

Message from the co-founders

East meets West 2021 in a fundamentally changing world!

Dear friends of East meet West,

Once again these 2021 Pages, the EmW Newsletter #8 offers you a unique overview of what went on in Central & Eastern Europe (CEE) LGBTIQ universe in 2021. How to summarize this? Still too many challenges and too few victories? Essential is to see that a killer virus like COVID could not silence the LGBTIQ activists. No, it made them stronger, even when facing hostile environments.

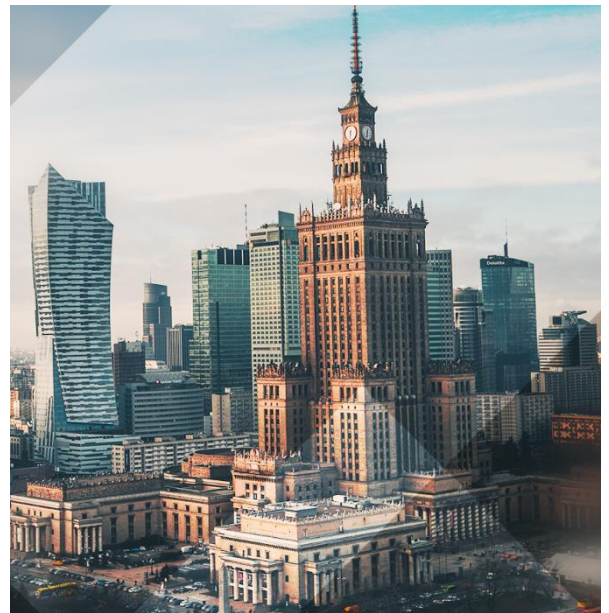
After 2 years, all of us became very knowledgeable about viruses and vaccines and we tried to live with this challenge. We will not talk about how COVID fundamentally changed the world we live in, or better we thought we lived in. The basics of the progress that the LGBTIQ community was based on, were challenged, especially the human rights that include mutual respect and the fundamental right of freedom in all its forms, also in the CEE region. We just want to mention that all of us had to change strategies as worldwide the human rights clock was turned back, and governments introduced negative LGBTIQ legislation as part of non-democratic internal policies. It is clear for us, we just have to see they do not get away with it.

Also East meets West changed its strategy and took action. We decided to leave our Vienna comfort zone and organized our annual Conference in Poland. It allowed us to put a focus on this country where the LGBTIQ community is under rough attack. It also gave us the space to show the large international audience what is really going on in Poland and how it made their LGBTIQ community stronger. We continued also with our successful SPOTLIGHT series (Podcasts) giving a voice to key movers in our community. We also introduced a Corporate Round-table, guiding foreign corporates on how to introduce in a safe way their Diversity and Inclusion strategy in LGBTIQ unfriendly countries.

We have many plans for 2022 and we can already share with you that in 2022 we will once again go on site in a CEE country with our Annual Conference so keep an eye on our regular messages.

As always, you can count on us!

Pavel and Ludo



How to navigate through EmW Pages?

As these EmW Pages want to cover LGBTIQ Social as well LGBTIQ 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 2021 East meets West Conference

RIDING THE WAVES OF CHANGE

The 2021 online East meets West Conference is now a nice memory and we, Pavel and Ludo, would like to thank once again all who joined. We left the online stage in June overwhelmed by what at the beginning was just a simple idea, could **grew into a powerful event**. By setting-up our 2021 online studio in the **Polish capital Warsaw**, we could additionally make a real statement and bring attention to a country in our CEE Region which needs it. We could not have wished for better speakers and back-stage team. We thank all who spoke on the camera and thank all who joined as audience. We thank all our supporting partners too! Without them, the conference would not have taken place.

Since the start of the East meets West Conferences in 2014, the **LGBTIQ landscape in the CEE region has changed**, sometimes for the better, sometimes for the worse, but one thing is sure... we live in a different environment and it was time to do a first CEE LGBTIQ reality check, by bringing all an updated and more correct picture of the daily LGBTIQ reality in the different CEE countries.

Ongoing pandemic measures across Europe did not allow us to host a physical / in-person conference. But in our previous online event we have shown, that despite of being a small organisation, we at East meets West have a very high professional standard and focus on delivering real value, even in an online form. Our 2021 East meets West Conference studio was built in the Polish capital Warsaw and the streaming made available to audiences across the whole world.

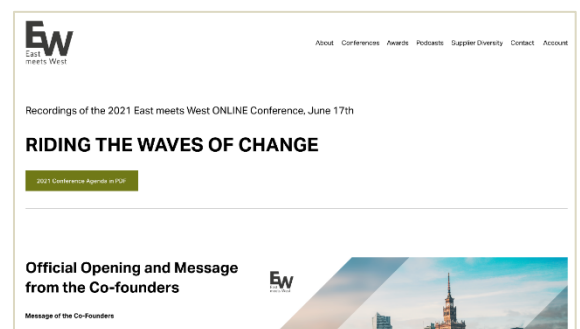
By streaming our online conference from Poland, we wanted to give the **needed attention** to the Polish LGBTIQ situation. And by building an online studio in Poland we aimed to **create a business opportunity** to local LGBTIQ owned and operated businesses and their allies.



The 2021 Conference Recordings

The 2021 Conference, which we broadcasted on June 17th from the Polish capital Warsaw, would not be complete if we would not publish all recordings. We took the time, cut the full 8+ hour recording into digestible session and made them available on our East meets West Website. It is part of our newly introduced "**Member zone**". Besides 2021, we uploaded the content of our previous events and conferences too. How to access the recording? It is very simple:


<https://eastmeetswest.eu/2021conference-recordings>



Useful links

- 2021 Conference website: <https://www.eastmeetswest.eu/2021conference>
- 2021 Conference agenda: <https://www.eastmeetswest.eu/s/2021Conference.pdf>
- 2021 Conference recordings: <https://eastmeetswest.eu/2021conference-recordings>

The 2021 East meets West Awards

 We were excited to share once again with you all the 2021 East meets West Award winners in three categories - **Corporate**, **NGO** and **Individual**. East meets West meets during the year NGOs, Corporate Businesses and individuals who, by their actions, improve the status of the LGBTIQ community in their environment. These heroes are not always known. With the East meets West Awards, we bring them the deserved positive stroke and the recognition they deserve.

About the 2021 Awards "You Will Never Walk Alone"

For the Award, East meets West always offers a present with a strong symbolic meaning and a link to the location of its annual Conference. As the 2021 Conference was broadcasted from Poland, the 2021 Award was very special and had an underlying story. It was a **rainbow flag** (textile scraps | papier | ink), a work of art by the Polish artist, **Dobromila Hada-Jasikowska**.

Dobromila created the original rainbow flag for protests against police violence against LGBTQ+ people in Poland. Violence and hatred were rising for many years but very significant was the anti LGBTIQ campaign of President Duda during the election, and the rising voices of many politicians and the Catholic Church. Now each flag is an original and most of the income from flag sales is donated to the foundation of 'Miłość nie wyklucza' (Love does not exclude Association), which is working for equality and marriage rights for the LGBTQ+ people in Poland.



Federation Sign of Equality (Poland)

WINNER IN CATEGORY "NGO"

The FEDERACJA ZNAKI RÓWNOŚCI (Federation Signs of Equality) **stands out** by the number of impactful activities in a hostile environment and by their positive attitude towards new international partners. It is the first Polish federation which brings together organisations that act for the LGBTIQ community. Their currently **9 member organisations** run various initiatives, from cultural and artistic ones, through legal representation and assistance, to sport and health-related initiatives, and have all one goal in common: to build an open and diverse society, free from any sort of discrimination, in particular discrimination concerning sexuality and gender. In June 2019 they opened the LGBTIQ+ Community Centre DOM EQ and since then, this community centre hosted over 4000 visitors and more than 300 events, support groups, initiatives, movie nights, and so much more.

The 2021 Award in category "NGO" was handed over to [Mateusz Gędźba](#), who serves as the President of the Board at FEDERACJA ZNAKI RÓWNOŚCI (Federation Signs of Equality).



The 2021 East meets West Awards

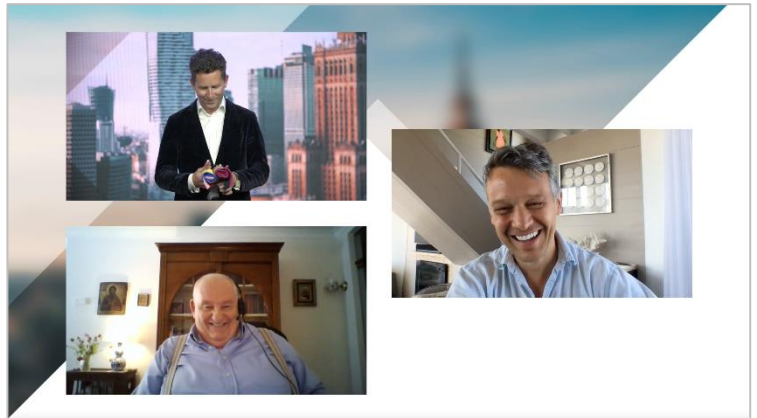
Fabrice Houdart

WINNER IN CATEGORY "INDIVIDUAL"

[Fabrice Houdart](#) is a member of the LGBTIQ community with a **unique track record**. As Human Rights Officer at the United Nations, he co-authored and led the **United Nations Global LGBTI standards of conduct** for Business, the largest corporate social responsibility initiative on LGBTI issues in the World. Also during his career at the World Bank, he made a real difference by advancing the LGBTIQ topic within this large organisation. In his actual position as Out Leadership Managing Director of Global Initiatives, he shows an impressive activity drive in launching new initiatives and supporting existing ones like East meets West. We have experienced him as a man who is always ready to help us and share with East meets West his vast experiences as an authentic LGBTIQ activist.

