



11<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Rainbow  
Cities Network  
Reykjavík City Hall, Iceland



## Table of Contents

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| List of attendees .....   | 3     |
| <b>Opening and welcoming new members, introducing new members.</b> .....            | 5     |
| <b>Organizational items</b> .....   | 6     |
| Annual Report 2022-2023 .....   | 6     |
| Approval of the Annual Report.....  | 7     |
| Photo Exhibition .....  | 7     |
| Vote for New Host & Prep Host Cities for 2025.....                                  | 8     |
| Questions and Answers for the cities proposing to host the next meeting: .....      | 9     |
| Voting results for the host city of the annual meeting in 2025 .....                | 10    |
| <b>Online infrastructure and how to use it.</b> .....                               | 11    |
| <b>Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Environment in a Growing Network.</b> .....   | 11    |
| Learning session 1 .....  | 12    |
| <b>Recap from learning session first block</b> .....                                | 15    |
| Effective intersectional city politics (Cork).....                                  | 15    |
| Tackling extremism and hate against the queer community (Heidelberg).....           | 17    |
| LGBTIQ+ Elders; support and services (Nuremberg) .....                              | 19    |
| <b>Meeting Local NGOs</b> .....   | 20    |
| Trans-Ísland (Trans-Iceland).....   | 20    |
| Kvenréttindafélag Íslands (Women's Association Iceland) .....                       | 20    |
| Samtökin '78 (The National Queer Organization).....                                 | 21    |
| Questions for the NGOs.....   | 21    |
| <b>Learning session 2</b> .....   | 23    |
| Moving beyond the gender binary in the city administration (Heidelberg).....        | 23    |
| LGBTIQ+ Homelessness (Berlin) .....   | 25    |
| Rainbow Centres & Spaces, how to facilitate a diverse queer centre (Sao Paolo)..... | 29    |
| <b>Rainbow Cities in Action brochure</b> .....                                      | 30    |
| <b>Conclusion and next steps</b> .....  | 31    |
| The board of Rainbow Cities Network.....  | 32    |
| <br>Figure 1: Approval of the Annual Report 22-23.....                              | <br>7 |
| Figure 2: Photo Exhibition .....  | 8     |
| Figure 3: Host City 2025 .....  | 11    |

## List of attendees

| City             | Name                            |
|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Barcelona        | Francisco Miñan Medina          |
| Barcelona        | Meritxell Sàez Sellarès         |
| Bergen           | Tale Nesmann Berntsen           |
| Bergen           | Heidi Aasen                     |
| Berlin           | Florencio Chicote               |
| Bern             | Marianne Kauer                  |
| Cologne          | Susanne Bonnemann               |
| Copenhagen       | Mille Bie                       |
| Copenhagen       | Dina Staal                      |
| Cork City        | Siobhán O'Dowd                  |
| Cork City        | Kieran O Connell                |
| Esch-sur-Alzette | Dominique Vitali                |
| Frankfurt        | Nicole Peinz                    |
| Genk             | Bieke Vancraeynest              |
| Ghent            | Sabien Blondeel                 |
| Hanover          | Grace Proch                     |
| Hanover          | Maximilian Horn                 |
| Hanover          | Juliane Steeger                 |
| Heidelberg       | Danijel Cubelic                 |
| Heidelberg       | Marius Emmerich                 |
| Helsinki         | Paula Salmi                     |
| Helsinki         | Tuija Mustajärvi                |
| Kortrijk         | Lee Blomme                      |
| Kotor            | Anđela Ševaljević               |
| Kotor            | Milica Tomović                  |
| Lausanne         | Nils Kapferer                   |
| Ljubljana        | Tanja Hodnik                    |
| Ljubljana        | Simona Topolinjak               |
| Mannheim         | Sören Landmann                  |
| Mannheim         | Johannah Illgner                |
| Montpellier      | Fatma Nakib                     |
| Montpellier      | Valentine Costes                |
| Nuremberg        | Christine Burmann               |
| Oslo             | Betty Koreh                     |
| Paris            | Hélène Dureux                   |
| Paris            | Marine Perrin                   |
| Podgorica        | Mina Minić                      |
| Podgorica        | Andjela Radovanovic             |
| RCN              | Jose Manuel Rosas Vazquez       |
| Reykjavik        | Þórhildur Elínard. Magnúsdóttir |
| Roeselare        | Bert Fieux                      |
| Rotterdam        | Hicham El Abbas                 |
| Rotterdam        | Rinaldo Lopes-Brekemans         |
| Rotterdam        | Marije Pluijm                   |
| Sao Paulo        | Yuri Amaral                     |
| Vienna           | Wolfgang Wilhelm                |
| Vienna           | Florian Wibmer                  |
| Wiesbaden        | Stefan Kräh                     |
| Zurich           | Nathan Schocher                 |

