNECTING THE DOTS** - linking a social action and a business focus.

One of our "working titles" for this year's [Conference](#) was "1+1=3". When communicating the 2020 Conference, we thought perhaps such a title, would be a step too far. We know now that this title fitted well! There is something extra we gained by the 2020 Conference, the East meets West online events for the world in a new era. We call them **THE SPOTLIGHT SERIES**.

There was way more LGBTIQ Business focus at the 2020 East meets West Conference than it looked. In partnership with the EGLCC (The European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce) and its European members, our pre-conference program (by invitation only) featured for the very first time the Corporate Roundtable and the Chamber Academy.



The 2020 East meets West Awards

🔗 We meet as East meets West many individuals, NGOs and companies who by their actions improve the status of the LGBTIQ community in their environment. These heroes are not always known and get seldom the recognition they deserve. As everybody, they deserve a positive stroke so we decided to start with the East meets West "Tap on the Shoulder" Awards. The premiere 2020 Awards have an Austrian touch and a strong symbolic meaning. The 3 Swarovski flowers are covered by a Crystal bell. It symbolises the many initiatives that pop up everywhere and that are covered and protected by organizations like East meets West and the EGLCC. We are pleased to announce the winners of the 2020 East meets West [Awards](#) in three categories:

- **NGO:** ERA (LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey)
- **Individual:** Jens Schadendorf (Germany)
- **Corporation:** Barilla (Italy), represented by Eliano Apicella



🌐 Useful links

Conference Program: <http://www.eastmeetswest.eu/2020Conference.pdf>

2020 East meets West Awards:

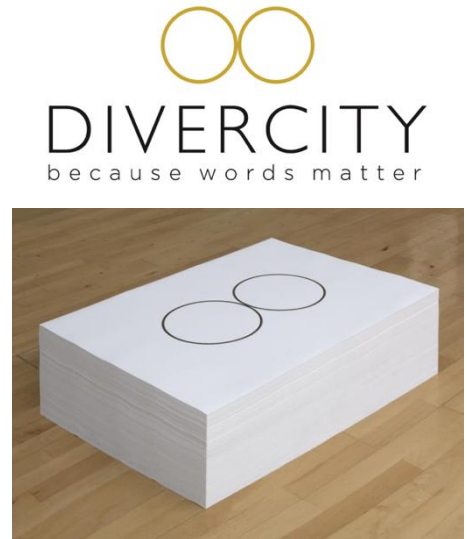
<https://www.linkedin.com/feed/update/urn:li:activity:6678216202801700864>

The 2020 Highlights

We were interviewed for DiverCity Magazine

● [DiverCity](#), a European quarterly magazine about inclusion and innovation was born in March 2018, based on an idea by Valentina Dolciotti and Tiziano Colombi. Our aim is to collect in one magazine all the voices, passions, projects, initiatives and opinions surrounding the subject of inclusion; to talk about every kind of diversity (lofty ambition) and not just those that are fashionable or the most 'comfortable' to talk about, and to do so by involving and giving voice to administrations, associations, organisations, bodies and companies.

Valentina and Tiziano and were in London, visiting the Tate Modern, when their attention was captured by this artwork (see photo), several copies of which sat in a stack, ready for visitors. It has been ten years since that moment. The painting, framed, hangs in the entrance to their home and has become the new logo for DiverCity Magazine. The double circle is inspired by the work of Félix González-Torres, dated 1988: a white sheet of paper with two golden circles that appear to touch each other, but only appear to: 'We are synchronized, now and forever.'



You can read Pavel's and Ludo's article in the September 2020 edition of DiverCity. They talk about their East meets West journey: <https://divercitymag.it/2020/09/28/5703>.

Partnering with Open For Business

● East meets West and Open For Business' CEE program are officially becoming Program Partners. This means that as Open For Business develops and creates its regional research program and report it will look to share and disseminate information with our East meets West's network and hold relevant webinars and other gatherings together using the power of both brands to attract larger audiences. Similarly, East meets West will share Open For Business' activities with its members and ask for their support in helping to spread its research and data across their networks. Open For Business is a great resource on the Economic Case & Business case for LGBTIQ inclusion. Read more (not only) about the CEE program <https://lnkd.in/e2fyfmf>



GaYme Changer in Vienna

● Some of you might have met [Jens Schadendorf](#) on the presentation of the German version of his GaYme Changer book, organized by East meets West in Vienna and supported by the German Embassy in Vienna. East meets West, but also the GGLBC (German LGBTIQ* chamber) along with the EGLCC, have been mentioned in Jens book 'Gayme Changer'. In this book, these chambers have been highlighted for the role they are playing in bringing about a significant shift in the way we do business!



Useful links

DiverCity Magazine: <https://divercitymag.it>

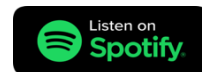
Open For Business: <https://open-for-business.org>

Jens Schadendorf: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jens-schadendorf-6b423816>

THE 2020 SPOTLIGHT SERIES

Our new conversation recordings

To innovate and to come up continuously with new ideas has for many years been a symbol of East meets West. **People we meet throughout the year** and then bring to the Conference stage deserve more than just the short session at our signature event. We therefore decided to go the next mile and establish regular online events. We are proud and happy to introduce to the wider public the East meets West SPOTLIGHT SERIES. Every month we select an inspiring individual, organisation or proud business and we bring them to our online stage for either an interactive session with the audience or a video **conversation / a podcast**.



#1 THE ECONOMIC & BUSINESS CASE FOR GLOBAL LGBTI INCLUSION



For our July 2020 SPOTLIGHT SERIES we invited someone we are very impressed by - **the Open For Business** coalition. Moreover, Open for Business started to build a data-driven economic case for LGBTI rights also in the Eastern Europe, our home-region. This first series gave the perfect opportunity not only to learn more about their CEE program, but through an interactive session to answer all questions.

#2 THE OPEN MIC FOR THE EAST MEETS WEST NETWORK



A group of inspiring personalities representing three organisation from different parts of Europe but all with a common pull - a great passion for NGO work! We talked to **Sarajevo Open Center** about their upcoming Diversity Certification program in Bosnia & Herzegovina, to **Deutsche Aidshilfe** and their #workingpositively campaign and to **Lithuanian Diversity Charter** which is one of the youngest but growing fast.

#3 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY



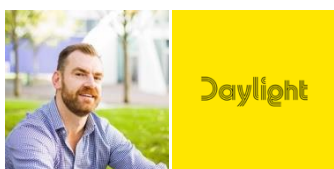
We brought on stage four international authorities who each of them was able to look at Corporate Social Responsibility from a specific, very personal point of view. **Adéla Horáková** (CZ), **Nikita Baranov** (DE), **Fabrice Houdart** (USA) and **Jens Schadendorf** (DE). This dynamic combination of people delivered what sometimes happens with a podcast - an eruption of rich ideas, surprising findings and inspirational guidelines.

#4 THE GLOBAL EQUALITY CAUCUS



We "travelled" to meet and talk to the famous **Randy Boissonnault** on how "the life after politics" (how Randy calls it) looks like and about **The Global Equality Caucus**. Launched at the United Nations in New York City on 21 June 2019, The Global Equality Caucus is the international network of parliamentarians and elected representatives aiming to tackle discrimination against LGBTIQ people.

#5 DAYLIGHT



In our December SPOTLIGHT we had the pleasure of talking with **Rob Curtis**, the CEO and Co-founder of the **Daylight** - Banking for LGBT+ people, by LGBT+ people. We got to know Rob as the driving force behind this retail banking innovation and got a great understanding of the "why" and "how" of the different way of banking the US LGBT+ community will be catered for by Daylight.