Fabrice serves on 8 non-profit Boards including Outright Action International, Housing Works and the Institute of Current World Affairs (ICWA). He was ranked 2nd by Yahoo Finance among LGBTI public sector executives globally in their 2019 Outstanding list.

Fabrice lives in New York City with twin sons Maxime and Eitan.

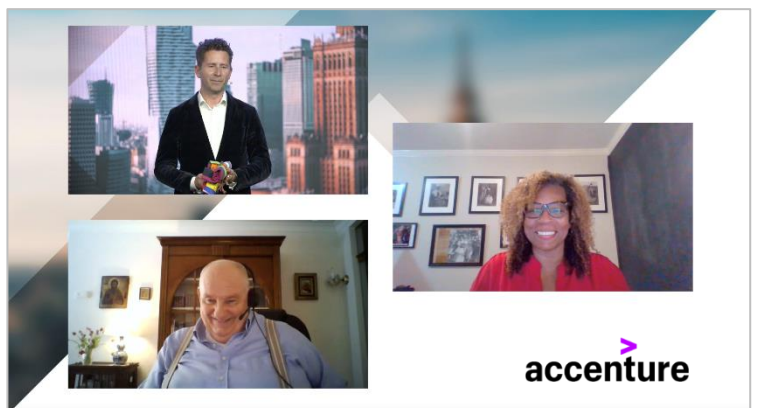


Accenture

WINNER IN CATEGORY "CORPORATES"

There is a rising number of corporates that already **'breath' Diversity and Inclusion**. Accenture incorporated this as their company value, a value that is not limited to certain business locations. Accenture is not only one of them. Accenture in our opinion **leads and inspires other corporates** to take action, being it in the field of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) or when developing a responsible supply chain. By their actions, Accenture significantly contributes to a social change and the acceptance of LGBTIQ people (not only) in a business environment.

To hand over an award to a company of over 500 ths. employees is a rather challenging task to do. However, there is one person, who since the first time we met, was for us at East meets West not only a great ally, but also a great mentor. The 2021 Awards in category "Corporates" was handed over to [Nedra Dickson](#), the Managing Director, Global Supplier Inclusion & Sustainability Lead and Procurement Europe Market Lead. This time, Nedra did not have to wake up at 4am to be with us :).



Useful links

2021 East meets West Awards: <https://www.eastmeetswest.eu/awards>
Including awards from previous year awards and about

Interview for Hospodářské Noviny (CZ)

We could not have wished for a better ending of the year. Opening on December 23rd [Hospodářské Noviny](https://www.hospodarske-noviny.cz/), the leading Czech economical newspaper, we proudly read an article about East meets West.

“In the Czech Republic, homosexuality was hardly talked about without a smirk. All my life I have not seen any model with whom I could identify, with whom I would see that I am not abnormal”, says Pavel in the interview. He describes how back in 2013 he founded together with Ludo East meets West - a platform that wants to discuss and seek ideas on how to help the LGBTIQ community in Central and Eastern Europe.

“Our East meets West attention is now next to Hungary and Poland also heading towards Russia. We are working on how to help the people there so that they can be who they are. Although they are experiencing governmental oppression, which would be best if they did not exist at all. At least that's how it looks” said Ludo in the interview.



The Story of East meets West in DIVERCITY Magazine (IT)

The story of East meets West, from the first moments of our initial Forum in Prague back in 2014 until joining forces on European level with other LGBTIQ business chambers and establishing a unique umbrella organisation, The European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce (EGLCC) made it also to this great Italian diversity magazine DIVERCITY.



By the editorial staff

EAST MEETS WEST

There are many European organisations, which work with and for the LGBTIQ community. They range from very small local NGOs. But the Eastern part of the European continent was somewhat forgotten and for many organisations, Europe stopped where the so-called 'Iron Curtain' existed until 1989. In 2013 in Prague, the 2 future co-founders of the East meets West, Ludo Swinnen and Pavel Šubr, after being confronted on an LGBTIQ Business Forum, although taking place in a Central European country, with the fact it had a mainly West European content and the speakers had a feeble local, East European background. They decided to create East meets West, an LGBTIQ organisation with a specific focus on the CEE region but with a strong link to the rest of Europe. This East meets West network has gradually become the main catalyst in the LGBTIQ organizational ecosystem in Central and Eastern Europe. Later on, East meets West saw a unique opportunity to play a relevant role in a rapidly changing social environment. East meets West was quite aware of the fact that this constantly changing world, asked for us flexibility in thinking and finding new ways to progress the LGBTIQ community. They quickly recognized the LGBTIQ business potential of the changed perception of Corporate Social Responsibility which truly has a positive impact on the LGBTIQ community. They are convinced that by connecting the two dots, the traditional social, human rights actions joined with a clear LGBTIQ business focus, is not only possible but will boost the results of their efforts. And that this is needed

is proven by the gradual deterioration of the status of the LGBTIQ communities in Europe, not only in the CEE region e.g. Hungary and Poland but also in Western Europe. The recent homophobic murder in Belgium of a gay man by 3 under aged youths indicates that also in a progressive LGBTIQ country, there is still a lot of work to do. To confirm the determination of East meets West to support the LGBTIQ communities, especially in the CEE region, they decided to have their annual International East meets West Conference in 2021 in Warsaw, Poland. The many LGBTIQ owned and managed businesses are clearly underrepresented in the economical networks of countries. East meets West wants to motivate these businesses to come out and become a positive role model in their community. This has become a major mission of East meets West. Indeed, existing negative social attitudes towards LGBTIQ people are not based on facts nor experiences but on questionable values that have been handed down from generation to generation. These can only be debunked by visible and positive role-models, especially coming from LGBTIQ business representatives. Of course, such a strategy needed an additional role for East meets West so the association turned into a de-facto LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce for the CEE region with its mission to introduce similar national Chambers of Commerce, all over Europe. For this, East meets West needed to set up a network of such national LGBTIQ Chambers of Commerce. In 2018, the 3 already existing national European LGBTIQ Chambers of Commerce, East meets West, covering the CEE region, Italy with the IGLCB, the Italian GLTB Business Chamber and the SGLC, the



Scandinavian LGBT Chamber of Commerce (they were soon joined by the German Chamber, the GGLCB) decided to join forces and founded the EGLCC, the European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce. The EGLCC is an organization that functions as an umbrella organization for all present and future national LGBTIQ Chambers of Commerce in Europe. Diversity & Inclusion in a Business environment covers many topics, incl. the well-known Workplace Equality, but also the way a business works with their suppliers is a crucial topic. If a company wants to be diverse and inclusive, it also should follow a diverse and inclusive policy when engaging with external suppliers. If we want to improve this, they need to connect the large companies as well as governmental and public organizations, to be diverse in working with minority businesses and include these when searching for suppliers. At the same time they need to have the similar LGBTIQ owned and managed businesses to register as prospects for cooperation with large businesses and government authorities. To achieve this, East meets West introduced the concept of Supplier Diversity, a pro-active sourcing of products and services from previously under-represented minorities, which includes businesses owned by suppliers, in order to reflect the

demographics of the communities in which the business operates. Ultimately, the aim of Supplier Diversity is to create an equal market landscape where opportunities are equal for participants regardless of their gender, race, ethnicity and sexual orientation. Advocacy plays an essential role in Supplier Diversity. It is the EGLCC that covers this difficult role in Europe. The main function of the EGLCC and its national and regional chamber members is to promote the growth of LGBTIQ Business across the continent, and this primarily through introducing the concept of Supplier Diversity. Coming out in business should not be seen as a threat to existing successes, but as an act as important as a personal coming out. It makes the businesses stronger, more authentic and more successful. By giving an opportunity to an LGBTIQ owned and operated business, the business can grow and be not only an inspiration inside the LGBTIQ community but also a proof that LGBTIQ business owners have a rightful place in society.

PAVEL ŠUBR, 1977, BBA (UK), Anglo American University, Co-founder East meets West and EGLCC. LUDO SWINNEN, HBA, Law Degree and University of Leuven, Co-founder East meets West and EGLCC.

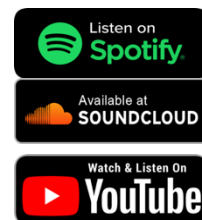
Useful links

Hospodářské noviny: <https://vikend.nn.cz/c1-67015750-uspesny-banker-a-priznany-gay-v-mladi-nevidel-vzor-ted-se-jim-sam-stal>

Diversity Magazine: <https://divercitymag.it/2020/09/28/5703>

Our new conversation recordings

To innovate and coming up continuously with new ideas has for many years been a symbol of East meets West. People we meet throughout the year and who we 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.



