

**"BEING YOURSELF IS NOT YOUR IDEOLOGY, IT IS YOUR IDENTITY!"
UNION OF EQUALITY: LGBTIQ EQUALITY STRATEGY 2020-2025**

The European Commission highlighted the details of "UNION OF EQUALITY: LGBTIQ EQUALITY STRATEGY 2020-2025" during a webinar organised with the participation of Transgender Europe, ILGA-Europe and Queer Cyprus Association on Wednesday, June 30 2021 via Zoom. The webinar was also shared live on the EU Infopoint Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/ABBilgi/videos/1121475201708895>

In his opening remarks, Michael Docherty, Head of Section at the European Union Programme Support Office, defined EU's LGBTIQ Strategy and stated "the first-ever lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, non-binary, intersex and queer (LGBTIQ) Equality Strategy addresses the inequalities and challenges affecting this community, setting out a number of targeted actions, including legal and funding measures, for the next 5 years. The actions focus around four main pillars: tackling discrimination; ensuring safety; building inclusive societies; and leading the call for LGBTIQ equality around the world."

One of the keynote speakers of the event Jonas Hamm, Policy Officer at Transgender Europe shed light on the details of the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy in his presentation and introduced Transgender Europe (TGEU) and its work as a network composed of different organisations established to advocate for the rights of transgender, transexual and other like-minded individuals. Jonas Hamm stated that "with the first ever LGBTIQ Equality Strategy, the EU takes its commitment to LGBTIQ rights to a whole new level, and that is good - But it will not solve everything. In fact, it cannot solve everything. However, it is an important milestone and a valuable tool that we as civil society can use in our work for LGBTI Equality in Europe."

The second keynote speaker of the webinar, Belinda Dear, Advocacy Specialist at ILGA-Europe, focused on the impact that EU's LGBTIQ Equality Strategy brought along in Europe. She said that "while it is important that governments call out human rights violations happening against LGBTIQ people abroad, they must also work on ensuring equal rights for LGBTIQ people in their own country, through legislation and leadership."

The webinar continued with a presentation delivered by lawyer Öncel Polili from Queer Cyprus Association. Mr. Polili provided information on his ongoing work with regard to the legal gaps in this domain in the Turkish Cypriot community. The moderator of the webinar, Erman Dolmaci, also the Project Coordinator of the EU funded Diversity of Colours Project implemented by Queer Cyprus Association, concluded the webinar by stating that "the First Pride was a rebellion and our rebellion shall continue until the day everyone is equal with LGBTIQ".

Background:

People continue to be the target of racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance throughout the EU, for their race, religion, national background or ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, social status or for their other characteristics. A broad set of regulations put in force at EU level contribute to better combating different forms of discrimination and intolerance along with the ways in which they emerge. Discrimination against LGBTIQ people is a violation of EU's fundamental values. The EU is committed to exert efforts aiming at eradication of this problem. Therefore, the European Commission adopted on 11 November 2020 the LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025. This is the first-ever Commission strategy on LGBTIQ equality and delivers on the European Commission's commitment to building a Union of Equality. It strives to build a Union where diversity is celebrated as part of our collective richness, where all people can be themselves without risk of discrimination, exclusion or violence.

For more information:

https://ec.europa.eu/cyprus/news/20201112_4_tr

https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/combating-discrimination/lesbian-gay-bi-trans-and-intersex-equality/lgbtiq-equality-strategy-2020-2025_en

https://ec.europa.eu/info/sites/default/files/lgbtiq_factsheet_2020-2025_en.pdf

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