



Outhouse
LGBTQ+ CENTRE

A SPECIAL ENVOY FOR LGBTQ+ RIGHTS

July 2024

About Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre

Outhouse is the cornerstone of support for the LGBTQ+ community. We provide a safe and welcoming space for LGBTQ+ individuals to gather, connect, and find solace in a world that doesn't always understand or embrace them. We are the heartbeat of the queer community, offering vital services including social spaces, mental health support, cultural events, and much more.

We are dedicated to supporting the people, spaces, and issues important to the LGBTQ+ communities. Our vision is a future where LGBTQ+ individuals are safe, seen, and celebrated.

Our mission is to improve the quality of life for LGBTQ+ people by providing a safe space to find:

- **Connection** - discovering themselves, their people, place, and passions.
- **Community Support** - accessing information, programmes, and services.
- **Culture** - experiencing creativity, heritage, discovery, and fun.
- **Campaigns** - being part of a strong, credible, and trusted voice for LGBTQ+ communities.

We live by the values of Trust, Respect, Joy, Inclusivity, and Impact.

Underpinning our work are our commitments to equity and intersectionality.

LGBTQ+ Rights Today: A Global Perspective

The global landscape for LGBTQ+ rights reflects both significant advancements and ongoing, profound challenges. In many countries, such as Ireland, there have been notable strides towards greater equality through successful referendums, progressive legislation, and public policy initiatives. However, these achievements exist alongside severe and persistent obstacles.

Across the world, LGBTQ+ individuals continue to face widespread discrimination, harassment, and systemic inequalities that impact their daily lives. Mental health issues, social isolation, poverty, homelessness, and substance misuse disproportionately affect LGBTQ+ communities, underscoring the urgent need for comprehensive support and systemic change.

A critical concern is that in 64 countries, being LGBTQ+ is still a criminal offense, with 12 of these countries imposing the death penalty for Queer individuals. This stark reality highlights the dangerous environment many LGBTQ+ people face globally, where their very existence is criminalised and punished with the utmost severity.

The polarisation of the international debate on LGBTQ+ rights is also alarming. Recently, there has been a troubling trend where LGBTQ+ issues are framed as a new form of colonialism. This narrative seeks to delegitimise the experiences and rights of LGBTQ+ individuals by positioning their advocacy as a form of Western imposition rather than a fundamental human right. As a former colony, Ireland has a role to play in challenging this corrosive narrative. We must resist efforts to define LGBTQ+ identities and rights as new or foreign concepts, acknowledging instead that LGBTQ+ people have existed since the dawn of time and their rights are intrinsic to human dignity.

Recent developments at the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) further illustrate the challenges facing LGBTQ+ rights globally. The 56th Session, was marked by increased retrogressive efforts by certain states aiming to undermine well-established human rights standards concerning sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. Despite these challenges, human rights, feminist, LGBTQ+, and sex worker organisations continue to work tirelessly to uphold international human rights standards and advocate for progress.

The international community is witnessing a rise in anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric and policies, often linked to broader geopolitical shifts and the influence of far-right

and conservative movements. This polarisation, combined with the diminishing support for LGBTQ+ rights within some multinational corporations and the potential reduction in critical funding from governments such as the Netherlands, poses a significant threat to the global LGBTQ+ movement.

In particular, the proposed cuts to Dutch development funds, which are projected to reach €2.4 billion by 2027, could severely impact global LGBTQ+ civil society organisations. The Netherlands is the single largest donor to LGBTQ+ rights initiatives worldwide, and reductions in this funding could undermine progress and embolden efforts to roll back rights.

Looking ahead, addressing LGBTQ+ rights effectively requires a multi-dimensional approach that includes increased investment in support and advocacy, international cooperation, and a commitment to combating discriminatory narratives. It is essential to build alliances across movements and resist efforts to undermine the fundamental rights of LGBTQ+ individuals.