#6 THE GAY HAPPINESS PROJECT



GAY HAPPINESS PROJECT

For our 6th series we had the pleasure of talking with [Robert Hutchinson](#) PCC, FRSA, the Co-founder of [The Gay Happiness Project](#). Robert is a transformational coach, leadership consultant, and founder of The Authentic Life Company who specialises in self-awareness and personal development. Since 2017 together with Christopher Samsa, who is a positive psychologist and senior consultant with the NeuroLeadership Institute, they have run The Gay Happiness Project, an impactful, modular program which brings together gay men in a positive, safe and non-therapeutic space. The program is based on a unique blend of mindfulness, applied neuroscience, positive psychology and self-compassion.

#7 MATEUSZ GĘDŹBA AND FEDERACJA ZNAKI RÓWNOŚCI



When it comes to LGBTIQ Diversity & Inclusion in Europe, Poland is the country that dominates the headlines with negative or other shocking news. For our 7th East meets West SPOTLIGHT SERIES we travelled (virtually) to Krakow, the second largest city in Poland, once the capital of Poland, now one of Europe's most beautiful cities. What is the situation in Poland right now? What drove a once progressive CEE power-house to become a country where we find over 100 "LGBT-Free Zones"? Where do local communities find the strength to fight and, is all so negative? We talked to [Mateusz Gedźba](#) who serves as President of the Board of the FEDERACJA ZNAKI RÓWNOŚCI ([Federation Signs of Equality](#)), and where he looks after all legal and formal documentation and reviews and negotiates the contracts on behalf of the Federation. ZNAKI RÓWNOŚCI is the first Polish federation which brings together organisations that act for the LGBTIQ community. Their currently 9 member organisations run various initiatives, from cultural and artistic ones, through legal representation and assistance, to sport and health-related initiatives, and have all one in common: to build an open and diverse society, free from any sort of discrimination, in particular discrimination concerning sexuality and gender.

#8 WITH VERONIKA VALKOVIČOVÁ ABOUT LGBTIQ ERGS



At the occasion of IDAHOBIT, The International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia and Biphobia, we talked to the renowned Slovak researcher and lecturer [Veronika Valkovičová](#) PhD about LGBTIQ Employee Resource Groups (ERGs): What do such ERGs stand for? Is this only a recent invention and what do we know about their roots? Why do these ERGs exist? What's needed to make them an important part of an organisation? Created in 2004, IDAHOBIT draws the attention to the violence and discrimination experienced by lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex people and all other people with diverse sexual orientations, gender identities or expressions, and sex characteristics. Why May 17th? On this day in 1990 The World Health Organization decided to declassify homosexuality as a mental disorder.

THE 2021 SPOTLIGHT SERIES

#9 WITH PAVEL & LUDO ABOUT THE 2021 CONFERENCE



Our summer was over and we returned in full speed! This included our famous SPOTLIGHT SERIES. For August we actually invited ourselves to the studio and had great fun talking about our 2021 East meets West Conference. We talked about what motivated us to go to Poland and build a studio there, about moments we loved and moments we were sad about and of course, we went once again through the agenda and picked the most important messages from our speakers.

#10 WITH PHIL CREHAN ON THE WORLD BANK GROUP



For our September SPOTLIGHT recording we invited [Phil Crehan](#), a true expert on the topic of advancing LGBTIQ Economic Empowerment. He has a great track record in social inclusion and economic development with an LGBTIQ focus. This also brought Phil to the strategic role the World Bank is playing in improving the LGBTIQ well-being, a role that is not enough known. The World Bank Group is the premiere economic development institution in the world not only in terms of its budget, but also in terms of intellectual capital and leverage with governments. There are five parts of the World Bank Group and in this SPOTLIGHT, we focused on the World Bank itself and how this institution can be better understood by LGBTIQ organisations, business owners and people.

#11 WITH TÁMAS DOMBOS ON THE SITUATION IN HUNGARY



How much do you know about the current situation in Hungary? We all are aware of the recent Hungarian Legislation, that makes providing information on LGBTIQ to people under 18 years the object of legal sanctions. This comes in addition to already existing laws against the well-being of the LGBTIQ community (e.g. ban on gender change).

For our October SPOTLIGHT recording we invited [Tamas Dombos](#), the true expert on what the situation is in Hungary. He made us familiar with the new legislation in Hungary, the local political context and most importantly, the implication of the legislation to workplace inclusion. Legal aid services are among the key activities of [Háttér Society](#), the leading Hungarian NGO where Tamas serves as the member of the board.

But Tamas was not alone who we interviewed. We asked Ludo to tell us more about the new East meets West ONLINE series SHARING THE GOOD PRACTICES FOR YOUR WORKPLACE INCLUSION IN HUNGARY, events to examine which could be the right (clever and efficient) position of corporates vis-à-vis this legislation. He recently interviewed four important corporate players in Hungary and in this SPOTLIGHT recording he shares with you the key learnings.



Useful links

All our podcasts can be found on our website

<https://www.eastmeetswest.eu/podcasts>

East meets West podcasts channels

<https://open.spotify.com/show/4rZM5GxqwXvOyEaUsnoLVs>

<https://soundcloud.com/user-14622893>

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCZ-BHWigANmMGdSLom9E9pw>

The 2021 Highlights

EmW at the 2021 World Pride Human Rights Conference

● The 2021 **World Pride** took place in Copenhagen and Malmö. On August 18th, East meets West in cooperation with [Prague Pride](#) hosted a CEE Panel, a hybrid event - on-site in Copenhagen and with audience from all around the globe.

The Central & East European (CEE) region is often treated in discussions about Human Rights and Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) as an outsider. The negative LGBTIQ news that reaches us from this part of Europe has certainly not helped to change this perception. East meets West wanted to show on the Conference a **different picture of D&I in this region**, a picture of dynamic and successful NGO's that, with the help of a young population and the support of the business world, are gradually changing the existing homophobic status into an open and diverse society. We brought on stage a great mix of countries, as well as corporates and NGOs. This way we shared insights and practical good examples from the **Czech Republic, Bosnia & Herzegovina and Russia**.



#YouAreIncluded



Streaming from Copenhagen

CENTRAL & EASTERN EUROPE: A DIFFERENT REALITY?

World Pride 2021 Inclusion Day Workshop



Generations: Challenges to Maximizing Knowledge

● We have **5 generations** in the workplace today. How do we maximize collaboration, sharing and wellbeing? East meets West joined on November 18th a great '[Diversity Magazine](#)' panel and brought there the voice of the LGBTIQ community. Are there **any specifics** in this respect? Yes there are. We have now a younger generation that expects from companies to support and respect human rights. To attract talents, companies need to live D&I. From the **BCG Out@Work Barometer Survey** we also know that the first year matters the most for coming-out at the workplace (70% come out within the first year). And on the contrary, we should not forget that coming-out at later age tends to be more challenging. Do companies really do enough for our senior employees?

It was our great pleasure to be on this panel next to great and inspiration professionals - [Heidi Robertson](#) (the group head of D&I at ABB), [Annice Joseph](#) (senior HR director at SAP), [Monika Jankowska-Rangelov](#) (EMEA D&I Head at State Street), [Chrystelle Simon](#) (Diversity, Equality & Inclusion lead at Deloitte) and [Allyson Zimmermann](#) (executive director at Catalyst Europe). Their insights brought real value! And not to forget, it would not be a great panel without a great moderator, [Rose Cartolari](#).



Useful links

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

Copenhagen 2021 Report <https://copenhagen2021.com/report>

Workplace Inclusion Day <https://copenhagen2021.com/human-rights/workplace-inclusion-day>

BCG Out@Work Barometer Survey

<https://www.bcg.com/publications/2021/first-year-of-inclusive-work-environment-for-lgbtq>

Sharing the good practices for workplace inclusion in Hungary

THE NEW EAST MEETS WEST ONLINE SERIES

We all are aware of the recent **Hungarian Legislation**, that makes providing information on LGBTIQ to people under 18 years the object of legal sanctions. This comes in addition to already existing laws against the well-being of the LGBTIQ community (e.g. ban on gender change). East meets West runs now **series of ONLINE events** to examine which could be the right (clever and efficient) position of corporates vis-à-vis this legislation.

The focus of the events are the **internal** workplace practices, excluding any form of **external** (market) communication. We invite at each event on the stage a few **corporate representatives**, to share their view and good practices on LGBTIQ Diversity and Inclusion within their Hungarian workplaces. This information that can also be used by corporates faced with similar challenges in other parts of the world.



SESSION #1 on October 13th 2021

We secured great panellists for our 1st event with a strong focus on Hungary. Firstly, we did hear from [Háttér](#), the **Hungarian leading NGO**, who made everyone familiar with the new legislation in Hungary, the local political context and most importantly, the implication of the legislation to workplace inclusion.

The audience got to know good practices from **4 corporate representatives**, each passionate about their work, driving workplace diversity & inclusion. The panellists represented a large international retailer, a large telco provider, a global industrial German group and a global consultancy company.

We also invited to the panel the Russian [ComingOut LGBT Group](#), an organization based in St. Petersburg. The reason why we brought them on the stage is simple: also **Russia** is facing a legislative challenge, but still they have been able to mobilize groups of corporates and establish a best-practice sharing platform. This is certainly an inspiration towards your future activities in Hungary.