Useful links

<https://open.spotify.com/show/4rZM5GxqwXvOyEaUsnoLVs>
<https://soundcloud.com/user-14622893>
<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZ-BHWigANmMGdSLoM9E9pw>

The 2020 Highlights

EmW supports the 2021 World Pride HR Conference

As you might know, the **World Pride and Euro Games** will take place in **Copenhagen and Malmö in 2021**. You can find all information on the [WorldPride](#) site. Part of this event will be a Human Rights Forum which will feature an Inter Parliamentary Plenary Assembly. The French NGO [L'Autre Cercle](#) agreed to take the lead in a transcultural and transcontinental work endeavour to present on the Conference in Copenhagen on 18.08.2021 an answer to the question how will the LGBTIQ in the workplace in 2031 look. They developed 6 main streams to work on this challenging question with a large number of NGOs and companies next to the individual participants, coming from 21 countries and 5 continents. They will work using design thinking that joined with the individual contributions will lead to valid ideas. East meets West is proud to be selected as a contributing NGO working on the stream '**Corporate governance and global influence**'. The team is composed of the East meets West management and representatives of NGO's and companies from Hungary, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Poland. We are sure that this way we will have an influential voice from the CEE region on the final result of the prestigious project.



Proud to be judges for the OPEN Spotlight Awards 2020

[WeAreOpen](#) is a Budapest based nonprofit that creates campaigns with a coalition of businesses to promote diversity and inclusion for millions, and helps companies become more open by offering services, workshops, talks and consulting.

This year they launched the **OPEN Spotlight** award again, to recognize organizations that have gone through an inspiring journey in which they worked for diversity and inclusion. The goal with the OPEN Spotlight award is to cultivate an international community of businesses and experts promoting openness and to inspire companies by sharing stories and knowledge. East meets West was invited to participate as a judge in the OPEN Spotlight Award in 2020 and we were happy and honored to accept this invitation. This year 10 submissions in the following 3 categories were shortlisted to receive a bronze/silver/gold award:

Engine of Change: stories of people who drove an organization toward greater openness

Excellence in Belonging: stories of how creating an open corporate culture contributed to the sense of belonging

We See You Here: stories of the change that a more realistic representation of people minorities brought to companies and communities

Curious to know which companies won an award? Check-out the [results here](#) and be surprised by the high-level names you will find there!



Useful links

World Pride Copenhagen / Malmö
<https://copenhagen2021.com/worldpride/>

WeAreOpen (organising the annual **OPEN Conference**)
<http://weareopen.hu> <http://www.openconference.hu>

News from Italy and Germany

Introducing IGLBC – the Italian GLBT Business Chamber

● **IGLBC** is the Italian GLBT Business Chamber, an association dedicated to **Italian LGBTQ companies** and their business partners. **Unique in Italy**, IGLBC is aimed at companies with LGBTIQ ownership equal to or greater than 51% of the capital or belonging to the LGBTIQ segment, as well as LGBTIQ professionals.

IGLBC offers member companies a series of services starting from LGBTIQ certification through EGLCC up to legal, tax and HR consultancy services, as well as coaching and training on specific related activities. At the same time, networking between LGBTIQ companies in Italy will open up new business relationships. An important role in supporting the growth of associated companies will also be given by the presence of large companies which have already equipped themselves with the Diversity Supplier Program and which therefore include LGBTIQ companies among their suppliers. In Italy, out of over 3 million SMEs, **about 200.000 are LGBTIQ-owned**, operating mainly in the travel, food & beverage, leisure and fashion sector.



Although many of 2020s initiatives had to be either cancelled or significantly modified due to the Covid-19 pandemic, IGLBC was still able to carry out a significant number of matchmaking sessions between. In November, **Laura Venturini** (see photo) was elected president of the association, taking over from Norbert M. Grillitsch who had retired previously. Partnerships with local corporates as well as IGLBC strategic partnership with the EGLCC will expect a constant membership growth rate in 2021.



The Objectives

IGLBC proposes itself as a business exchange platform to facilitate the development and growth of Italian LGBTIQ companies through new business relationships both with other LGBTIQ companies and with large companies in Italy and abroad, directly or through a series of partnerships with other LGBTIQ chambers of commerce in Europe and around the world. Thus, membership in IGLBC represents an important opportunity for growth.

The update from Germany

● The **GGLBC** has been hard at work developing its membership base and **promoting the LGBTIQ+ Business Agenda** within **Germany**. As a member chamber of the EGLCC, The European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce, it has also been actively involved in promoting the value of Supplier Diversity, with a particular focus on LGBTIQ+ suppliers.

In its role as an Umbrella organisation for LGBTIQ+ German Businesses, the GGLBC has showcased and successfully matched member businesses with international corporates and the wider business community. Sponsorship, as well as the digital expertise and technical support for the 2020 East Meets West virtual conference, was in fact provided by a business registered with and promoted by the GGLBC. At the 2020 EGLCC Matchmaking, the GGLBC also presented four of its member businesses to a panel of representatives from major corporates looking to partner with diverse suppliers. Feedback from this event highlighted just how valuable opportunities like these are for small to middle size enterprises looking for a platform to promote their services. (See photo: Kenneth Kamal-Seidel, GGLBC member, pitching in sign language at the EGLCC Matchmaking Event).

As a founding member of the GGLBC, **Fabienne Stordiau**, was invited to become a member of the jury for the List of Germany's Top 100 Out Executives.



Useful links

The German LGBTIQ* Business Chamber (GGLBC)
<https://www.gglbc.de>
info@gglbc.de

The Italian GLBT Business Chamber (IGLBC)
<https://www.iglbcc.it>
info@iglbcc.it

The European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce

Building up the EGLCC

The European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce was inaugurated in Vienna in June 2019 but building up such an international organisation from scratch asks a lot of work and a good internal coordination. Therefore the management of the EGLCC has apart from monthly online meetings also annual meetings. The first annual meeting took place in January 2020 in Vienna, on the same day as the famous Vienna's [Rainbow Ball](#), the most elegant LGBTIQ event in Austria so the EGLCC management was happy to close the meeting with participation at the Ball. The following annual meeting was an online meeting because of COVID19 as getting together the representatives of 5 different countries has become quite impossible. We hope that we will be able to meet in person again in 2021 and toast on the progress we have made!



Meet the EGLCC

Who are the people behind the European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce? The Board of the EGLCC consists of representatives from the 4 Founding Chambers of Commerce, each with a specific responsibility as you can see on this overview:



Useful links

Vienna Rainbow Ball (Regenbogenball)
<https://regenbogenball.at>

ELGCC, The European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce
<https://www.eglcc.eu>

The European LGBTIQ Self-registration Live!

First of its kind in Europe

As announced at the recent 2020 East meets West Online Conference, the EGLCC - The European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce is proud to launch the very first **European Self-registration website for LGBTIQ business owners**.

Born out of the initiative of four existing European LGBTI Business Chambers - East meets West (Austria & CEE Region), GGLBC (Germany), ILGBC (Italy) and SGLCC (Scandinavia) - the EGLCC Self-registration provides a **passport to proud LGBTIQ business owners** to enter the scene of new, yet untapped business opportunities. A successful self-registration with the EGLCC represents the entry-level qualification to supplier diversity programs of our corporate members.

EGLCC's corporate members can **benefit from the one-stop access** to the growing European network of LGBTIQ owned and operated businesses, as well the growing number of LGBTIQ Business Chambers. They can also benefit from the local, regional and international events organised by the EGLCC.

Register today!

Are you also a proud and out LGBTIQ Business owner(s)? Then please register today at no costs at the EGLCC, The European LGBTI Chamber of Commerce and be part of the new untapped growth opportunities.