# Day 1

## Thursday, November 2<sup>nd</sup>



## Opening and welcoming new members, introducing new members.

**Manuel Rosas Vázquez**, the managing director at Rainbow Cities Network, opens the meeting and welcomes the audience. It is requested that if anyone wishes to make an intervention during the conference, they should mention their name and the name of the city they are representing. Manuel introduces the new board member, **Pórhildur Elínard. Magnúsdóttir (Reykjavík)**; she thanks everyone for coming to the Annual Meeting and is looking forward to the next two days together.

Guðrún Elsa Tryggvadóttir and Joanna Marcinkowska from the Human Rights and Democracy Office of Reykjavík City wrote the minutes of the meeting.

Manuel introduces **Juliane Steeger (Hanover)**, the chair of the board of the network, and she delivers a speech: It is a pleasure to see you here for the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of Rainbow Cities. These meetings are not only to share best practices but also to be in a group of people who understands the importance of this work. Anti queer laws such as in Poland or Hungary are just the tip of the Iceberg. Hate speech is rising. We must work together. We have grown in the last five years, but our environment is also changing. We need to learn from each other. Juliane finally thanks the Reykjavík staff and the preparation team from Rotterdam.

Manuel asks everyone to tag Rainbow Cities Network on Instagram if they take pictures (@rainbowcitiesnetwork).

There are now 52 cities in the network around the world from 20 countries. This is a great achievement. We now welcome new members to our family.

**Pórhildur Elínard. Magnúsdóttir (Reykjavík)** welcomes new members joining the network this year and calls them on to the stage. They will one by one receive their certificates. New members are Podgorica, San Francisco, Genk, Lausanne, Montpellier, Gießen, Oldenburg, Bremen and Mechelen.

### The new members introduce themselves:

**Andjela Radovanovic (Podgorica)**: Good morning and thank you for inviting us here today. Thank you for accepting our membership, we are happy to be a part of the RCN. We are serious about making our city welcoming for LGBTQ people and make everyone feel accepted. It is also important for the city. We are the host of Pride in Montenegro for a long period of time, and this is important for us. We are looking forward for a successful partnership.

**Bieke Vancraynest (Genk)**: Proud to be member of the Rainbow network. In Genk we've worked towards the LGBTQ community for about 8 years. Now that we are part of the network it will be wonderful to say that we are a part of this work.

**Nils Kapferer (Lausanne)**: Thank you for this welcome. Lausanne is looking forward to this work. Now we can start working on various projects and work with other cities in Switzerland.

**Fatma Nakib (Montpellier)**: Je vais parler en français, there is a translation. Thank you for welcoming us into this network. Montpellier has an inclusive culture. We wanted to take part in the Network because we are sure that alone we go faster, but together we go further.

**Goedele Frans (Mechelen)**: We are happy to have a strong LGBTQI network. We have strong interest groups that we work closely with. We are going to focus on safety in public spaces, domains of social

inclusion and safety. We have partnerships with universities and high schools. We want to cooperate with artists. We have a new tool about story weaving. We have worked with sports, music festivals and other. We have a point of contact concerning violence and we have a bystander training.