Key Take-aways from SESSION #1

The activity level of the HQ in pushing or having the backing from the HQ where D&I plays a strong role is crucial. But **when you start from scratch**, the best policy is a bottom-up approach. You need to get to know how your operation in Hungary considers Diversity. A good start is to identify the needs, the "why" it makes sense to do it and add concrete examples. You also need few employee drivers, those who start working on the topic within your Hungarian branch. To move further **one needs help** from companies (or external professionals) who already started this journey.

And do not forget to **educate** as people often simply do not know what Diversity & Inclusion (D&I) means and why it is important. Find the local people who can lead the engagement to start working on the topic, person by person. **Measure the progress**. And also the baby steps need to be rewarded.

Useful links

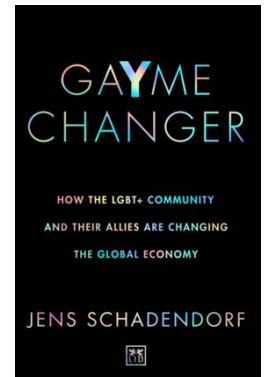
Háttér Society
<https://en.hatter.hu>

A new book by Jens Schadendorf

● You finished the holiday season successfully? You offered your loved ones wonderful presents? Now is the right time to spoil yourself with a stunning present, the 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 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.

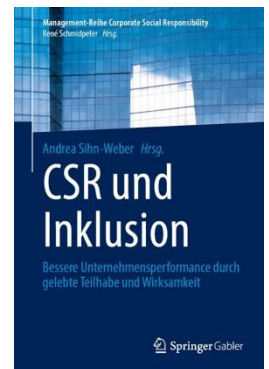
We rarely push products, not even books but this time we make an exception, because every person who is part of, supports or is just interested in the LGBTIQ community should have read this book. Why? Not only because on the one hand, a special attention is paid to our region and the work all of us do, but perhaps even more because of the valuable overall content of the book. And, let's not forget that the book was just nominated for the [2022 Business Book Awards!](#)

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.



A new management book from Springer

● Published by the renowned publishing house Springer, a great new book "**CSR und Inklusion**" is now available as part of their management-book series on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Among others, it features a chapter on East meets West. The aim of this book is to give executives and in particular diversity officers, CSR and HR managers and all those interested in this topic a practical insight - based on current scientific knowledge - into how diversity and inclusion can be lived in organizations in the best possible way. Social Enterprises in the book explain how they promote diversity and inclusion in society through innovative and sustainable business models. The **book demonstrates** how more diversity and inclusion contributes significantly to a more sustainable future in which cooperation, innovation, engagement and empowerment are of increasing strategic importance.



The way the business world has embraced the idea of Corporate Social Responsibility in the last 10 years by aligning their CSR projects with their own business models and company goals is quite remarkable. The belief that such a business strategy can achieve a competitive advantage is now widely accepted. This has been more and more visible in areas like HR, innovation and marketing. However, also the topic of inclusion, a theme that is closely linked to the role of diversity in modern management, has found its way to CSR. Inclusion and diversity cover a wide spectrum of subjects, such as the role of women in management or how a company deals with senior employees. In addition to such rather general issues also the more sensitive subject of sexual orientation in the business environment has appeared. Often, companies invoke here the support of NGOs or even internal ERGs to develop a fitting strategy. East meets West is such an NGO, a bottom-up initiative that started with a mainly social and regional focus but gradually developed into a relevant European player with a clear business-related objective, collaborating with large corporate players and jointly developing their CSR policies.

Useful links

The GaYme Changer <https://www.gaymechanger.com>

CSR und Inklusion book on Springer <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1007/978-3-662-62114-1>

The 2021 Highlights

Blood Donation Austria

● The Austrian Blood Donor Ordinance or its application, excludes people from donating blood for a period of currently 12 months and four months in the future, from the time of their last sexual activity on the basis of their sexual orientation. This means in other words **LGBTIQ people in Austria** are **discriminated**, without taking their individual sexual risk behavior into account. A petition supported by seven Austrian companies (**A1 Telekom Austria AG**, **Accenture Österreich GmbH**, **Avanade Österreich GmbH**, **IKEA Austria GmbH**, **Microsoft Österreich GmbH**, **PwC Österreich GmbH**, **Raiffeisen Bank International AG**) was presented on October 1st at a press conference at Raiffeisen Bank International AG (**RBI**), which calls for the elimination of the blanket exclusion regulations for homosexual and bisexual men and transgender people.

"We demand a modern, safe and non-discriminatory blood donation practice in Austria. It should be based on the risk behavior of the donor, but not on their sexual orientation," said **RBI CEO Johann Strobl**. "Instead of a general exclusion, we advocate the targeted questioning of all donors about their individual risk behavior. With this we want to send a signal against discrimination and for more inclusion and equal opportunities."

The initiative came about at RBI and its LGBTIQ Employee Resource Group **EMBRACE** after the death of an employee's partner at the beginning of 2021. Despite all precautionary measures, both were ill with COVID. The partner soon had to be treated in intensive care and needed blood plasma infusions with COVID antibodies as a last resort, a very scarce commodity at the time. Due to the existing guidelines, the RBI employee was not even allowed to make this donation directly for his partner, not even in this desperate situation.



"As a company, we have a responsibility to society and society. With our commitment to this initiative and the open discourse, we are setting an example for diversity, tolerance and inclusion and want to actively shape and exemplify an equal and open culture in Austria," said **Bettina Türk**, Member of the Management Board and Diversity Lead at Accenture Austria.

In the meantime, **13 big Austrian companies** are supporting the petition. Next to the initial seven companies the support came from: **Anylone**, **Austrian Airlines**, **The Boston Consulting Group**, **Byrd Technologies**, **SAP** and **Wirtschaftsuniversität Wien**.

On the October 15th, the petition was personally handed over to health minister of Austria, **Dr. Wolfgang Mückstein**, in order to start the legal steps which will have to be taken thereafter. According to the feedback received so far from the various stake-holders, the initiative of getting Austrian companies involved in this topic has been the turning point and has **real chances** that the directive and the current practice in Austria will finally be changed.



Useful links

RBI's Press Release

<https://www.rbinternational.com/de/media/2021/namhafte-oesterreichische-unternehmen-fordern-diskriminierungsfreie-blutspende.html>

LGBTIQ Business

Many new opportunities in 2021

Throughout 2021, LGBTIQ-owned and -managed businesses within the East meets West network could tap on new business opportunities. East meets West being a member chamber of the [EGLCC](#), the **European LGBTIQ Chamber of Commerce**, could offer the LGBTIQ network to register and do so offer their products and services to our growing number of European corporate partners - **Accenture, Johnson & Johnson, Unilever Facebook/Meta, BP, Barilla, Sony Pictures, IBM, EY and Intel.**



EGLCC joined forces with partner **advocacy organisations** [MSDUK](#) (Ethnic minority entrepreneurs) and [WEConnect International](#) (Women-owned businesses) and under the umbrella of the European Supplier Diversity Alliance, ran in 2021 a series of **diverse business showcase events**. Invited on the virtual stage were diverse businesses from Europe's digital and retail marketing and the IT / Technology industry to pitch in front of corporate buyers.

With the concept of **Supplier Diversity** (SD) growing the attention in Europe, it is no longer an overseas activity. Next to the already well-established SD champions, also new corporates activated their Supplier diversity programs in the first European markets. But as we are still only at a beginning of a great journey, we continue to educate the wide public on why engaging with diverse suppliers matters. Where do you find a good reading (or a good listening) on supplier diversity?

- **World Economic Forum** Blogs on Supplier Diversity ([link 1](#)) ([link 2](#))
- Andrea Fimian on importance of Diversity and **ESG in Procurement** ([link](#))
- **CIPS** (Chartered Institute of Procurement & Supply) on Supplier Diversity ([link](#))
- **Procurement Foundry** on Supplier Diversity ([link](#))

The Economical Potential of the East meets West Region

The estimated economical significance of the region, covered by East meets West – Central & Eastern Europe / CEE (excluding Russia, status 02/2021)

 **11,2** Million
LGBTIQ
Population

 **125** Billion
€ LGBTIQ
GDP

 **480** Ths.
LGBTIQ
Small Businesses

Useful links

East meets West Supplier Diversity <https://www.eastmeetswest.eu/supplier-diversity>

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

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.

Register today!

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

[Register](#)

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 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.



ERA @Western Balkans and Turkey

○ In December, the [ERA](#) - LGBTIQ Equal Rights Association held its second regional conference on political participation of LGBTIQ people in the Western Balkans and Turkey. Since its establishment in 2015, and in close cooperation with its member organisations, ERA has advocated regionally and internationally for the political participation, representation and engagement of LGBTIQ people. To date, significant efforts have been made to push for and maintain a positive momentum among governments, parliamentarians, human rights organisations and other stakeholders in the region. The event was organized with the support of Olof Palme International Centre, the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs, LSVD Germany, the European Commission, the Council of Europe and Open Mind Spectrum Albania (OMSA) together with HBT-Social Democrats of Sweden. Read the conference [full report](#).