[Register](#)

The screenshot shows the EGLCC Self-Registration website. On the left is a navigation menu with links for 'Welcome to EGLCC', 'About EGLCC', 'Self-Registration', and 'Contact'. Below the menu are social media icons for LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter, and a section for 'EGLCC MEMBERS' listing 'East Meets West', 'SGLCC', and 'IGLBC'. The main content area features a header with logos for 'EW East meets West', 'GGLBC German LGBTIQ Business Chamber', 'sglcc SCANDINAVIAN LGBT CHAMBER OF COMMERCE', and 'IGLBC ITALIAN GLBT BUSINESS CHAMBER'. A map of Europe is visible on the right. The main heading is 'SELF-REGISTRATION'. Below it, a 'Choose Language' dropdown is set to 'English'. The text explains that the application aims to collect information about LGBTIQ owned and operated companies. A section titled 'APPLICANT INFORMATION' states that necessary information is collected, with a note that 'All fields with the exception of social media links are mandatory'. An 'Email' input field is visible at the bottom.

The Economical Potential of EGLCC Region

The estimated economical significance of the region, covered by the European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce (excluding Russia, status 08/2020)

 **21,4** Million
LGBTIQ
Population

 **500** Billion
€ LGBTIQ
GDP

 **948** Ths.
LGBTIQ
Small Businesses

Useful links

European Self-registration website for LGBTIQ business owners
<https://eglcc.eu/self-registration>
info@eglcc.eu

Proud LGBTIQ Businesses Owners

Coming Out in Business and Untapped Business Opportunities

This year at the **Online East meets West Conference**, the **EGLCC** featured number of proud LGBTIQ Business Owners. Having a limited time and running a **business match-making online**, we invited an expert in the field to help us out - Vit Lichtenstein. He joined us live from Tel Aviv, Israel, where he heads Technology Scouting & Business Development. Take the time and recognise all the 14 great businesses (listed as appeared on our virtual stage together with sourcing category) featured at the #2020emw:

TAE - Think Act Effect
Advisory
Germany
www.taekk.de



Fusakle
Retail Products
Slovakia / Czech Republic
www.fusakle.sk / www.fusakle.cz



MB Market Makers
Strategy & Communication
Sweden / Hong Kong
www.mbmarketmakers.com



IWASASHIRT
Retail Products
Slovakia
www.iwasashirt.com



Tallbergs Förlag
Media / Publishing
Sweden
www.tallbergsforlag.se



Alf Kjeller AB
Professional Services
Sweden
www.alfkjeller.se



Loor Ens GbR
Translation / Signing
Germany
www.loorens.de



MBA Costruzioni srl.
Construction
Italy
www.mbacostruzioni.com



Baobab Communication srl
Media / Advertising
Italy
www.baobabcommunication.it



Cool Concept
Promotional Products
Germany
www.coco-marketing.de



AllroundTeam
Diverse
Germany
www.allround-team.com



Gabriella Bodi
Learning & Development
Hungary
<https://eureka.games>



ModusMaris srl
Human Resources Consulting
Italy
www.modusmaris.eu



Ristuccia Tufarelli & Partners
Legal Services
Italy
www.ristucciatufarelli.it

Useful links

European Self-registration website for LGBTIQ business owners
<https://eglcc.eu/self-registration>
info@eglcc.eu

Diversity & Inclusion in the Supply Chain

Matchmaking works online too!

In the 2019 Pages, our newsletter, we explained why East meets West focuses also on **LGBTIQ businesses** and what brought the four founding chambers to launch the EGLCC, **The European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce**. We also introduced to readers the concept of Diversity & Inclusion in a Supply Chain (**Supplier Diversity / SD**). Such a concept of Supplier Diversity used to be mainly the domain of US market. This is now changing. Next to the well know SD champions like Accenture, Johnson & Johnson, Unilever, Barilla, EY, IBM, MSD, Eaton and Facebook the number of corporate players with Supplier diversity on their European agenda is constantly increasing. We watch closely news and announcements and re-publish them on our social channels (mainly on [LinkedIn](#)).

One of the way how underrepresented businesses, like LGBTIQ owned and operated businesses, can tap on new opportunities is through **matchmaking**. In the past, these were in person conversations and typically part of a larger event like a conference. This practice was in 2020 very much challenged by COVID-19 measures and so as **online conferences** became reality, also **online matchmaking** sessions did. We were happy to be part of some of them and can only confirm that yes, matchmaking works online too! The setup gets more professional with each event and some involve a great fun too., like Virtual Reality.

But every matchmaking needs the **right preparation**. EGLCC and its member chambers (among them East meets West) are here to help the small businesses to get prepared for such business match-making. There are few do's and don'ts you need to pay attention to!

Supplier Diversity:

The **pro-active sourcing** of products and services **from previously under-used suppliers**, which includes businesses owned by **minorities**, in order to reflect the demographics of the communities in which the business operates.

Whom we call "champions in Supplier Diversity"?



Links to Advocates for Minority Businesses in Europe

LGBTIQ Owned and Operated:

- **EGLCC, The European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce** (self-registration in Europe) www.eglcc.eu/self-registration
 - East meets West www.eastmeetswest.eu
 - GGLBC – German LGBTIQ* Business Chamber www.gglbc.de
 - IGLBC – Italian GLBT Business Chamber www.iglbc.it
 - SGLCC – Scandinavian LGBT Chamber of Commerce www.sglcc.se

Women Owned and Operated:

- **WEConnect International** (Self-registration offered globally and certification in over 45 countries incl. the UK, Germany, Switzerland and the Netherlands) www.weconnectinternational.org

Ethnic Minorities:

- **MSDUK** (Self-registration and certification in the UK) www.msduk.org.uk



Short news from the EmW Network

East meets West works in a region where the LGBTIQ topics touch many people in a variety of ways. Sometimes political or sometimes business, often social, but always very driven! Enjoy the news from our network and be amazed. For more information about country related news, feel free to contact us: info@eastmeetswest.eu.



North Macedonia making a real difference

Our friends in North Macedonia ([Subversive Front](#)) made an important step forward for our community when they launched the first-ever **National Helpline** for LGBTIQ People in August 2020. This is the first time that in North Macedonia this sort of service is available to the public. LGBTIQ+ identified persons, allies and/or parents can call to get support from trained professionals on topics like coming out, mental health support, discrimination, violence and abuse, rights, etc. The line has received tremendous support from the Council of Europe as well from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.



075241124

НАЦИОНАЛНА ЛИНИЈА ЗА СОВЕТУВАЊЕ НА ЛГБТИ+ ЛИЦА

понеделник-среда-петок: 16:00-20:00
вторник-четврток: 10:00-14:00



The effects of the COVID crisis caused many LGBTIQ people in North Macedonia to remain unemployed or with a lower monthly income – making everyday life difficult and food money scarce. So they organized the donation of 12 food and hygiene packages, and 120 supermarket vouchers to LGBTIQ people under social risks. At the same time 2020 proved to be an even bigger challenge for mental wellbeing and the need for this essential service only increased. With the help of their donors they covered the full costs for 117 therapy sessions for LGBTIQ people in need of psycho-social support and counselling and they were even able to offer this service thoroughly throughout the whole year.

