

On 27th June in Strasbourg, France, IGLYO held the fourth roundtable in its 2014 Series on Intersectionality. Representatives from the SABAAH (Denmark), PINK Embassy (Albania), La Station (France), Roma Action Plan (Council of Europe), Youth of European Nationalities (Germany), the Mag (France), la Refuge (France), Rainbow Association (Serbia) as well as two independent activists met to discuss racial and ethnic diversity within the LGBTQ community.

IGLYO convened the roundtable on racial and ethnic diversity to recognise the diversity of LGBTQ people with respect to racial, cultural and religious diversity. The roundtable went into in-depth discussions that recognised the difference and diversity of the LGBTQ community in an attempt to understand the needs of people who simultaneously fall into these overlapping categories of identity. Intersectionality as a concept was mentioned frequently, particularly in the finding ways forward to challenge institutional, social and political forms of racism.

The roundtable acknowledged the invisibility of racial and ethnic diversity within the LGBTQ movements. Participants focused on the power dynamics and privilege at play that can result in limiting the participation of people from different backgrounds. These limitations are a result of the racism that permeates society, and those limitations should not be reproduced within the LGBTQ movement. The roundtable saw a need to support internal diversity of the LGBTQ community in order to enhance inclusion and to support those with various experiences.

Participants saw a need for safe space in which people of self-identified racial and ethnic identities can focus on LGBTQ issues. Safe spaces are a gathering of self-identifying marginalised groups in which to discuss personal, social and political experiences or viewpoints of how they may have been affected by discrimination. Such a space enables peer learning and support from others who have similarly situated experiences within mainstream society.

Above all, participants saw the need to establish tools in order to empower people from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds as well as the need to challenge existing paradigms of privilege and oppression within society. Supporting self-organised initiatives such as events and workshops run by those of racial and ethnic diversity will contribute to a more inclusive LGBTQ movement, with the ultimate goal of a more inclusive society.

The roundtable also saw the need for the increased representation of people from diverse backgrounds within LGBTQ organisations, with meaningful participation of everyone involved. Organisational structures and policies should allow for the full participation of marginalised people. The roundtable recognised the challenges in promoting participation, emphasizing that tokenism should always be avoided at all times.

The roundtable promotes increasing visibility of diversity and people with multiple minority or vulnerable identities. This increased visibility is necessary within minority communities as well as within LGBTQ community. Promotion of dialogue between various social movements is one way to foster visibility. Collaborative events, intra-movement discussions, peer-to-peer learning and one-on-one meetings with various actors within each movement will work to raise awareness within each movement on the internal diversity and common struggles.

The roundtable concluded that we all have a duty and responsibility to continually challenge institutionalised racism and discrimination and to combat and challenge internal discrimination within communities. Discrimination against anyone is inequality for all.



Government of the Netherlands