**Manuel passes the microphone to the assembly, to give other members a chance to introduce themselves.**

**Yuri Amaral (Sao Paolo):** We really wanted to be represented here with you. Thank you, it is nice to meet you.

**Betty Koreh (Oslo):** Happy to be here. This is my first time here. We are two people in Oslo in our department working with diversity and inclusion. My work is to renew an action plan (proud and free). I am happy to be here today. Thank you.

**Meritxell Sàez Sellarès (Barcelona):** Glad to be here. Fantastic opportunity, thank you.

**Hélène Dureux (Paris):** Third time for me, and Marie from the delegation in Paris. Working on human rights. Here for the first time.

**Rinaldo Lopes-Brekelman (Rotterdam):** This year I had the opportunity to join my coworkers. I am happy to be here with you. Happy to be here, a lot of bad things are happening. It is good to see these forces together. I hope we will have a good meeting.

**Dina Staal (Copenhagen):** A new face to the network. Thank you, I am Dina, and this is Milla from Copenhagen. I represent the equality unit and Milla works with safety secretary. This is the first time for the two of us, but Copenhagen was also present last year. We look forward to learning about what you are doing in your cities.

**Florian Wimber (Vienna):** Last year I was not able to participate, happy to be here.

**Paula Salmi (Helsinki),** new in this field. I am here to listen and learn. We will be hosting next year in Helsinki.

**Lee Blomme (Kortrijk):** I started working for the project recently, but I am excited to learn from all of you and to be here with you.

**Bert Fieux (Roeselare):** Happy to be part of this network, the last few years around the world had seen some drawbacks. We are happy to be here and become stronger.

**Kieran O Connel (Cork City):** It is an honour to be here with a group of people trying to make the world a better place.

## Organizational items

### Annual Report 2022-2023

The annual report was sent to each city through email.

**Manuel (RCN):** We are now going to proceed. I would like to invite Juliane to the stage. We are coming to an important part. We must send our annual report each year. We've sent the report, we decided not to present it here today since it is too long. Are there any questions regarding the report?

What I can tell you is that we might have to change from the Netherlands to Germany. We are registered in the Netherlands, but we are having a problem with the taxes. In Germany we would not

have the same issues. This might be a topic for the next conference. We are growing and the income is growing as well. We want to remain a strong network and all our work must be legal.

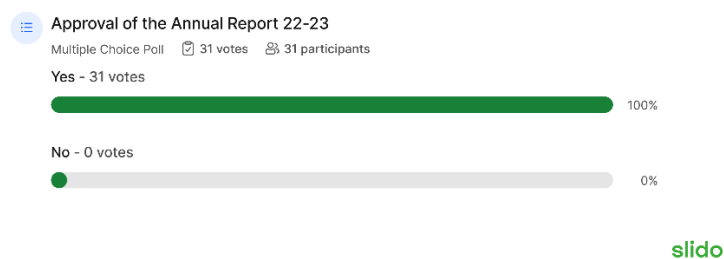
### Approval of the Annual Report

**Manuel (RCN)** reminds the assembly that even if there are several participants from each city, each city only gets one vote.

**Juliane (Hanover)** reminds participants that if members have any concerns, the board is open to any criticism.

Using a digital voting system, attendants approve the annual report. Each city gets one vote. Delegates from 31 cities are present at the meeting.

**31 cities voted in favour of the annual report. With that, the annual report 2022-2023 was approved (see figure 1).**



*Figure 1: Approval of the Annual Report 22-23*

### Photo Exhibition

The next vote is on choosing the topic for the photo exhibition of 2024. The choice is between:

1. Queer sports
2. Queer elders and pioneers
3. Visibility of bisexuality
4. Future challenges for the queer communities
5. Freedom to dream

Helsinki asks about topic nr. 2: There are two topics there, there might be young pioneers as well.

**Manuel (RCN):** The original title was changed since in this case the aim of the topic is to concern specifically the elderly.