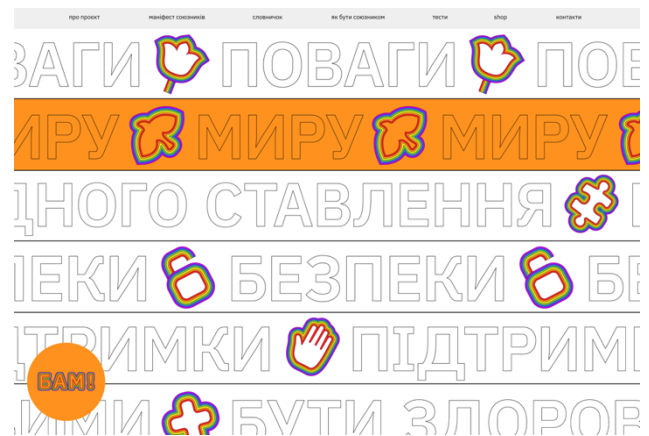
Once again East meets West is happy to see how in, for some of us less known countries, the local NGO's can make a real difference for their LGBTIQ community.



Ukraine

moving forward on all levels

[Fulcrum](#) was the first UA organization to conduct the first and the only [Allies Forum](#) in the region. The agenda was quite rich and diverse and it was clear that for an ally such events are a huge support and empowerment. They started introducing Diversity and Inclusive schools for business in Ukraine. There are LGBTQ components on the agenda and it was great to see the way people use the shared information and insights.



Moreover [Fulcrum](#) helped 'Open for business' to gather data from local HRD, regarding LGBTIQ inclusion. The data will become an integral part of Pan-European survey on LGBTIQ Rights promotion. It will be released around spring and it was great to hear that Ukraine leads in the number of questionnaires submitted. Fulcrum even conducted a series of interviews with priests of churches of different confessions, working in Ukraine.

точка опори fulcrum

The **Ukrainian Corporate Equality Index** continues to be the national survey of corporate policies, rules and practices of private companies to support equality and diversity and the prohibition of discrimination in the workplace. The index includes research on combating discrimination on the grounds of sex, disability, sexual orientation and gender identity. Read more about the [INDEX](#) and of course, read the scores of various private companies.



Austria

successfully catching up in the D&I field

Did you know that the streaming for the 2020 Online East meets West Conference took place from **two locations**? One of the two was in **Austria, Vienna**.



Hissing a **rainbow flag** at corporate headquarters becomes in the times when Pride events are not possible even more important. **We were proud** to see many across Austria, and particularly to see for the very first time in history a rainbow flag at [Raiffeisen Bank International](#) (RBI), the leading financial institution in Central & Eastern Europe region. RBI stands for diversity, which includes justice as well as tolerance and acceptance. No one should have to fear discrimination on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity.



69 papers from over 11 scientific disciplines were submitted to the Austrian Research Award (**12. Forschungspreis**). Learn more about the [2020 winners](#) and their thesis which include "Love makes a family, law shapes a family", "Legally Queer?" or "Queer linguistic analysis of sexual and gender identity constructions in coming-out narratives".

The **2020 LGBT+ Business Forum** was organized with as title "**Embracing LGBT+ acceptance in CEE workplaces**". Together with the Forum's co-initiator **IBM** and this year's host and cooperation partner **Raiffeisen Bank International**, was challenged the perception of the allegedly "progressive West" through giving a voice to LGBT+ workplace activists from different CEE countries. The guests and speakers showed us that prejudices and stereotypes are pan-European phenomena. Even though Article 21 of the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights explicitly prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, the translation into the daily life of the LGBTIQ community is still an on-going process, with a differing pace in different countries. It is the responsibility of Western companies with affiliate branches in CEE to be a key player in increasing acceptance for the LGBTIQ community in these countries. This includes being aware of the specific legal situations, implementing transnational anti-discrimination guidelines, giving a voice to in-house role models, cooperating with local LGBTIQ organizations and many more actions. Personal stories and specific survey insights were the centerpiece of this [8th LGBT+ Business Forum](#).



Another major event were the DIVERSITY Days Austria, with the **DIVERSITY Congress** taking place for the third time. This year, due to known circumstances, it was 100% digital and, as always, free of charge. More than 22 speakers gave lectures via livestream on exciting topics around the main topic of "**Diversity & Talents**". The contributions of all speakers are available as a digital video review. Each contribution covers a diversity perspective in 15 minutes. You can have a look and see if there is a topic for you: <https://lnkd.in/e4p4UJY>.

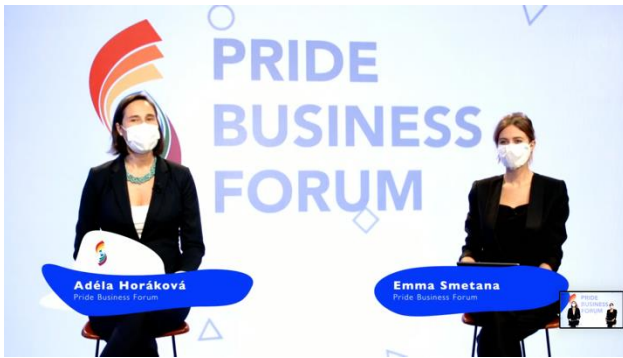




Czech Republic

planning already their 2021 activities

When looking back at the work done in 2020, also the Czech [Pride Business Forum](#), had a bit of a different feeling, as everything turned upside down. They entered the year with great plans for their **10th anniversary** celebration and they were basically halted right at the beginning. Like everyone, they had to turn to a crisis management mode and re-plan everything to function online. Although they did not want to give in, they ended this year with a realization that **"online is the new black"** and they embraced it the best they could.



But not everything that happened this year was a tragedy. There were quite a few great things. The first is the fact that not only the PBF family didn't get slimmer but grew! They welcomed 6 new members this year rounding up a total number of members to 30! Despite all limitations, they still managed to organize a few in-person meetings including an Executive cocktail in June at Hilton and **ERG networking** in August at CSOB. They successfully entered a new virtual era with an online annual conference that was watched by almost 600 people.

They are aware that Workplace inclusion is even more important during a time of crises when we need to take care of each other, especially those most vulnerable. There is definitely not a feeling of nostalgia at the Czech Pride Business Forum when looking back at 2020, and there is a big amount of impatience for this year to come to the end. And as all of us, they look at 2021 with great hope that it will bring relief.

But there is so much more what happened in 2020 in the Czech Republic. A great [summary](#) you can read from **Jsmě Fér (Marriage Equality Campaign)**. Enjoy! PS: did you know 67%. Czechs support marriage for all?



Czechs support marriage for all



Slovakia

tough but still a success year

Our Slovak friends from [Diversity Pro](#) and [Sapling](#) had a tough year, dominated by the COVID19 pandemic so in a way, surviving that was already quite an achievement. Nevertheless, one thing stood actually out - from July to December, they were able to train 15 new activists, despite the changing COVID19 situation, despite the fact they had to move the training to online, despite the fact that several of their participants got sick themselves. The program called **"KompAkt" (Competences for activism)** and was supported by the LGBT+ Community Support Fund by the Pontis Foundation (the existence of which is yet another achievement/success of this year). The program consisted of three modules and a compulsory practice mini-project that provided participants with the opportunity to gain skills and test out the theory. [Read more](#) about this project (in Slovak only)

And we should not forget the **LGBTI+ Business Forum 2020** on Equal Employee Benefits held on 5.10.2020 with 70 participants. [Find out more.](#)

LOADING LOVE, an exhibition revealing the unknown stories of forbidden love over the past hundred years that still have a lot to teach us today. Although opened only in September and October..., you can still see this unique exhibition **ONLINE!**

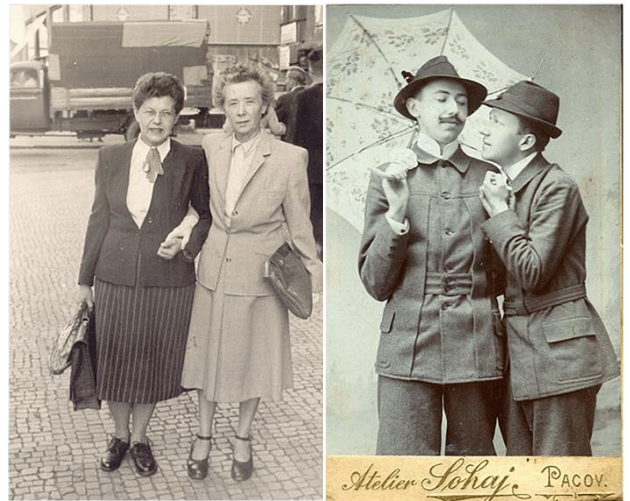


Image source

Queer Slovakia, the new Slovak online magazine offers endless possibilities for every LGBTIQ fellow or a friend. Browse [queerslovakia.sk](#) and discover the colorful world of stories.