○ Another example of ERA's great work were the sustainability and resilience webinars organized throughout October and November. The series of webinars was an invitation to explore the role of self and collective care in our work necessary for social movements. ERA aims to encourage wellbeing as a collective strategy for creation of the sustainable movement itself, where the wellbeing of one becomes the responsibility of all. The webinar series included sustainable activism, understanding risk and threats and regenerative organisational culture.



Croatia

a mix of legal progress and reprehensible civil behaviour

○ On May 5th a high Croatian Court confirmed that same-sex couples are allowed to adopt children. This is a great step forward for family rights in Croatia, where rainbow families are still fighting for full marriage and family equality. Parallel to the legal battle over adopting, the couple has also fought a decision that prevented them from becoming foster parents, for which the Constitutional Court decided in favour of the couple last year. [Read more](#) here.

○ We also need to mention a really despicable violent hate crime against a volunteer in [Split Pride](#) in Croatia. Physical and psychological violence was suffered by a young man from Kaštela who was attacked by his neighbours because he is a homosexual. After leaving him with a broken knee and torn arms, he called for help from the beach to passers-by who were walking along the promenade. But they just ignored him. No one stopped.

○ LGBTIQ people can now report the incident via "You Are Heard", a [regional platform](#) for documenting hate crimes and incidents of hate developed by ERA in partnership with 14 partners, including the Split LGBTIQ organisations. The survivors can report their experiences anonymously and can find information on where to seek support. A much needed initiative!



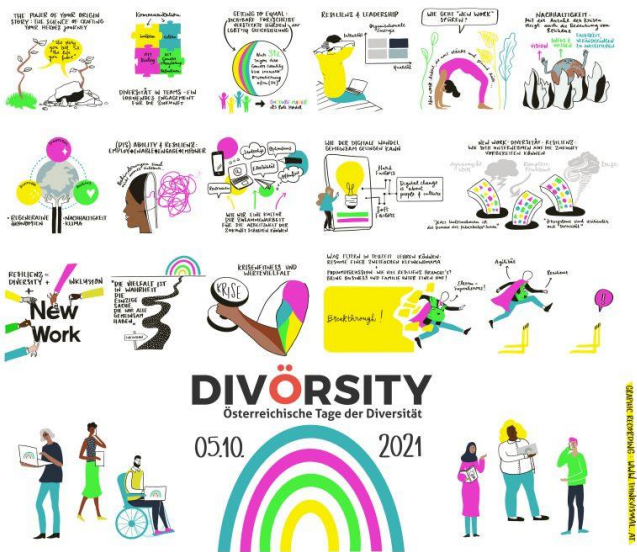


Austria

finding its place in CEE

● The [Diversity ThinkTank Austria](#) had throughout 2021 a great line-up of events, trainings and seminars. Their Diversity Campus is an innovative e-learning platform. What we love about their Diversity Breakfast online events is that they care for participants to enjoy the morning meeting. You can sign up for a free breakfast to be delivered to your doorstep. And in case you live outside of Vienna, where this service is not available, or you opt out from receiving breakfast, they take the "saved" money and donate it for a good cause.

● [DIVÖRSITY](#) or Diversity, the Austrian way. The play on words from the term diversity (variety) enriched with a little Alpine Republic, characterized by the Ö, stands for the Austrian Days of Diversity and its diverse formats. Also in 2021, many great initiatives and actions by companies and organizations formed the core of the nationwide days of action. These are framed by top-class events and media-effective elements such as the DIVÖRSITY Congress, the DIVÖRSITY Magazine and the DIVÖRSITY Gala with the presentation of the Austrian Diversity Prize. The [2021 Congress](#) took place online on October 5th under the motto "Diversity & Resilience". The very good news for all who missed that event is that the [recording](#) is of course available to all.



● An truly exemplary way of CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility - was shown by 13 companies in Austria. They joined forces and within just a little over six months after the initial idea, presented their position paper to the Austrian health minister Dr. Wolfgang Mückstein. You wonder why a position paper in a country someone can call doing well in human rights? The reality is, that a relevant part of LGBTIQ community is still banned from blood donation. Read full best practice article on page 11 of these 2021 Pages.

● A great example of events by corporates within the Austrian DIVÖRSITY Days was brought by EMBRACE, the LGBTIQ Employee Resource Group (ERG) of [Raiffeisen Bank International](#). Also on the occasion of the National coming-out day, they invited to their Vienna headquarters the German economist and well-known author Jens Schadendorf to read from his latest book: *The GaYme Changer - How the LGBT+ Community and Their Allies are Changing the Global Economy*. Not only was it a great reading, which included the important learnings from Barilla case, but there was also a great interview with Hannes Mösenbacher, the Group Chief Risk Officer. The whole event was broadcasted to the entire Raiffeisen network in CEE. What did the audience learn? The importance of role models, the needed result-oriented employee resource groups and the importance of coalitions and partnerships. And all were also reminded of the risks a company is facing when not addressing the LGBTIQ diversity & inclusion at the workplace.



● And of course we cannot forget to mention Meritus. Since 2009, the "[Meritus](#)" award has been presented every two years to companies and other organizations that are particularly committed to diversity management in the dimension of sexual orientation and gender diversity. To date, Meritus has made a decisive contribution to significantly improving the situation of LGBTIQ people in business and the world of work in Austria. The 7th Meritus Gala with UniCredit Bank Austria as host should have taken place on November 27th. Due to the pandemic situation, this year's winners will be honored with a video series. But most importantly, who are the 2021 winners out from the 33 applications received? Meritus "Large companies" category: Accenture. Meritus "SME" category: Ferdinand Porsche FernFH. Meritus "Public sector" category: Board of Trustees for Vienna Pensioners' Residences. Pride Biz Special Prize: VIMÖ (Association of Intersex People Austria) and Pride Biz Special Prize: Queer Base (Welcome and Support for LGBTIQ Refugees).



Czech Republic

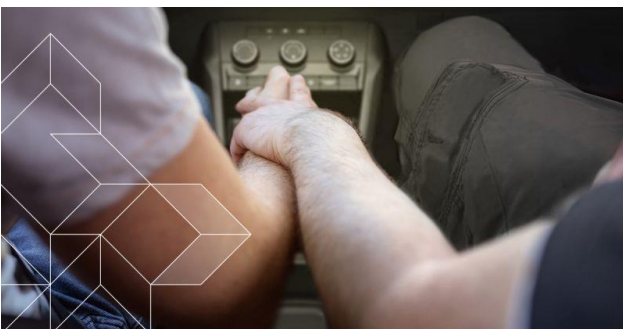
still going strong

○ For many years the [Prague Pride](#) team has been dreaming of a safe and open meeting place for LGBTIQ people. Such a space is now the new LGBT+ Community Centre, where everyone can spend their free time, regardless of age, orientation and identity. You will find this [community centre](#) in the very heart of Prague, a short walk from the Old Town Square, at Železná 18. There will be debates, screenings, workshops, support groups and many other events and activities and become part of a diverse community of people who have a lot in common while respecting their differences. The LGBTIQ community centre will bring a rainbow to your life!

● The already 11th edition of Pride Business Forum took place on June 18th under the motto "Is LGBT+ workplace equality a new normal?" In 2021, the [Pride Business Forum conference](#) looked at how this statement is put into practice. They argued that inclusion must become a part of the new normal among Czech business. Experts from abroad highlighted the global trends on how to implement the diversity and inclusion principles. Czech business leaders elaborated on the local reality. For the first time, they also looked at the Czech public sector and discuss why its workplaces are lagging. And of course the LGBT+ Friendly Employer 2021 and Pride Business Forum Heroes were awarded for the fourth time in a row.



● Many businesses joined in Czech Republic the call of the Pride Business Forum and the #ZaRuce campaign (holding hands) to show that they are not indifferent to violence and homophobia. Did you know that as many as 46% of same-sex couples are afraid to show their love in this way, for fear of attack, allusions, or harassment? Only a third of the Czech public respects such a gay couple when they meet them in the street. Jointly, the many businesses expressed their support for their LGBTIQ employees, clients and partners (like we see in the Skoda Auto [post](#)).



Slovakia

a real rollercoaster year

● The Online [LGBTIQ Business Forum](#) 2021 took place on May 17th. The main topic of this forum was the discrimination and harassment in the workplace and a diverse program was presented. The presenters included Mária Patakyová from the Office of the Public Defender of Rights and Silvia Porubánová from the Slovak National Center for Human Rights. They also prepared the latest research results, an overview of institutions dealing with this topic as well as a view from the counselling center or human resources.

○ This 2021 rollercoaster year in Slovakia also knew negative happenings! In spring there was an unprecedented legal attack on the rights of transgender people, where a draft law proposed the banning of legal transition. Fortunately, it didn't pass, but it's impact on the already strained mental health of trans people was significant. A similar attack repeated itself in autumn, but gathered much less support.

○ Nadacia [Pontis](#) managed the Happy Mondays [campaign](#) for an inclusive workplace in Slovakia. The foundation links together companies, non-governmental organisations, state institutions, communities, and individuals to make positive changes in education, responsible entrepreneurship, and fight against corruption and poverty.

○ Despite the Covid situation and following strict regulations, two PRIDE festivals and marches took place - one in Banská Bystrica and one in Košice. [Košice PRIDE](#) also included a full week of various events - discussions, parties, movie screenings and community events.