As we continue to strive for a world where LGBTQ+ rights are universally recognised and respected, it is crucial to acknowledge the interconnected nature of these issues and work towards meaningful and sustained change on a global scale.

Ireland's Role Internationally

Ireland has long been a global leader in LGBTQ+ rights, from pioneering marriage equality through a popular vote to confronting our conservative past. This position, coupled with our unique history as a former colony, places us in a prime position to influence and advance LGBTQ+ rights globally. To solidify and extend our leadership, we propose the establishment of a Special Envoy for LGBTQ+ Rights. This role will be dedicated to advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and protections worldwide, supported by a specialised team and an annual budget.

Rationale

Historical Leadership and Moral Responsibility:

- **Pioneering Marriage Equality:** Ireland's achievement as the first country to legalize same-sex marriage by popular vote reflects our progressive values and commitment to human rights. This landmark decision exemplifies our dedication to equality and sets a precedent for other nations.
- **Post-Colonial Experience:** As a nation that transitioned from colonial rule to independence, Ireland possesses unique insights into overcoming historical injustices. Our experience can offer valuable lessons on building inclusive societies and addressing systemic discrimination.
- **Transformation from Conservatism:** Our evolution from a conservative, Christian nation to a global leader in LGBTQ+ rights provides a compelling narrative and deep expertise. This transformation enhances our credibility and capacity to support LGBTQ+ rights advocacy globally.

Global Polarisation and Rising Extremism:

- **Countering Hostility and Violence:** The surge in far-right politics and extremism has intensified hostility and violence against LGBTQ+ individuals. A Special Envoy will play a crucial role in addressing these challenges by promoting inclusivity and countering regressive trends.
- **Navigating Corporate and Governmental Challenges:** As a significant European hub and EU member, Ireland is strategically positioned to address the decline in corporate and governmental support for diversity and inclusion. With significant reductions in LGBTQ+ development funding (e.g., the Dutch government's €2.4 billion cut), Ireland's proactive stance can help mitigate adverse impacts and sustain global progress.

Strategic Importance of the Envoy Role:

- **Permanent and Focused Mission:** A dedicated Special Envoy ensures sustained attention on LGBTQ+ issues, integrating advocacy efforts across the United Nations, EU, Council of Europe, OSCE, and other international bodies.
- **Operational Support and Expertise:** With a dedicated team and an annual budget the Special Envoy will have the resources necessary to conduct studies, attend international conferences, and advocate effectively. The Envoy will need deep expertise in LGBTQ+ issues, geopolitical acumen, and a thorough understanding of multilateralism.

Enhancing Ireland's Global Brand and Influence:

- **Brand Ireland:** Ireland's successful marriage equality campaign has enhanced our international reputation as a human rights champion. Establishing a Special Envoy reinforces this commitment, showcasing Ireland's proactive role in promoting LGBTQ+ rights worldwide.
- **Progressing LGBTQ+ Foreign Policy:** The Envoy will ensure that LGBTQ+ rights remain a priority in Ireland's foreign policy, aligning with Sustainable Development Goals and ensuring the inclusion of LGBTQ+ people and issues in addressing pressing global challenges.

Mitigating Risks and Ensuring Sustainability:

- **Safeguarding LGBTQ+ Rights:** With increasing global opposition and funding cuts, it is crucial to bolster support for LGBTQ+ advocacy and rights. The Envoy's efforts will be pivotal in maintaining and advancing the progress made, ensuring that hard-won rights are not rolled back.
- **Supporting Civil Society:** While the Envoy will not directly fund civil society organisations, their advocacy and diplomatic efforts will foster a more supportive environment, encouraging increased funding and support for LGBTQ+ initiatives globally.

Appointing a Special Envoy for LGBTQ+ Rights is both a strategic and moral imperative for Ireland. It will leverage our historical leadership, address global challenges, enhance our international reputation, and safeguard the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals worldwide. With dedicated resources and expertise, the Envoy will play a vital role in advancing human rights on the global stage.

Investment Cost: €0.5m

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