Poland

rowing against the political tide

On the EmW International online Conference, we invited **Alicja Sienkiewicz** who gave a touching report how it is to live as a Lesbian woman in one of the large number of Polish cities and villages that call themselves 'LGBT free'. It put our attention to the attitude of the Polish government towards our community. Recently a high ranked official declared that having an LGBTIQ community in Poland is worse than the communist dictatorship. It's a shameful display of an official homophobic policy that violates human and civil rights in an EU country. But such actions make our Polish NGO friends just more determined to fight against this obvious form of bigotry and discrimination, as you can read in the [English link](#) to the Polish publication Polskiej Prawicy 'Equality signs'. You will read how they use poetry to make clear that the Polish LGBTIQ community has always been and will always be a real part of the Polish nation.

Also the **Tęczówka** association from Katowice is an NGO that works for LGBT+ people. The main aim of its members is to ensure that support in a broad sense; both counselling and legal support is available to lesbians, gay men, bisexual people, transsexual people, and everyone else who identifies as nonheteronormative. **Tęczówka** also organizes support groups and events whose main purpose is integration, for strength lies in doing our bit for society together, as a team and they have been doing this for eight years. And let us not forget the [Krakow Equality Centre](#) that provides counselling for LGBTIQ people with all sorts of difficulties and problems. People contact them when they need to support before and after coming out, as well as advice about how to go about this process. Parents too, who have issues with accepting their child's sexuality or gender identity. Transsexual people contact them when they require advice concerning diagnosis and transition from a medical and legal point of view.



Hungary

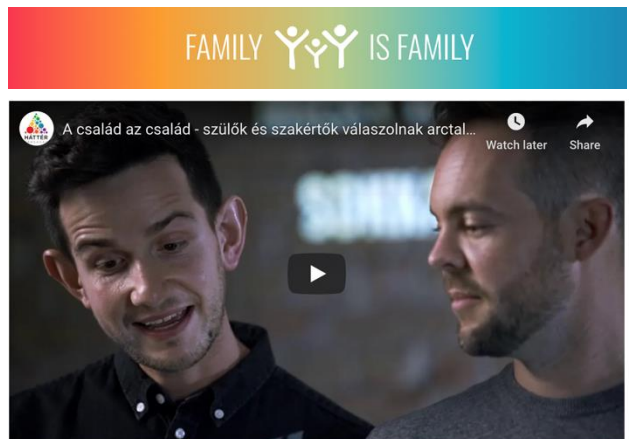
developing the yearly Open Conference

The major 2020 activity by [WeAreOpen](#) was the yearly [Open Conference](#), this time fully online and offering a large program with 4 days of online meetups, podcasts, presentations, round table discussions, workshops and deep dive discussions. The Conference was attended by 250 participants from 17 countries and 37 speakers streaming from across the world including Czech Republic, Poland, Croatia, USA, Israel and many more. The Conference announced the winners of the OPEN Spotlight Award for the 2nd time ever!



There were also the podcasts from Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Romania and other countries around the CEE region discussing the diversity and inclusion landscape in the region and curated workshops, best practices and case studies in specific diversity and inclusion related challenges addressed by employee resource groups, experts and researchers. To learn more about present and past OPEN Conference events, please visit their website: www.openconference.hu

In addition to this there is also news about the [Family Campaign](#). [Hatter.hu](#) is very pleased to announce that their family campaign will run as a social ad on RTL Klub.





Slovenia

and the power of an animated film

○ We would like to come back to an original and powerful initiative from our Slovenian friends. To start a local discussion on the topic of transgender, they made an animated film called **"Between blue and pink, Nika and the Toy factory"**! [TransAkcija](#) is the driver of this idea and it was made entirely (animation, original music, script and film direction) by trans persons. The story has a fairy tale touch: In a land far, far away stands a large, old toy factory. The gloomy factory holds a big secret ... The engineers wired and programmed the factory machines incorrectly, which has led to the machines having systemic faults. Due to the engineers' mistakes, the machines that sort and package the toys for shipment recognize only two types of toys – blue squares and pink triangles. But what happens to the toys which are between blue and pink? Both the film and a toolkit have been created as an attempt to present trans topics and complex concepts of gender in a way that is accessible and understandable.



○ Less positive was the news that the non-governmental organizations operating at No.6 [Metelkova Street in Ljubljana](#) received a proposal for an amicable termination of the lease from the building manager of the Ministry of Culture and an order to vacate the building by 31 January 2021. The reason given is that the ministry supposedly needs the premises for its own use and intends to renovate them. The Ministry has not offered tenants replacement premises, nor has it entered into any sort of dialogue with them. **No.6 Metelkova Street** is home to non-governmental organizations, collectives and individuals engaged in independent cultural and artistic production, and research and advocacy on behalf of minority and marginalized groups. These are internationally recognized actors who have created countless books, films, magazines, exhibitions, conferences, festivals, theatrical, puppet and dance performances, intermedia projects and research over nearly three decades of operation in these spaces. Of course, the organizations that work on these premises will use every possible way to remain in the Metelkova Street! We wish them a positive outcome!



Bulgaria

profiting fully from the on-line opportunities

○ Our LGBTIQ friends in Bulgaria from [GLAS](#) created the [Work It OUT](#) (WIO) platform for the in Bulgaria based domestic and international companies that want to make their workplaces more inclusive and embrace the benefits of diversity. The purpose of the platform is to promote a positive business and economic case for equality of opportunity for every employee in Bulgaria. It is not a formal organization, but rather a community of companies all sharing the goals for acceptance and inclusion of LGBTIQ people. **Work It OUT** hosts regularly virtual and in-person round table discussions and other events to learn about the innovative approaches to LGBTIQ inclusion internationally, as well as the challenges to achieving the same levels of LGBTIQ workplace inclusion as in other countries abroad. Work It Out serves as a practical resource for companies, LGBTIQ workers, and their families facing challenges in the difficult country placements and will strategize how to engage on-the-ground resources to better serve their employees in-country.



○ In 2020 the biggest realization by WIO was the development of their **#NoLabels workshop**, which was hosted physically at SAP in February 2020. And after the lockdown they rearranged the whole workshop into a digital format and managed to successfully host it in several companies, including IBM. #NoLabels is brings the attention towards unconscious bias and prejudice at the workplace through interactive and participatory approach and can be applied internationally on all levels. Also for **Sofia Pride** they took an online format as well and for the a first time, the CEOs of five companies recorded video messages to express the importance of the Pride, not only for their companies but for the Bulgarian society as a whole. These were HPE, EY, IBM, Ingram Micro and Sutherland. Other good news is that the companies Accenture and Progress joined the WIO as partners this year. GLAS also continued the online quarterly newsletter on D&I and they have plans to host the first D&I and wellbeing forum in April 2021 in Sofia. The LGBTIQ NGO's in Bulgaria join the list of several CEE countries that made successfully the transition to online activities!