○ Quite interesting was also the Project Queer curtain that unveiled stories of the LGBTIQ people who lived on the Slovak, Czech and Hungarian territory since the early 20th century. The aim of the [Queer Curtain](#) - 30 years of democracy for LGBTIQ people project was to build a queer memory based on history research and testimonies from those LGBTIQ people who survived the communist and socialist era and who helped improve LGBTIQ people's lives.

○ And we end in a festive way with the Cený Inakosti ([Queer Awards](#)), Award giving ceremony held on November 29th in 8 categories for the creme de la creme in the LGBTIQ world in Slovakia.





Poland

still in turmoil

Being the East meets West Conference focus country, we mentioned it already a few times in these Pages. So we bring you a bitter-sweet sparkling cocktail for all LGBTIQ community in Poland with specific events of which somehow bring hope. Please find them below:

Three Polish regions revoked their anti-LGBT declarations! A region in southern Poland has revoked an anti-LGBT resolution under the threat of losing European Union funding. The regional assembly of Świętokrzyskie voted in a special session on Wednesday to [revoke the resolution](#), which was first passed in 2019 by dozens of Polish municipalities. It is the first time a region in Poland has abandoned the declaration of being an "LGBT-free zone".



On January 12th, the District Court of Plock dismissed the appeal of the Prosecutor Office against the acquittal of women human rights defenders Elżbieta Podleśna, Anna Prus and Joanna Gzyra-Iskandar in the so-called "Rainbow Virgin Mary" case. On 3 March 2021, the three women human rights defenders were acquitted by the court of Plock of the charges of "offending religious beliefs" under article 196 of the Criminal Code of Poland. There is much [more to read](#) about.

After TV stations in Denmark, Germany and the Netherlands, Poland will be the next country in Europe to have decided to produce its version of Finding Prince Charming. So far, the [program](#) has enjoyed great popularity with viewers and in Germany it received the renowned Grimme Prize for the best entertainment program. Participants in the program are 13 gay men who are seeking the favor of a bachelor – the so-called "Prince" (a rich and handsome man who seeks love).



Hungary

homophobic politics hurt people and economy

The Hungarian parliament has passed an anti-LGBTI bill censoring communication about LGBTIQ people to under-18s. The general provisions in Child Protection Act, Family Protection Act reads "it is prohibited to make available to children under the age of eighteen any pornographic content and content that depicts sexuality as having a purpose in itself, or promotes or portrays deviation from the self-identity in line with the birth sex, gender reassignment, and homosexuality". There are specific provisions in Business Advertising Act, Media Act and Public Education Act.



We asked [Háttér](#), the leading Hungary LGBTIQ NGO to give us a glimpse of "recent" developments in Hungary. Here is the list:

- January 2019: public media promoting conversion therapies "curing" homosexuality
- October 2019: Coca Cola fined for featuring same-sex couples in ads
- May 2020: ban of legal gender recognition for trans and intersex people
- September 2020: campaign against Fairyland is for everyone, local bans
- November 2020: abolishment of Equal Treatment Authority
- December 2020: proposed amendment to Constitution, ban on adoption by people out of wedlock
- June 2021: ban on promotion or portrayal of homosexuality, transgender identity, gender reassignment
- July 2021: anti-LGBTQI referendum announced
- August - September 2021: media guidance and commerce legislation on anti-propaganda law implementation

Every year, the LGBT+ discrimination costs Hungary 0,14 - 0,23 % GDP. These are findings of the Open for Business coalition among their Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in Central & Eastern Europe (CEE) 2021 study which next to Hungary looked also at Poland, Romania and Ukraine. Open, inclusive and diverse societies are better for business and better for economic growth. This is true for companies and economies all around the world, including Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). [This report](#) presents the evidence base that demonstrates discrimination has a cost for these economies and that openness and inclusion can aid them in reaching their ambitious economic goals. It also shows that companies that address LGBT+ inclusion can attract higher talent and have better financial results.



Slovenia

strong communicators

○ You never heard of the Ljubljana LGBT Film Festival? Well, this festival was for the first time organized back in 1984, part of the Magnus Festival. It is the oldest LGBTIQ film festival in Europe and at the same, time the oldest international film festival in Slovenia. Curious about what film line-up organizers brought in 2021 brought on screens in seven Slovenian cities? Look at the 37th festival [catalogue](#).



○ Another LGBTIQ cultural happening took place in the middle of September in Ljubljana – the Lesbian Quarter, the already 7th festival and platform for lesbian creativity at the intersections of art and activism organized by the [Škuc Association](#). The opening documentary was from the 90s BloodSisters: Leather, Dykes and Sadomasochism about the lesbian leatherdyke and BDSM scene in San Francisco is a provocative pioneering work that shook the erotic and activist boundaries of the then lesbian community.

○ TransAktcija published a YouTube video of interviews with 20 trans allies presenting a unique message: “Trans people are among us.” With the [video campaign](#), TransAktcija aims at expressing support for trans persons and topics from a diverse group of members of the general society.

○ The LGBTIQ Young People in Schools conference, organized by Legebitra on June 17th together with the Pride Parade Association. The conference was striving to respond to the question “what is inclusive volunteering and how can we practise it in youth organisations?” Next to hearing about the concept (and challenges) of inclusive volunteering, the audience could listen to the different organisations presenting their good practise examples of inclusive volunteering. This event was just one among many on the program of the 2021 Ljubljana [Pride Festival](#).



Bulgaria

the great and... the ugly

● Organised by Work It OUT, the international one-day [Better Together Forum](#) took place in Sofia (and online) on September 17th. It focused on the inclusion, equality and well-being of LGBTIQ workers in the workplace. For the first time in Bulgaria, experts from international organizations and businesses such as IBM, Progress, Reward Gateway, the World Bank, activists and HR professionals did gather to discuss around the topics.



● [Work It OUT](#) is a platform for the Bulgarian based local and international organizations that want to make their jobs more inclusive and include the benefits of diversity. The aim of the platform is to encourage the creation and development of a positive business and economic environment for equal opportunities for every employee in Bulgaria. This is not a formal organization, but rather a community of companies that share the mission of accepting and integrating LGBTIQ people into the workplace.

● [PREVENT](#) was not the only important LGBTIQ business happening in 2021. Work it OUT also brought together in May a large audience to the first Diversity & Inclusion forum in Bulgaria - Healthy is the New Happy.



○ An [attack](#) on the Rainbow Hub, the LGBTIQ community centre in central Sofia took place on Saturday, October 30th during a trans community gathering. According to reports, around 10 people stormed the Rainbow Hub, vandalised the space and destroyed property. One of the attackers was the leader of the far-right Bulgarian National Union, also a candidate for the Presidential elections which took place in November. Despite this positive development we see in Bulgaria, the country still does not have legislation criminalising hate crime and hate speech on account of a person’s sexual orientation, gender identity, expression or sex characteristics.



Serbia

great legal progress

○ We know it might be little late to share this in the 2021 East meets West Pages but we need to start with a survey of [ERA](#) - LGBTI Equal Rights Association for Western Balkans and Turkey, in partnership with the World Bank and IPSOS. It is the biggest ever survey of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people (LGBTI) in this region. The survey is looking for responses from anyone who consider themselves to be LGBTI, who is aged 18 years and above and lives in Serbia. Do you have 30 minutes to [answer the survey](#)?

○ With the adoption of amendments to the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination, this law includes now the recognition of sex characteristics as a basis for the prohibition of discrimination. The Republic of Serbia became the fourth country in the region that recognizes sex characteristics as a basis of discrimination and thus started the work to protect the rights of intersex persons.



○ The European Parliament adopted resolutions on the Commission reports that included Serbia. In every report, there is substantial language on LGBTIQ issues. The EP resolution urges Serbia to deliver convincing results, including a sustainable track record with effective investigations in areas of concern such as the judiciary and the freedom of expression, and it underlines the need to continue protecting LGBTIQ rights. It welcomes the peaceful conduct of two pride parades in 2019 but also stresses the importance for all institutions of supporting the preparation of EuroPride 2022 and ensuring the safety of all participants. Finally it also urges Serbia to improve access to healthcare services for people with disabilities, people living with HIV, children and adults who use drugs, sex workers, LGBTIQ persons - particularly in view of the ongoing pandemic and challenges in the health sector. The full resolution text can be [downloaded here](#).



Albania

under local and EU pressure

○ The European Parliament adopted resolutions on the Commission reports that included also Albania. In every report, there is substantial language on LGBTIQ issues. The key concerns when it comes to Albania are around fundamental rights, e.g. calls on the authorities to step up efforts to establish solid anti-discrimination case law and ensure the effective prevention and prosecution of hate speech and hate crimes. Note that Albania's 2016-2020 National Action Plan for LGBTI Issues has expired and the EP resolution calls on the government to develop a new action plan through a transparent and inclusive consultation with civil society and to ensure appropriate resources are assigned for its implementation. Within socio-economic reforms, the EP resolution encourages the Albanian Government to prioritise measures aimed at mitigating the health and socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, with particular consideration for marginalised and vulnerable groups such as LGBTQI community. The full resolution text can be [downloaded here](#).