Someone asks if they can abstain from voting, that is allowed.

**Q:** What do you expect from the cities? **Manuel (RCN):** the network has an exhibition every year. You send a picture, a poster, related to the topic. We send that all to Vienna and they create the photo exhibition.

**Florian Wibmer (Vienna):** This is a great opportunity to showcase the network.

**Q:** Picture with a story or just a picture? Can you write a few sentences? **Manuel (RCN):** you can write a few lines as well.

**The number of votes were 30. The topic of LGBTQ+ elders and pioneers were chosen as the next photo exhibition with 53% of votes.**

### Voting results (see figure 2):

1. Queer+ elders and pioneers – 53% (16 votes)
2. Queer sports – 17% (5 votes)
3. Freedom to dream – 17% (5 votes)
4. Visibility of Bisexuality – 10% (3 votes)
5. Future Challenges for the Queer communities – 3% (1 vote)

**Manuel (RCN)** informs the assembly that in the coming weeks they will receive detailed information about the photo exhibition.

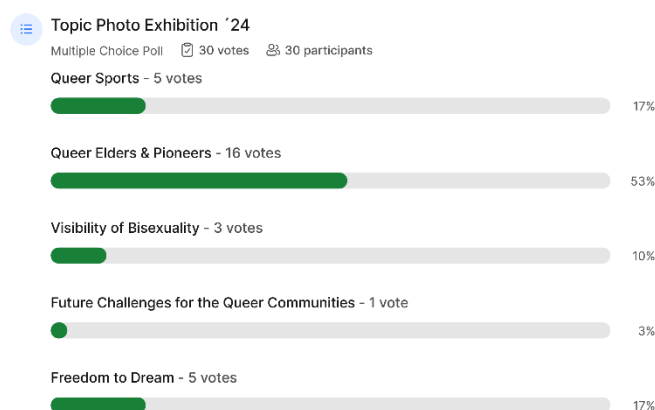


Figure 2: Photo Exhibition

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### Vote for New Host & Prep Host Cities for 2025

The cities that applied to host the annual meeting 2025 were Vienna, Paris, Montpellier, San Francisco, Bordeaux, and Mexico City.

Below are their speeches of candidacy.

**Vienna:** Vienna has been a part of the network since the beginning. We have already hosted and would like to do it again. There have been a lot of changes since last time, we would like to show you all of this. Vienna is also located in the middle of Europe which makes travelling easier.

**Paris:** The deputy mayor is now developing a new policy on inclusivity. In 2023 we funded 30.000 euros to NGOs in Paris. We have many interesting projects. The city is one of the first cities to have joined the network.

Paris is also well located and is easily reached. We have many things to show you. We have raised visibility of LGBTQ people. A new venue “La Bulle” is dedicated to everyone who experiences violence such as immigrants or LGBTQ people.

**Montpellier:** Montpellier has always been on the side of those who fight. The mayor flies the rainbow flag when possible and has the rainbow flag in his office. The fight for LGBTQ rights is in the cities DNA. We are committed to have an inclusive city. The city participates on several projects to do this. Montpellier is a historical city. The first association for young LGBTQ who have difficulties with coming out started in Montpellier. It is a city where police officers are trained to spot abuse. Promoting inclusion is our goal. We saw a delay for celebrating weddings during the pandemic since they can



only take place at the city hall. The mayor opened a new space for celebrating weddings where all kinds of couples can be united. 10 years ago, a new law was passed to introduce a marriage for all. We now accept marriages of same sex couples. Montpellier celebrated the first same sex marriage in France.

**San Francisco** did not attend the meeting, and therefore did not deliver a speech of candidacy.

**Bordeaux:** (sent a promotion video as they are not participating in person in Reykjavik). We just introduced a new anti-discrimination plan. We are fortunate to have many LGBTQ associations. We have many projects we would like to share with you. Our beautiful city would like to welcome you.