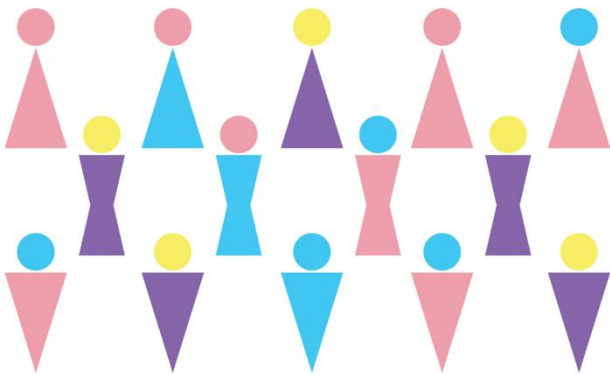
Serbia

reaching out to the Transgender community

○ In 2020, [Geten](#), the Serbian Centre for LGBTIQ People's Rights, with the support of the Governmental Office for Social inclusion and poverty reduction unit, issued a [Guide for trans persons](#) through the **transition process in Serbia**. It was supported by 2 [online](#) presentations. This guide was really very well received and followed on Instagram live. The guide explains in detail the process of social, legal, and also a medical transition, and it will serve as a useful tool for every person who is questioning his/her identity and lists important contacts for medical and social assistance. At the beginning of the guide, they explain the variety of trans identities (...they are sure they did not cover yet them all :). The Guide is online but they also have 150 hard copies.



VODIČ KROZ TRANZICIJU ZA TRANS OSOBE U SRBIJI



○ **Geten** got a 2-year grant from the **Dutch Embassy** to work with the Belgrade municipalities and 5 larger Serbian cities to establish a proper and unified practice of changing one person's personal documents after transitioning. This way they can put an end to the arbitrary treatment of trans persons once they change documents legally, after the operation.

○ Knowing very well that active communication creates understanding for trans people, Geten delivered a promotional video for a visibility campaign called "[Invisible](#)" (**Nevidljiva**). They also added the results of the researches that were done last year (Research on the health needs of trans people in Serbia and - a Research on the needs of transgender and non-binary people in the Republic of Serbia).



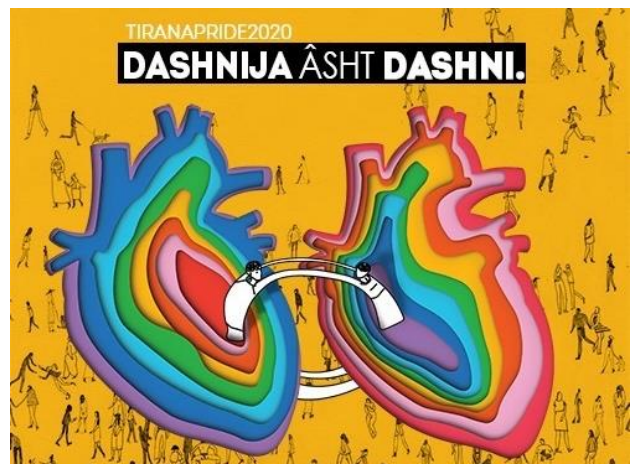
Albania

next to the Pride also socio-economical support

This year has been particularly difficult for the LGBTIQ community in Albania. Many LGBTIQ people ended up homeless and couldn't afford basic needs such as food and medicine. So their work as an organization has been focused a lot in providing direct support to their community.

○ **Balcony Pride:** Due to the fact that the usual Tirana Pride could not be held, a new form of Pride was created by making a [video](#) of LGBTIQ community and Allies raising the LGBTIQ flag on their balconies. Raising the LGBTIQ flag on the balconies showed solidarity and a strong message that #LGBTIQ people are an integral part of our societies and as such they must be able to enjoy human rights and fundamental freedoms, without discrimination on any ground.

○ **Tirana Online Pride:** on May 15th for the first time the local [LGBTIQ Pride](#) was held online using the Zoom platform. More than 100 people joined the celebrations. The final video of the Zoom Pride was shared on social networks. Solidarity and supported by different organizations, institution and partners, was shown to the LGBTIQ community which is still facing in Albania discrimination and various levels of social, economic and political exclusion.



○ Given this difficult socio-economic situation, the [LGBTI Alliance](#) and the [LGBTI Shelter](#) took immediate action to help LGBTIQ people who were hit the hardest by the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. From March to December, the Alliance supported about 117 LGBTIQ people with more than 800 food packages. A special focus has been paid to the health of the most vulnerable - 30 members of the LGBTI community were supported with medication, and 36 received services in health centres through the mediation of organizations. During this period, 342 people were tested for sexually transmitted diseases at the LGBTI Alliance, and 473 people received counselling about STDs. [See more on this work.](#)



Lithuania

joining the Diversity Charter movement

● We have breaking news from Lithuania: The Diversity Development Group and SOPA, which coordinated 'Charter in Lithuania', together with one of the largest news portals in Lithuania 15Min, established the Lithuanian Diversity Charter Association on 4 December 2020!



LITHUANIAN
DIVERSITY
CHARTER

● In addition to this, we also saw a number of other activities. [LGL](#) launched the first ever professional emotional [support platform](#) in Lithuania dedicated to cater for **LGBTI youth needs**. They also gave assistance to the [court case](#). *Buhuceanu and Ciobotaru v. Romania* which concerns the legal recognition of same-sex family relationships and may be crucial to furthering the European consensus on the matter.



● Finally, we cannot forget that LGL celebrated IDAHOT with a Social Media [Campaign](#) and that LGL also completed all the necessary preparatory work to host IT [courses](#) for unemployed LGBTI youth and other young people from vulnerable groups, which will enable them to successfully integrate in the current labour market, and would, in turn, counter some of the negative economic effects of the pandemic.



Belarus

the LGBTIQ community joins the forces for freedom and democracy

● We have all seen on TV the uprising of the Belarussian people in their fight for freedom and democracy, which is still going on. From our LGBTIQ friends in Belarus we know that the current '**evolution-in-progress**' in Belarus is a long process. They believe that they still have many more months of resistance and transformation ahead of them. At the same time, the mobilization has already been going on for several months now. The Belarussian society as a whole and people who participate in mobilization, manifestations, and solidarity actions have been subjected to extreme violence by the pro-Lukashenka forces. This also goes for the LGBTIQ community who are actively supporting the call for human and civil rights. They know that if they want to continue, to be there for the long haul, they need to take care of the people and the communities, to measure their stamina, to have a space to breath, to process these experiences, and to connect to each other in a meaningful way. For them to be able to carry on, and carry on in a meaningful and forward-looking way, they need to have more opportunities for rehabilitation, community connections, and simply moments of peace. East meets West is happy to support our Belarussian friends and give them a voice outside of Belarus. Therefore we are happy to include in our Newsletter **the open letter** of the local LGBTQ+ community, signed by 130 activists, community members:

"We, representatives of the LGBTQ+ community, understand what it means to live in constant fear and violence, so we all the more understand the horror of what is happening. Like all peaceful protesters, we oppose violence, arbitrary detention and abduction of people whose views and actions differ from those imposed by the authorities. At the same time, it is important to note that we, LGBTQ+ people, are subject to persecution and pressure not only from civil servants and officials, but also from society. We publicly (with our symbols) express our protest against the lawlessness and violence that have been taking place in Belarus for over 60 days, despite the fact that some protesters also want to make us invisible. Many people of the LGBTQ+ community have taken and are taking an active part in actions aimed at gaining freedom in Belarus. Many of us were election observers and observers, we also participate in peaceful protests from the early days, we are also subjected to arbitrary detention and violence by the stateAnd also many other people of the LGBTQ+ community who, for security reasons, do not give their names, but have faced illegal detentions, days, fines, threats, insults and other violence, including homophobia and transphobia."