○ On May 12th, [OMSA](#) (Open Mind Spectrum Albania) together with ERA held an online [forum](#), with representatives of the Albanian parliament, government, human rights institutions and civil society organizations, to discuss the phenomenon of hate speech, especially by political leaders (but not only), towards vulnerable communities such as women and girls, LGBTIQ people and the Roma community.

○ The [Aleanca LGBTI](#) and Pro LGBTI Alliance continue their great effort in organizing awareness meetings with State Police representatives across the whole country and to discuss issues facing the LGBTIQ community and hate crimes. In line with awareness of the International Transgender Visibility Day, the organizations introduced the informational brochure that focuses on supporting the transgender community, who are most often victims of crimes of hate and continue to experience discrimination, even from police officers.





Lithuania

a family and digital focus

On September 29th the National LGBT rights organization LGL organized an international [conference](#) called "Family Protection and Diversity in a Democratic Society: Problems and Perspectives" at the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Lithuania. The conference addressed the legal and social issues of family diversity and the recognition of LGBTIQ family rights, as well as the role of the private sector in creating an inclusive environment and equal opportunities for diverse families. The issue of legitimizing a gender-neutral partnership institute is particularly important for same-sex couples who are unable to establish their relationship through marriage. As long as the old democracies of the European Union are consistently moving towards the establishment of marital equality, the laws of Lithuania, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria and Slovakia do not yet meet the different needs of families.



The Lithuanian Gay League (LGL) is among the 13 organizations that [won](#) the Google.org Impact Challenge for Central and Eastern Europe. In total, €2 million will be distributed between those organizations for projects promoting inclusive economic growth and creating equal chances for everyone to succeed in the digital world. The winning 3 year project, will include free online courses in digital marketing and programming for LGBTIQ community and other underrepresented groups. During the course of this project LGL, together with Code Academy, will train at least 180 individuals in difficult economic circumstances and empower them to use technology to develop their own businesses or seek employment. It also seeks to contribute to closing the digital divide between Vilnius and other regions of Lithuania by involving participants from areas that are more affected by the economic crisis.

Of course, we will not forget to mention the annual main event of the Lithuanian Diversity Charter, their [Conference](#). This time online, the conference focused on May 25th on "Uplifting diversity in a (post)-COVID era" and brought together over 25 speakers, not only from a business environment.



Belarus

a queer survival struggle

In the ongoing protests in Belarus against Alexander Lukashenko and the sitting regime, the LGBTIQ community walked alongside other demonstrators, with a common wish to see a change in their country. The LGBTIQ community perceived a political turnaround on the highest level as a first step towards a more inclusive society where our community would have a more secure space. East meets West is aware that it is not easy to be LGBTIQ in Belarus and fight for equal rights and have the highest respect for the local activists who never gave nor will ever give up the fight for LGBTIQ human rights in Belarus. In a country where a revolution is taking place and where you are as LGBTIQ person, next to abuse when arrested, often also met with a lack of understanding and appreciation at the marches themselves as other participants ask "Why are you here? This is not your protest!".

It is not East meets West's role to analyze the political discourses employed by both the Belarusian authorities and the opposition with regard to homophobia and the LGBTIQ community, as this identifies which homophobic discourses are present in Belarus and how political homophobia is wielded by different actors on the domestic political scene. But as LGBTIQ activities were too scarce in 2021, we want to offer you a better in-depth view of LGBTIQ in Belarus. One just has to listen to the president of the Republic of Belarus and some of his quotes. Most famously, he proclaimed that it was 'better to be a dictator than gay' in 2012. Amazing is to know that homosexuality was decriminalized in the country in 1994 (four months before Lukashenko was elected president). But this decriminalization of homosexuality in Belarus has not resulted in the end of homophobic public attitudes and surveys show year after year the outright hostility to the LGBTIQ community in the Belarussian society. [Read more](#) on LGBTIQ-related history in Belarus from [Europe-Asia Studies](#) or Tatiana Newedomskaja article for the [Heinrich Böll Stiftung](#).

A new documentary "We Have Not Lived In Vain" was released in 2021. Directed by Nick Antipov and Bart Staszewski (Nick is the co-founder of [MAKEOUT](#) project and [Bart](#) is the well known Polish filmmaker, you might remember him in connection to LGBT-free Zones in Poland) the documentary shows both the queer legacy and the country's turbulent present. Through the stories of three participants, it leads you throughout the Belarusian protests of 2020.

On November 9th Olya Gorbunova, a psychologist, former head of the Radislava NGO, a feminist, and a women's rights activist, was abducted and later [detained](#). Olya is an open LGBTIQ person who has always openly opposed patriarchy and homophobia.



Ukraine

progress in turbulent times



Organised by the NGO [FULCRUM](#) which builds bridges between LGBTIQ and non-LGBTIQ communities, the second BAM Forum took place in October. BAM stands for "business / activism / media". 2021 BAAM brought together business representatives, policy makers and activist to talk beyond "when Ukraine will start solving the problem of hate crimes" (probably the most burning topic).

БАААМ! 28/10

РІЗНІ РАЗОМ НА ФОРУМІ →

бізнес / активізм / медіа / форум союзників в дії / онлайн стрім на громадському ТБ / 28 жовтня



The Equality March took place in Kyiv on September 19th. According to the organizers, it was attended by about 7 thousand people. The March for Equality is in Ukraine probably the most visible LGBTIQ action, and because of this there is a stereotype view of LGBTIQ in the society that says these parades are the only thing that work the LGBTIQ community and its allies on. But we all know that LGBTIQ activists work every day. The work includes many series of educational events for national police officers or training for large companies. FULCRUM prepared a publication for the business community in Ukraine, on how to ensure diversity and inclusion in the workplace during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is another example of the important work of LGBTIQ NGOs. They bring the needed perspective of the community, during the pandemic. Well done FULCRUM!



The [ALLIANCE GLOBAL](#) (before: NGO "GAY-ALLIANCE") specializes in providing services for HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among men who have sex with men (MSM). This includes focusing on the progress and consolidation subgroup of gay and bisexual men as part of LGBT community and the community in general and promoting the reduction of homo-, bi- and transphobia in the Ukrainian society. Today its activity is mainly focused on activities of outreach/social work, HIV/STI testing and prevention, paralegals, development of community centres for MSM and regional advocacy for access of key groups to health and social services. From 2019, the organization launches the Shelter project for MSM / LGBT people.



Bosnia & Herzegovina

the times, they are a changing



The 'Excelling In Diversity' Network provides a diversity certification as a means of social inclusion in the Bosnia and Herzegovina's business community. The first companies and institutions, Klika, Unija, Orbico Beauty, McCann and SSST University, received the certificate in Sarajevo on May 5th. One of the important organisations behind the [Excelling In Diversity](#) Network is [SOC](#), the Sarajevo Open Centre. Its executive director Emina Bošnjak said "it was a successful pilot project supported by MarketMakers and the Swiss Embassy in BiH".



The [decision](#) of the institutions of the Sarajevo Canton, Municipality of Centar, and the City of Sarajevo to cover the costs of additional security measures, which were ordered by the Ministry of the Interior of Sarajevo Canton to the Organizing Committee of BH Pride Parade, is a remarkable victory when it comes to the right to freedom of assembly of LGBTIQ people. On top of that, institutions of the Sarajevo Canton, the Municipality of Centar, and the City of Sarajevo sent a message that they are sensitive to the problems of their LGBTIQ citizens.



SOC, the Sarajevo Open Center and the Tuzla Open Center organized a [new queer art festival](#) called Kvirhana in Sarajevo from June 25th to 27th, and in Tuzla on July 2nd and 3rd. The name Kvirhan is derived from the word queer, and the word "han", which in local language means a refuge for travellers.





Armenia

fighting for the basics

In Armenia, violations against LGBTIQ people continued also in 2021. The United Nations Committee expressed its concern about the effectiveness of the investigation into cases of violence against LGBTIQ people and its responsibility to provide protection against sexual orientation, discrimination based on gender identity, and violence not only through legislation but in practice. The Committee is also concerned with the impunity of homophobic and transphobic rhetoric by politicians and public figures, proposing to combat such discourse, including through training courses with law enforcement agencies and public awareness campaigns. From January to November 2021, 308 legal consultations were carried out by Pink Armenia NGO, 29 violations based on real or presumed sexual orientation and gender identity were registered.

Pink Armenia is the first and largest LGBT+ community-based organization in Armenia, which strives to make their services more inclusive & accessible to LGBT people in all regions of Armenia. Pink turned 14 years on December 14th. Why not to consider a birthday gift by making donations through the GlobalGiving website to support Pink work in the regions of Armenia to make it more inclusive and secure. One of their recent important work was publishing a Guide for professionals working with LGBTIQ people.

The 6th "RAINBOW" Forum was held on May 10-14th. This event has been held annually since 2015. What this year was new in the Forum was that it took for the first time place on a virtual platform format. 149 people were registered at the Forum, 40 of whom were speakers. Participants included LGBTIQ individuals, as well as civil society representatives, artists, activists, lawyers, and health professionals.

