



RECLAIM THE RAINBOW

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Introduction

“Reclaim The Rainbow” is a resolution initiated by the Gender Working Group (GWG) of CDN in 2021, after identifying the need to approach global issues that are responsible for oppression and difficult lives of the members of the LGBT+ community. The resolution is written by members of the GWG after conducting a public online discussion and an input gathering meeting with members of the informal network of organizations working on a similar framework as GWG.

The resolution outlines three general chapters, through which we aim to present patterns and various aspects that are having a negative impact on the community and propose solutions and changes that we can all benefit from in a sustainable manner. The content serves as a starting point to explore all these issues on a deeper level and identify various strategies to combat them.

In Eastern Europe (EE) it is especially difficult to lobby for progressive changes due to highly conservative and in many cases authoritarian governments, that proclaim traditional values which are used as an excuse for corruption and intolerance. With this resolution, we hope to bring these issues to the attention of local stakeholders, as well as a community of the Greens, and other activists who are willing to fight for social justice.

Representation and visibility

In EE societies, a strong influence of conservative propaganda is always present through media, politics, religion, and the economy. This is one of the main struggles for those who lobby for any progressive policies and LGBT+ agenda. In

order for any changes to be made, communities and allies need better representation in different sectors and more visibility in general. The main channels of representation we want to address are politics and decision-making, media, administrative and education systems. Here we also want to address a negative trend of Pinkwashing that occurs in political and economic systems in our communities.

We are mentioning these issues, as we, the queer community, are the ones directly experiencing negative consequences, and we hereby present to you a reality as we live it.

While the visibility of queer people in politics could benefit the community, it often does not offer a realistic representation of the entire community, and statements from these individuals are harming the reality of queer people and others.

The general public and stakeholders need to recognise what are the real struggles, and they need to hear this from exactly the people who are affected by those struggles.

Intersectional and inclusive representation of the community should be done in a way that will raise solidarity and empathy, and not promote negative bias.

We do not need companies to display a rainbow symbol as a form of support; we want them to be aware of what the realistic support would look like. It is unacceptable for corporations to use rainbow as a marketing trick in countries that could bring them profit while staying silent in others, where their queer employees, customers, supporters are suffering from discrimination in employment, hate speech, and neglect of basic human rights. The rainbow must not be a fake coat of support and morale, not only for the LGBT+ community, but for any marginalised group whose human rights you are violating with your actions.

Besides the lack of awareness on gender issues caused by faults in systems, we have noticed that there is a very low level of knowledge and a modern, science-backed approach to policymaking, and education of institutions and individuals.

Religious beliefs and stereotypes should not influence educational materials.

We urge educational institutions and advocacy organizations to redefine syllabuses without bias, to include content on LGBT+ rights, history, and health so that we can truly strive for equal society by educating future generations and banishing discrimination and hate. These institutions should destigmatise all gender topics, stop age censoring of material for students and make them equally represented and accessible in education systems.

Governments send messages of inclusion and support, without doing anything about implementing procedures that would make those messages real. In order to combat systematic oppression of the LGBT+ community, we need progressive legislation

which will benefit visibility, physical and mental health, and various human rights that the LGBT+ community is being denied.

And finally, we are demanding of media institutions to report on LGBT+ events and any cases including the LGBT+ community in an objective, unbiased manner, and to understand that the role they play in representing the community to the wider public is a double-edged sword and could mean the boundary between safety and violence toward LGBT+ community. Representation is needed, but it must be addressed properly.

Equal rights and opportunities

As the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "*All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.*" In the sphere of respecting human rights, the LGBT+ community is very often neglected. Various intersectional identities make the community almost invisible under the radar of institutions and activists that fight for human rights.

Due to poor visibility, educational and government systems are not pressured enough to make changes and include people of different genders and sexualities (or any other marginalised group), and consequences can in some cases be life-threatening.

Therefore, we demand equal rights and opportunities in spheres of healthcare, education, employment, housing, family, legal recognition, and politics. For this,

we need public institutions to change their framework of addressing gender in general, as the binary system should no longer be the norm and does not reflect reality. Medical personnel must urgently be educated and sensitised toward the more specific medical needs of transgender and intersex people, as they often don't have access to healthcare at all – and even in cases when they do, it is very poor. Forced sterilization of transgender people and conversion therapies must be excluded from medical practices so all people can be treated with dignity with respect to their human rights. Harmful stereotypes about the LGBT+ community being "diseased" must be put to an end, and instead, real medical conditions and mental health issues need to be addressed without bias and negative judgment.

Members of the LGBT+ community often find difficulties in finding jobs and secure housing due to discrimination present in these areas. This leads to a poor financial state, difficult living conditions, medical issues, and many other significant problems. Employers, housing, and healthcare institutions must stop discriminating and stereotyping queer communities based on their gender or sexual identity, physical appearance, and social status. In general, a different approach is present toward people of different levels of privilege – this needs to be recognised and stopped – we all deserve equal opportunities.

Additionally, in the spirit of addressing inequalities, we demand of governments and policymakers to create and adopt inclusive policies in the sphere of gender identification and legal gender recognition, same-sex marriage, adoptions, and other family rights as well as their international recognition. We urge non-supporters to practice objective education and empathy.

Combating discrimination and hate

It is known that stereotypes are one of the core roots of verbal and physical violence toward the LGBT+ community. In order to resolve this, we would need to address the entire system contributing to oppression through education, politics and many other areas. Common issues affecting the community are the lack of

safe space, a space without judgment, violence, and hate. Even the safe spaces that exist, often might be invaded physically, or even emotionally.

In EE it is rare to find legislations that specifically call out hate speech and violence based on discrimination – even if they exist, they are not respected. A concept of legal reporting method that regulates hate speech from social media in “real life” is a concept discussed rarely by those affected by hate speech. We would like to call out all anonymous personas of the digital realm and invite them to respect the guidelines of social media and portals. We demand of stakeholders to create frameworks that will legally condemn hate speech from both digital and offline spheres, and we urge safety institutions to react timely, professionally, and without bias on the situations of hate speech and verbal violence toward LGBT+ people.

We demand of courts and connected institutions and actors to process and follow up on hate crimes, discrimination, and hate speech like all other cases, redefine the legal benchmarks for hate speech, harassment, violence, and discrimination and update currently binary terminology to be inclusive of LGBT+ community and different gender identities.

Additionally, we ask for institutions and activists to create support systems for LGBT+ community members who have faced violence from hate crimes, domestic violence, or other harm, so they can pursue justice. We suggest to all relevant institutions in EE to start discussing the needs of the LGBT+ community in asylum or with refugee status and to protect vulnerable groups with strong statutes and procedures.

In the end, we demand of all violators of safe spaces, persons who have committed hate crimes, and all those who have wronged members of the LGBT+ community in any way, to cease with this behavior, self reflect and resolve their stereotypes and internal issues they may be facing that make them chastise on any vulnerable group.