Croatia

when fun turns into embarrassment

○ We all like fun and festivities but on February 23, 2020 - [Bakova povorka](#), the pinnacle of a 150-year tradition of carnival festivities in **Imotski**, Croatia was engulfed by scandal on Sunday afternoon when enthusiastic residents set fire to an effigy of a gay couple to widespread cheers. What happened? Well, the Imotski residents chose to feature a gay couple with an adopted child, which had a five-pointed star on his forehead (resembling that of the Yugoslav flag) for the central carnival figure. Contrary to the local sentiment, the pics and story reached the international press and caused a lot of resentment about the way the Croatian population still looks at gay couples.



○ This event was most likely connected to the decision made by **The Croatia Constitutional Court** to allow same-sex couples in Croatia **to have the right** to be foster parents on the same terms as everyone else. Indeed, on February 7th, 2020, the [Croatia Constitutional Court](#) decided that same-sex couples have the right to be foster parents on the same terms as everyone else. The Constitutional Court did not repeal the challenged legal provisions, but it made clear that the exclusion of same-sex couples from foster care was discriminatory and unconstitutional and provided clear instructions to the courts, social welfare centers and other decision-making bodies that applicants for foster care cannot be excluded based on their life partnership status.

It once again shows that non-discriminative legislation is important but even more necessary is the changed mind-set of the population.



Bosnia & Herzegovina

setting a milestone for Gender equality

● Soon to be launched, a real milestone in Workplace diversity in Bosnia & Herzegovina. Check out brand new site www.diversity.ba



○ [SOC](#), the **Sarajevo Open Centre** was quite successful in the political field. They proposed 18 initiatives addressing the human rights of women and LGBTIQ people, 14 of which were adopted and incorporated into the Gender Action Plan 2019-2022. Some of the initiatives are:

- The adoption of standards for the use of gender sensitive language in the Assembly and the Government of the Sarajevo Canton (SC)
- The submission of all legislative and by-laws of the SC Assembly to the
- Commission for Gender Equality
- Harmonization of the Rulebook on the acquisition and use of academic titles, professional and scientific titles in higher education institutions in the Sarajevo Canton
- Introduction of training programs as part of police professional training on hate crimes under the FBIH Criminal Code and their regular implementation, development and adoption of standard operating procedures for police and the judiciary in the case of hate crimes under the Criminal Code FBIH, and many others.



**SARAJEVSKI
OTVORENI
CENTAR**

○ The Gender Action Plan was adopted in accordance with the Gender Equality Law of BiH and the **Gender Action Plan** of BiH 2018-2022, and is an important strategic document that lays the foundations for the effective achievement of gender equality in priority areas. Marking 8 September, the date of the first BiH Pride March, will be included in the proposal for the Program marking the important dates in the field of human rights in BiH, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees announced in response to the request of the Sarajevo Open Centre.



Armenia

fighting on 2 fronts

2020 has been a **tremendously difficult** year for Armenia. The COVID-19 situation and the large-scale attack against Artsakh by the Azerbaijani armed forces had serious consequences on everyone. There have been numerous cases of discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes towards LGBTIQ people during this period. As always, [Pink Armenia](#) stood in solidarity with the community and did its best to support the community during this burdensome situation. During this year they also provided services, projects and activities for empowering the community, capacity building and human rights protection.

Several initiatives were implemented to empower LGBTIQ people, their supporters and allies. These initiatives mainly aimed towards the promotion the human rights of LGBTIQ people, and protecting them from violence and discrimination. Pink and partner organizations underwent various training courses aimed at developing their internal capacity, as organizations. The implementation of online courses continued on **Pink's "Inqrus" (self-education)** platform. These courses aim to develop human rights-based approaches to promoting sexual health and to raise awareness about sexuality and tolerance.

Pink Armenia continues to provide social and psychological support to LGBTIQ people, to protect their rights, by providing legal services to victims of sexual orientation and gender identity discrimination and hate crimes. Needless to say that the coronavirus pandemic and the war against Artsakh had a negative impact on the physical and mental well-being and social situation of LGBTIQ people. Pink Armenia provided social and financial support for about 90 members of the LGBTIQ community who were in a difficult situation.



Russia

creating a new "Iron Curtain" by increasing the legal non-respect towards the Russian LGBTIQ community

East meets West is happy to see that [ILGA Europe](#) launched an online campaign to show solidarity with Russian LGBTIQ activists in support of their tireless work as the government gets ready to introduce the **'Traditional Values'** bill. Everyone can post their selfie on social media holding a sign saying 'Never Give Up' using the hashtag [#NeverGiveUp!](#) In July 2020, 7 Russian senators introduced 3 bills to the State Duma, seeking to amend the Russian Family Code. With the purpose of "strengthening the family institute," if approved, this legislative package would further limit the rights of LGBTIQ people. ILGA worked with local LGBTIQ activists fighting for all families and human rights in Russia, and who will never give up the fight for freedom and equality for all.



In addition to this, Russia plans to outlaw [legal gender recognition](#). Russian trans and LGBTIQ organizations have been mobilizing to protect trans and LGBTIQ persons in the country from another attack on their rights since a package of draft laws had been put forward on July 14th by a group of **Russian senators**. The package, if adopted, would ban any changes to birth certificates and lead to a reversal of all previously made changes by 2022. It also seeks to add an additional layer of legal barriers to same-sex marriages and adoption by LGBTIQ people. These barriers would be implemented based on birth certificates, where 'sex' would practically mean 'sex assigned at birth'. In practice this would mean a total ban on marriage for trans persons, whose birth certificate and passport would show different gender markers. The package has been published on the State Duma website and is going through preliminary reviews before it can be put up to the first parliamentary vote.





Kosovo

legal Up and Downs, the efforts of the LGBTIQ activists

○ The Civil Society Organizations in Kosovo were confronted with the Draft of the [new Kosovo Civil Code](#) that violates the rights to partnership (marriage or civil union) for LGBTIQ individuals in Kosovo. Indeed, this **Draft of the Civil Code** defines marriage as a legally registered community between two spouses of different sexes. It also defines that the husband and wife have the right to marry and create a family. The Ministry of Justice clearly failed to apply the practices of the European Court of Human Rights and to draft legislation that is comprehensive and non-discriminatory on the basis of sexual orientation. It is clear that the Draft Civil Code excludes persons from the right to partnership and the right to start a family on the basis of sexual orientation. As such, it is discriminatory and violates Article 24 of the Constitution, which guarantees equality before the law, and Article 37 of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to marriage and family. The Civil society organizations will use all legal means and legal mechanisms to regulate all forms of marriage and civil society without distinction in the Draft Civil Code.

○ A more positive result was achieved by transgender [Blert Morin](#) and the next time he crosses the border, he will have new documents and a victory against the state in his pocket. Indeed in December, the Basic Court of Prishtina affirmed his right to change both his name and sex marker in his identification documents, marking a landmark decision for Blert himself, transgender persons and the whole LGBTIQ movement in Kosovo.

○ And we end the Kosovo contribution to the Newsletter with a positive note: **The Center for Equality and Liberty of the LGBT community in Kosovo** (CEL) became in Phristina a "[Drop-in Center](#) for the LGBTIQ Community". The Municipality of Prishtina provided a space for this center. This agreement is more than just a contract for the use of a space; it also represents hope and trust in the existing constitutions.