In June, Pink summed up the month with a "Pride Camp". It reunited the supporters of about 30 LGBTIQ people living in Yerevan & regions. During the camp, the participants shared their emotions, had active discussions, conducted various exercises, and celebrated diversity together. The participants also had the opportunity to organize discussions on their own, thus making the entertainment interesting. The enthusiasm of the participants was also reflected in the suggestion box, as it was full of suggestions, in particular, they wished such events to be longer and more frequent.



Russia

surprisingly strong in a dangerous environment

The St-Petersburg LGBTIQ community organized their annual pride week "Queerfest" from September 22nd till October 3rd, in spite of police pressure. Queerfest is a Russian pride festival, where everyone can be themselves. Here, no one will be surprised by your gender expression, name and gender of partners (or even their number!).

The theme of the Queerfest was STRENGTH WITHIN where they proposed the theme from three different levels: the individual level, the community level and at the level of society (post-Soviet in general and Russian in particular). Thirty five participants from Russia, the CIS countries and Europe were invited to photo exhibitions, discussions. Lectures, talks and concerts.

Working for LGBTIQ in Russia remains hazardous as is proven by the recent news that the Russian LGBT Network was recognized as a "foreign agent". This network is working to evacuate LGBTIQ people from Chechnya and many other important initiatives across the country.

But also coming up for your rights demands courage as the following report shows: On April 20th, the Nevsky district court announced the sentence in the "fake date" case: the offender received 3 years and 9 months in prison and will be charged 300 thousand rubles for moral damage and 15 thousand rubles for material damage. What was the case about? On May 7th, 2020 Alexei (name changed at the request of the hero) met a young man in "VKontakte" and made an appointment at his home. In the bedroom, the perpetrator attacked the man, striking him at least 20 times in the head and one time in the chest. As he attacked, he shouted, "Bitch, you'll remember this!"

The victim gave the following account of the facts *"After the beating, the ambulance took me to the hospital. She gave a telegram to the police. There was a terrible fear that they wouldn't understand, but to my surprise the police guys were very calm and friendly. In the process it was difficult to communicate with the investigators, they did not want to do what was necessary. There were retarded questions from the police: "In total there were 25 blows. How many of them were while you were standing? How many while you were lying down? How many while you were covering your face with your hands?". I was lucky with the judge; the trial was very orderly. It's clear that I won't get any money, because the attacker most likely didn't have any. But at least he'll serve time. Maybe, at least something will change in his head (though unlikely).*



Kosovo

small can be beautiful

○ The European Parliament adopted resolutions on the Commission reports that included also Kosovo. In every report, there is substantial language on LGBTIQ issues. The EP resolution welcomes the progress on the protection of LGBTIQ rights at the legislative and policy level in Kosovo but at the same time calls for the proper investigation of cases of hate crime against LGBTIQ persons. The government needs to include same-sex partnerships in the draft Civil Code, as guaranteed by the country's Constitution. The full resolution text can be [downloaded here](#).

○ Also this year, the Biennale Highway, in its third edition, together with the fifth edition of the Pride Week in Kosovo, in cooperation with the National Library of Kosovo and Manifesta 14 Pristina, presented in summer the [artistic installation](#) "Flowers , Don't forget me 2020 - 2021". "We are bringing these flowers to Pristina to celebrate nonconformity, an impetus for a vision for change, an invitation to dream, a call for diversity" said Petrit Halilaj and Alvaro Urbano.



○ On the June 29th [conference](#) with the topic "Civil Code and Inclusion: Same-Sex Marriage", through two panels addressed the institutional approach to the draft Civil Code and the international perspective on the right to same-sex marriage. Among the many guests, were also present the mayor of Prishtina, the Ambassador of Sweden in Kosovo and the European Parliament member Terry Reintke.



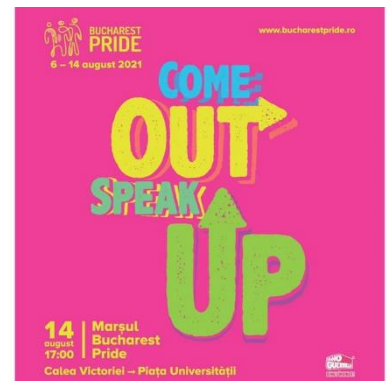
Romania

recognition of diversity as economic power tool

● Every year, LGBTIQ discrimination costs Romania 0,63 - 1,75 % GDP, driven by health and inequalities and economic discrimination. LGBTIQ discrimination leads to unequal health outcomes that reduce productivity. Higher prevalence of depression and HIV among LGBTIQ people results in lost earnings and productivity. LGBTIQ discrimination in the workplace leads to a wage gap. These are findings of the Open for Business coalition among their Economic Case for LGBTIQ Inclusion in Central & Eastern Europe (CEE) 2021 study which next to Romania looked also at Poland, Hungary and Ukraine. [Find out more](#).

● In June, the Romanian Diversity Chamber of Commerce ([RDCC](#)) developed its first Pride at work webinar "What an increasingly diverse world means for companies in emerging markets". Aimed at HR & senior managers, it offered insights into practice and policy on LGBTIQ equality, D&I in the workplace and best practices and case studies. RDCC also developed a series of Task Forces for LGBTIQ, for Gender Equality, for Ethnicity and for Seniors where national and international private companies come around the table and discuss ideas and implement strategies in order to meet the challenges that each of these categories face on a daily basis.

○ On August 6th the [Bucharest Pride](#) events were kicked off marking 20 years after the decriminalization of homosexuality in Romania. Despite some turbulences prior the Pride March, that the Bucharest Municipality first refused to authorize the March, the march could still take place. Not only that! For the first time, another municipality has taken action into celebrating the LGBTIQ and organized their own Pride Parade: the town of Iași, who organized in October 2021 Iași Parade with the help of local NGO [Rise Out](#).



○ The European Court of Human Rights in the case of [Association ACCEPT](#) and Others v. Romania [found](#) that the authorities in Romania had failed to offer adequate protection in respect of the individual applicants' dignity and private life, and to effectively investigate the real nature of the homophobic abuse directed against them. This case goes back to a 2013 protest against a screening of a film involving a same-sex family.



Montenegro

wedding bells in Montenegro

The first ever [same-sex partnership](#) was concluded in town of Budva (Montenegro) on July 25th. The Parliament of Montenegro adopted the Law on Life Partnership in July 2020, and the law entered into force on July 15th 2021. It makes Montenegro a leader in the region as the first Western Balkans country outside the EU to adopt such legislation.



Nevertheless, during the Montenegro's 9th Pride celebration, LGBTIQ activists and officials who were attending the March [called for the improvement](#) of the rights of the LGBTIQ community and full implementation of the Same-sex partnership Law. Organized by the [NGO Queer Montenegro](#), the Montenegrin pride took place under the slogan, "Love people" ["Ljubav ljudi"], as the LGBTIQ and civic activist as well as the Government and political parties officials, walked in the capital, Podgorica. Organisers called on the LGBT community to use their right to register same-sex partnerships in Montenegro, and urged the government to regulate last year's same-sex partnership law with the rest of the country's legislative framework. E.g. currently, the law does not allow same-sex couples to adopt or foster children. Earlier surveys have suggested that 71% of citizens in Montenegro still view homosexuality as an illness and that every second citizen sees it as a danger to society and would wish the state to suppress it.



Queer Montenegro NGO does great work by organising a series of meetings with members of the Coalition "Together for LGBT Rights", in order to strengthen the capacity and expand the coalition to promote human rights of LGBTIQ persons in Montenegro at a national level.



North Macedonia

becoming a real LGBTIQ service provider

In our previous Newsletter we mentioned the launch of the National LGBTIQ+ Helpline. This service has been operating wonderfully and is now just over a year old. It inspired the [Subversive Front](#), our local friends, to a new achievement, the opening of the [Skopje Queer Center](#). Over the last 2 years, they have actively been investing in mental health services for LGBTIQ+ people in North Macedonia. With the rise of COVID last year, the need for such support grew more and more. Thus, this year was a big step forward for them to branch out by opening a service-providing center for various needs. The Skopje Queer Center addresses the needs of the queer community based on individual and group mental health services, legal aid, informing of and directing to appropriate resources, and assistance from a social worker. They hope for next year to continue to push and staple these services in the donor community, as very little is done to support community development programs in their small NGO circle.

Of course, cooking cost money! Therefore [Subversive Front](#) are aiming now for community funding and fundraising as they have been challenged by the lack of funding opportunities for these services which they consider as a key role to connect them better to their community. This works especially for those people who are distanced from activism or still closeted, as these services offer a badly needed affirmation, self-acceptance and personal and professional development for queer people, in a country as North Macedonia. EmW gladly includes a [link to our fundraiser](#).

We have to conclude with a more negative update on the more official and legal aspects of the status of the LGBTIQ community in North-Macedonia. A major negative experience has been how the country is yet to adopt the Law for Legal Gender Recognition – giving trans people the right to change their legal documents. Another is the National Action Plan for the Advancement of LGBTIQ+ Rights, which again, is stuck in government pipelines. In reaction to this immobility, they hired a legal adviser who has been reviewing online content for hate speech, discrimination, and threats. This year alone they have submitted 50 reports to several institutions about online content threatening LGBTIQ+ people. They currently are waiting to receive the few final replies from these institutions to assess the functionality of these institutions following their experience of reporting to them this year.

Coming soon

Where will the 9th International East meets West Conference take place in 2022?



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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