**Mexico City:** (sent a promotion video as they are not participating in person in Reykjavik). We will soon celebrate 10 years with the network and would like to be the first non-European city to host. We want to show the work of the network to America. We have a great history to share with you as well.

#### Questions and Answers for the cities proposing to host the next meeting:

A vote was held on whether to allow questions for the cities who applied to host the next meeting. Some participants pointed out that the discussion is not fair for every city as the representatives of Bordeaux and Mexico City were not present on the meeting.

#### Voting results:

- For questions: 17 votes
- Against questions: 6 votes.

Therefore, it was agreed that the meeting continued with asking questions.

The candidate cities were asked about their opinion on outcome of the annual meeting and why did they apply for holding the meeting.

- **Susanne (Cologne):** From the perspective of the board, are there any criteria that you think are an advantage?
- **Nils (Lausanne):** Said all the meetings have been in Europe, if we want to gather countries from outside Europe, we need to have our meetings in countries that are not in Europe.

**Manuel (RCN):** In the laws of the Network each city must attend the annual meeting. Sometimes cities cannot attend, so it might feel unfair to discuss this without them, but we should still discuss these issues. Because we understand restrictions make it difficult for countries to go out of Europe. We might try to have meetings in Europe every other year.

#### The participants answer the questions:

**Q:** How can the Rainbow City Network support your city during the annual meeting?

- **Vienna:** We would be very reachable and therefore be beneficial for you to attend. Perhaps more than 31 cities would be able to participate.
- **Paris:** Do not agree that it is fair to answer these questions. We are expecting a big change in the political environment for LGBTQ people therefore it would send strong message to host this meeting.
- **Montpellier:** In France politicians are strongly influenced by associations. In the south of France, we see that rights wing politics are on the rise. It would be important to us to show that we can still show tolerance and preserve the rights of LGBTQ people.

**Susanne Bonnemann (Cologne):** Will there be several rounds if there is not a clear majority?

**Manuel (RCN):** Yes. The cost of travel is the thing which follows the participation in the network. If the cities need the confirmation about the travel cost, they can get it from the board of the network.

The bylaws are not having anything about the majority in voting the host city – the network is growing so the simple majority is enough to choose the city. It is the first time there are 6 cities for the first time applying. The bylaws have to be reviewed – the group is to be formed.

**Yuri Amaral (Sao Paolo)** – Asks the meeting if there is another city outside from the Europe – except Sao Paolo, present in Reykjavik. Since there aren't any, this meeting is more of a European meeting, but we need to add a global perspective the network. We should focus on advantages on going outside Europe instead cost and troubles. It is important also for the cities outside of Europe.

**Heidelberg:** We should keep in mind the cities outside of Europe are also full members of the network and should have the opportunity to be seen. The network participation is an investment that pays at the end.

**Nils Kapferer (Lausanne):** Environmental question is huge. Important to be present to fight together against our common goal.

**Florencio Chicote (Berlin):** Addresses global challenges, likes what Mexico City said in their video. The network needs to think global.

**Manuel (RCN)** thanks for the debate and proceeds with the voting. The one not participating has no vote.

[Voting results for the host city of the annual meeting in 2025](#)

31 cities voted in the election of the host city of the annual meeting in 2025.

**With 52% of the vote, Mexico City won the election.**

**Voting results (see figure 3):**

- Mexico City: 52% (16 votes)
- Montpellier: 26% (8 votes)
- Vienna: 10% (3 votes)
- Paris: 10% (3 votes)
- San Francisco: 3% (1 vote)
- Bordeaux: 0% (0 votes)

**Manuel (RCN):** Is there anyone here who would like to host the prep meeting for 2025? Prep meeting is 6 months before the annual meeting.