Romania

and the new kid on the block

● East meets West is happy to include for the 1st time in this Newsletter a new Romanian organization namely the [Romanian Diversity Chamber of Commerce](#). It became the very first diversity **chamber of commerce** in the world, with a mandate to promote business with and by companies majority owned or managed by LGBT, women, Roma, disabled and other traditionally marginalized groups. Initial members are Accenture, Asociatia Accept, Asociatia Orasul Meu Culorile Mele, Dentons, Fokker, ING Bank, Kaufland, Mega Image, Raiffeisen Bank, Roma Entrepreneurship Development Fund and Visa, together with EBRD as an honorary member. Their first webinar on LGBTIQ persons in the Romanian workforce was held in October and a second webinar on Disabled persons in the **Romanian workforce** was held in December, along with a building illumination campaign to commemorate International Day of Persons with Disabilities. Please follow our very active Romanian friends on the Social media and share their activities.



○ The law on the prohibition of gender debates in education was declared unconstitutional by the RCC, the Romanian Constitutional Court. Not only the [ACCEPT](#) Association welcomes this December decision, which decided that the law banning education on gender, gender equality and gender identity in Romania is unconstitutional. Thus, the RCC stopped a serious attack on democracy and freedoms of thought, expression and academic autonomy. The decision also indicates that the legislature and the executive must work together to strengthen and defend the rights of transgender women and people in the context of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, and not undermine reforms to combat gender-based violence and discrimination. [Read more.](#)

○ Romania continues to be one of the most hostile countries for LGBTIQ people in the **European Union**. According to data published by the [EU Agency for Fundamental Rights](#) (FRA), LGBTIQ people in Romania are among the most affected by homophobic and transphobic aggression, while having among the lowest rates of reporting these incidents due to distrust of the police. According to published data, 43% of LGBTI people in Romania say they have been harassed in the last year, while 15% have been attacked in the last 5 years.



Montenegro

adoption of the Same-Sex partnership Act!

With 42 votes in favour, the Parliament of Montenegro adopted a [Same-sex Partnership Act](#)! Congratulations to all LGBTIQ communities and activists, our friends and colleagues from Montenegro, who have worked so hard towards the adoption of this law. This is a great victory for the equality of the LGBTIQ persons! The implementation of the law will start in one year from now, as other laws have to be synced with this law and registry offices have to prepare this.



The Prime Minister of Montenegro Duško Marković welcomed the adoption of what is officially called the **Law on Life Partnership of Persons of the Same Sex**, stating that there is no place for discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation in European Montenegro. LGBTIQ Forum Progress pointed out that the key factor from now on will be the implementation of this law in practice, *“which is the next big step in the process of protecting the human rights of LGBTIQ people”*. Queer Montenegro said that the LGBTIQ population is *“one step closer to full freedom and full equality”* from today and the Coalition *“Together for LGBTIQ Rights”* congratulated LGBTIQ people on the adoption of the Law. Montenegro becomes the first country among Western Balkan six to adopt such law and we hope the other five countries will soon follow.



ERA @Western Balkans and Turkey

Starting of 2020 [ERA](#) is running a new regional initiative with the support of **Olof Palme International Center** and in partnership with the Swedish organization **HBT-Socialdemokrater**. The 4-years project, aims to address in particular the socio-economic and political rights of LGBTIQ people in the Western Balkans region, and in line with other beneficiaries and project partners of Olof Palme International Centre in the region counter threats to democracy and human rights, advance equality and LGBTIQ worker’s rights and further contribute to increased gender equality. While in the last 15-20 years LGBTIQ rights have entered the public domain and some legal and social rights have been achieved, the socio-economic and political rights of LGBTIQ people are far from fulfilled. The community still lives in fear of violence and discrimination and the movement across the region still struggle to have meaningful and deep cooperation with state institutions and other relevant stakeholders.



In April, **ERA** launched its guideline to the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDGs) and the Agenda 2030, as a tool for LGBTIQ advocacy in the Western Balkans, Turkey and the rest of the world, to best understand the goals and use them to advance legal, social and economic rights of LGBTIQ persons. The Goal’s main principle is *“Leave no one behind”* which aims to make sure that everyone, regardless of any personal characteristic, such as country they live in, their socio-economic status, education, race, religion or any other personal ground, is beneficiary of these goals. The principle is especially relevant to LGBTIQ people, who have been repeatedly left behind by national & international development initiatives. Discriminatory laws, projects that don’t acknowledge their specific needs and negative social attitudes have all combined to hold LGBTIQ people back. The impacts of this are felt by LGBTIQ communities in all parts of the world – lower income, worse health, less education, among others. As a result, poverty as a whole will never truly be eradicated until no one is left behind, including LGBTIQ persons.

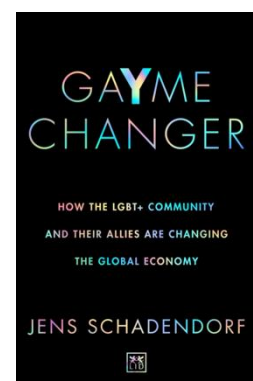
Coming soon

A new book by Jens Schadendorf

● You finished the holiday season successfully? You offered your loved ones wonderful presents? Then it is now the right time to spoil yourself with a stunning present, the [soon to be published](#) book by Jens Schadendorf called **"GaYme Changer: How the LGBT+ community and their allies are changing the global economy"**. Some might already have read the German version but believe us, the best way is to get the (updated & enriched!) English version. It is great during these darker months to read this book buried beneath cozy blankets on the couch! You will not be disappointed! Even more; you will go back to the book time after time to get some 'guidance' on how to move forward in our rapidly changing society with the LGBTIQ community.

We rarely push products, not even books but this time we make an exception, because every person who is part of, supports or is just interested in the LGBTIQ community should have read this book. Why? Not only because on the one hand, Jens pays a special attention to our region and the work all of us do, but perhaps even more because of the valuable overall content of the book, as this synopsis indicates:

Book teaser: The LGBT+ community: for a long time marginalized, stigmatized and criminalized - today the ultimate champions of creativity, diversity and innovation in a highly competitive world. In addition, corporate social responsibility (CSR) and ethical demands for organizational inclusivity have now become economic directives every organization would like to attain. Gay, lesbian, transgender, bisexual and queer individuals are symbols of diversity and economic power - true GaYme Changers - developing the global economy faster and for the better. Supported by up-to-date research and illustrated by fascinating stories, Jens Schadendorf has traced the LGBT+ community and an increasing number of their allies from across the globe to discover the start of a revolution. It becomes clear, even in times of hostility and resistance; it is economically and ethically beneficial for companies and societies everywhere in the world, to let LGBT+ members develop into dynamic forces - rooted in new forms of cooperation for game changing results.



About East meets West

Founded in 2013 in Vienna, Austria, East meets West is a network of LGBTIQ professionals from Western & (primarily) Eastern Europe. East meets West facilitates the exchange of ideas, the sharing of best practices and generates mutual inspiration to improve the social acceptance of LGBTIQ people in the different countries. The East meets West brand has two pillars. East meets West Social has a catalyst function in the LGBTIQ organizational ecosystem by connecting NGOs, diplomatic representatives, officials, corporate players, entrepreneurs and variety of other inspiring personalities. East meets West Business is the facilitator of awareness on LGBTIQ businesses and that LGBTIQ people can be successful entrepreneurs and become role models inside and outside the LGBTIQ community. East meets West is also the founding member of the EGLCC, The European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce.



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Ludo Swinnen
Pavel Šubrt
Co-founders

-  www.eastmeetswest.eu
-  events@eastmeetswest.eu
-  fb.com/emwbusiness
-  instagram.com/emwbusiness
-  linkedin.com/company/emwbusiness
-  [#emwbusiness](https://twitter.com/emwbusiness)