

The GIZ Rainbow Network

- Entry for the Gender Competition 2018 -
 - Gender Mainstreaming within the company -

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Promoting a more inclusive gender approach

Advocating respect for human rights, equal opportunities and integrity are core values of GIZ. The GIZ Rainbow Network is actively pursuing to make this a lived reality by promoting structural embodiment of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) topics within GIZ. The network would therefore like to join the 2018 Gender Competition in the category “Gender Mainstreaming within the company”.



Gender - in contrast to sex - refers to a social construction that encompasses a wide range of meaning. While “traditional” approaches often limit its range to the dichotomy of male/female, other aspects of gender such as the range of gender identities and sexual orientations are closely linked but only **rarely included in corporate gender strategies** and actions. This is the more surprising as many factors driving gender-focused action in international development similarly apply to the LGBTI community, such as the exclusion and underrepresentation of LGBTI in development processes¹ as well as discrimination and harassment at the work place².

The **GIZ Rainbow Network** is a continuously growing network of now 108 international and national LGBTI staff and supportive colleagues throughout the whole company. Our objectives are to **ensure equal opportunities and a discrimination-free environment for LGBTI staff at GIZ** and to promote the discourse on the relevance for action to **integrate LGBTI into international/development cooperation**.

Fostering a gender-diverse corporate culture and LGBTI competences

In a company such as GIZ with projects in about 130 countries, many with discriminatory, partly with life-threatening laws and social attitudes against LGBTI, LGBTI staff and their families in GIZ still face significant additional challenges compared to their cisgender and heterosexual colleagues. The overall attitude towards LGBTI from a perspective of international staff at GIZ headquarters in Germany is overwhelmingly positive. However, this culture of inclusiveness is not yet a work reality in all countries of the companies’ operations, where discrimination against LGBTI is often perceived as culturally acceptable. While most likely remaining unreported due to fear of revealing ones sexual identity/orientation, cases of mobbing and/or harassment of LGBTI staff are to be expected in such country-specific contexts.

With our commitment, we support the integration of LGBTI issues into the broader Gender approach of GIZ, helping to create a **culture of cooperation and collegiality that is based on equal opportunities and integrity**. We believe that mainstreaming knowledge and creating

¹ Cp. Stonewall International, The Sustainable Development Goals and LGBT Inclusion, https://www.stonewall.org.uk/sites/default/files/sdg-guide_2.pdf

² Cp. Antidiskriminierungsstelle des Bundes (2017): „Neuaufgabe der Studie „Out im Office?!“ zur Arbeitssituation von LSBT*-Personen veröffentlicht“, http://www.antidiskriminierungsstelle.de/SharedDocs/Aktuelles/DE/2017/20170719_PK_Out_im_Office.html?nn=6569928

awareness on LGBTI issues among both international and national staff is a key avenue to promote **an inclusive gender approach**. We want to address the needs that arise with fully acknowledging the diversity of GIZ's staff and stimulate a discourse on how we act and cooperate as an organisation that works to shape a future worth living around the world.

The network through its members around the world identifies existing challenges and discriminatory practices affecting LGBTI staff and maintains a **regular dialogue with relevant GIZ corporate units** to address those issues. It furthermore facilitates the direct sharing of country-specific knowledge and experiences among its members. All coordinators and members are contributing to the network on a fully voluntary basis.

Supporting awareness raising for LGBTI issues in international development cooperation

Gathering experience and expertise on LGBTI-issues related to development cooperation through our network makes us also an internal knowledge hub on this matter. As engaged professionals, we see this as a responsibility to actively share and disseminate this knowledge for the advancement of GIZ's services. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) have been agreed on the basis that they apply to everyone, everywhere and will 'leave no one behind'. The 'leave no one behind' principle is especially relevant for LGBTI. Furthermore, sexual orientation and gender identity are deeply rooted in the human rights approach³. In the strong believe that the SDGs and human rights are key issues of our joint mission and therefore a shared responsibility, we help to promote a discourse on the relevance and needs for action regarding LGBTI-awareness in our field of work.

The network's actions and results

Over the last 1.5 years, the Rainbow network has started a range of initiatives to achieve its objectives of ensuring equal opportunities and a discrimination-free environment for LGBTI staff. This has a widespread effect and led to a more structural embodiment of LGBTI topics within GIZ.

- **Strategic dialogue and close cooperation with the Human Resources (HR) department**
 Following the development of a discussion paper summarising the most important challenges for LGBTI staff in GIZ and an exchange with Managing Director Dr. Hans-Joachim Preuß in October 2016, the network established a quarterly Jour fixe with the Director General Human Resources, Mr. Lutz Zimmermann. Through this close cooperation between the HR Department and the network, updates on recent developments are being shared and current issues are brought up and discussed. Due to the regular exchange, several of the below mentioned activities could be initiated to be integrated in the regular GIZ HR-instruments and mentioned/discussed within annual executives' meeting. For example, suggestions to **establish a database with better country-specific data** on administrative requirements and lessons learned for LGBTI staff and their partners have led to plans for establishing such a **HR-wide system in the context of introducing IDA**. Furthermore, the collaboration with the GIZ Rainbow Network also led to the introduction of a dedicated contact point for LGBTI-staff in the HR-Department.
- **Q&A document for LGBTI staff**
 Network members drafted a Questions & Answers (Q&A) document, which contains the most frequent questions most international LGBTI staff have, when preparing their assignment

³ Cp. Yogyakarta Principles (2016) http://www.yogyakartaprinciples.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/principles_en.pdf

abroad. The document collects best practices and helpful resources and was used as the basis for an official Q&A document published by the HR department in March 2017⁴.

- **Liaising with the staff association on LGBTI-related matters and unresolved issues**
As some issues related to equal opportunities in the work place are related to specific benefits provided by the company, the network has regularly brought up these issues to the staff association as well as the committee on expatriate staff (PVA). Some members of the staff association and the PVA have also become part of the network's email distribution list to stay up to date on recent LGBTI-related developments. With this close alignment, we embed our engagement in a broader scheme to represent the interest of GIZ staff towards the company.
- **Dialogue on LGBTI inclusiveness of national staff policies**
While GIZ provides benefits for spouses (e.g. in the context of accompanying family members of a staff member moving abroad) of international staff also to same-sex partners, GIZ does not provide partner benefits to same-sex spouses of national staff in partner countries, where GIZ orients its approach along the lines of "local practice. This discrimination of national LGBTI staff was pointed out and discussed with a Country Director as well as the responsible for National Staff at the HR Department. Based on these initial discussions a process of collecting experiences from other development agencies, opening a discussion with BMZ on the subject, and integrating LGBTI-inclusiveness in an upcoming revised National Staff Policy was initiated.
- **Suggestions for the inclusion of LGBTI issues in the new GIZ Gender Strategy**
The network provided concrete suggestions to a draft of the new Gender Strategy to ensure the inclusion and mainstreaming of LGBTI issues. Furthermore, we initiated an exchange with the GIZ gender officers to further define joint fields of interest and align complementary activities.
- **Supporting processes to strengthen LGBTI issues in German Development Cooperation**
The network consults and provides regular inputs to the Sector Project Human Rights on issues related to LGBTI in German Development Cooperation. For example, representatives of the Rainbow Network supported the workshop "**Leave no one behind - LGBTI and International Cooperation**" organised by GIZ in Berlin and provided an input on the networks objectives and activities with participation of AA and BMZ representatives. The network will furthermore be involved in a consultation event with the German Foreign Office and BMZ in November 2017 to provide inputs on stronger integration of LGBTI issues in German International Cooperation.
- **Coordination on security-related issues with the Corporate Security Unit and COPE**
Members of the Rainbow Network are in regular contact with the Corporate Security Unit and COPE. The network was able to provide feedback on existing security issues among international LGBTI staff abroad. Spearheaded by the Corporate Security Unit, LGBTI issues have been **integrated into the training of RMOs** and are now part of the security mapping process.
- **Peer-to-peer advice**
Most of all, the network provides a platform for peer-to-peer exchange on work-related issues regarding LGBTI and gives direct advise to GIZ colleagues with questions regarding their situation. It refers them to the right contact persons and has frequently established contacts to

⁴ https://intranet.giz.de/cps/rde/xchg/giz_intranet/XSL/hs.xsl/-/HTML/10365.htm ; under LGBTI

other LGBTI colleagues abroad to share their country-specific experience with new colleagues. The latter is particularly important as publicly available information on the internet and the legal framework alone does not provide an accurate picture on the actual realities of local life for LGBTI GIZ staff.

- **Email newsletter & Global Campus 21 Workspace**

The network coordinators prepare a regular email newsletter to update all members about recent activities and developments within the company and in its broader context. Furthermore, a Global Campus 21 Workspace has been set up to allow for the latest news, documents to be available for all members. The platform also offers an online forum to discuss with other network members.

- **Face-to-face meetings in Eschborn & Berlin**

The network is organising regular face-to-face meetings. “Rainbow lunches” have taken place in Eschborn and Berlin to allow network members getting to know each other better on a personal level and discuss relevant topics.

- **Inclusiveness as the network’s guiding principle**

The GIZ rainbow network follows a principle of inclusiveness. The network is very diverse with members among international and national staff, Development Workers, CIM experts, and interns. It now encompasses over 100 GIZ employees and is steadily growing. But it goes beyond GIZ’s LGBTI staff and actively involves GIZ staff supporting the objectives of ensuring equal opportunities and a discrimination-free environment for LGBTI staff.

The network is in regular contact with relevant units within the company, such as the HR Department, the Corporate Security Unit, the Staff Association, several Gender Focal Points and gender officers, as well as the Sector Project Human Rights.

Beyond GIZ, the network has established an exchange with other LGBTI-networks in the BMZ, KfW and the Federal Foreign Office. Furthermore, the network is in touch with important external stakeholders such as the LGBTI group of BMZ, the Yogyakarta Alliance⁵, the Hirschfeld-Eddy Foundation⁶ and others.

The three key success factors for our achievements were firstly, revitalisation and expansion (internal and external) of the GIZ LGBTI Network since 2016, secondly, strategic dialogue and close cooperation with the Human Resources (HR) department, the staff association as well as the committee on expatriate staff, gender officers, Corporate Security Unit and COPE to raise awareness and foster structural changes for LGBTI matters, and finally Inclusiveness as the network’s guiding principle. We understand that **ensuring equal opportunities and a discrimination-free environment for LGBTI staff at GIZ** and promoting a discourse on the relevance and needs for action to integrate LGBTI into international/development cooperation is not a matter of lobbying for individual interest. It is an integral part of a **gender-diverse and inclusive corporate culture** and a vital contribution to embrace GIZ’s core values. This **will only be achievable through an integrated approach closely cooperating with a whole range of stakeholders**. This is the basis of our commitment for the GIZ Rainbow Network within and for our company.



⁵ The Yogyakarta-Alliance is a civil society forum whose aim is to contribute to a German foreign policy and development cooperation that are inclusive of the concerns of lesbians, gays, bisexual, transgender, and intersex people (LGBTI)

⁶ The Hirschfeld-Eddy-Foundation was founded in 2007 as the human rights foundation of the Lesbian and Gay Federation, Germany