**Copenhagen will host the prep meeting for 2025 annual meeting.**

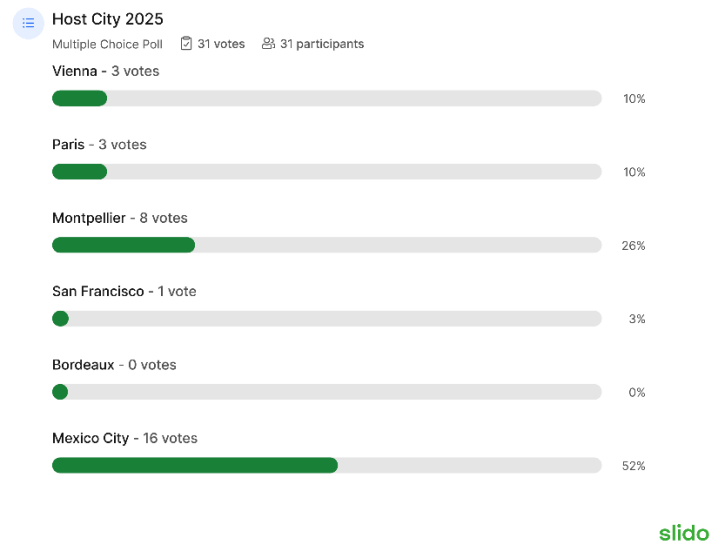


Figure 3: Host City 2025

## Online infrastructure and how to use it.

The mailing list and its features is explained.

**Manuel (RCN):** Presents the features and asks all the participant to update their profiles so members of the network would get to know each other. Manuel explains the chat option in the online infrastructure. Conversations can happen in the app. In the past many of have suggested that we should have more cooperation, this is a tool that we can use. It is faster and more friendly than sending emails. Manuel reminds everyone that the goal of this online platform is for the cities to be able to reach out to each other. This is a closed platform only for Network Partner cities.

Manuel tells the assembly that their first message will have to be approved by him.

**Þórhildur (Reykjavík)** tells participants that lunch is to be served, and after it the group will take a walk together to the Rainbow Road (Skólavörðustígur) for a photoshoot.

**- Lunch break & Photoshoot at the Rainbow Road –**

## Creating a Welcoming and Inclusive Environment in a Growing Network.

**Manuel (RCN):** Introduces the next agenda workshops.

**Johannah (Mannheim)** talks about the network which consists of 52 members – and the development of the network, which is still young. The network needs a good working environment for the annual meeting; diversity and inclusion are needed for the network to work better on. The network needs to see as a group how to work better on diversity and inclusion. First, we must start by knowing where we are now. Therefore, a questionnaire was sent out before the meeting, to take a temperature of the participants. 26 people answered. It is part of a bigger process. Members and the board are going to work on a strategy forming process.

The results of the questionnaire show us that that the group is diverse, and it is going to be carried out every year. In the future we will have all the people from the cities working with the network to have a full picture of the network members.

### **Workshops**

The participants are divided into 4 groups – the group leaders Tale, Siobhán, Johannah and Juliane take to their groups to separate rooms where the workshops are going to be held.

### **Speed dating among members starts.**

As feedback from previous meetings, it was decided to have a speed dating session to be able to break the ice between the participants. It will also help to have a successful first learning session. The speed dating will take 25 minutes – after the bell, people move around to be able to chat with the others.

- **Example of the questions:** What do you love most about your job?; How do you best connect with others?; What do you like the most about the people you work with?; What are your strengths?; What is your day-to-day work routine?; What do you think you have to offer those around you?

The speed dating session was very successful.

### **Learning session 1**

The assembly went into three workshops in Reykjavik City Hall and discussed following topics:

- I. Effective intersectional city politics (Cork)
- II. Tackling extremism and hate against the queer community (Heidelberg)
- III. LGBTQ+ Elders; support and services (Nuremberg)

Recap of the learning sessions can be found on page 14.

After the learning sessions, the mayor of Reykjavik hosted a reception for the attendees of the Rainbow City Network annual meeting.

## Day 2

### Friday November 3<sup>rd</sup>





**Þórhildur (Reykjavík)** reopens the meeting and welcomes all participants again. She asks the audience again to mention the name of the city in interventions for the purpose of the minutes.

**Keynote speech is delivered by Þorbjörg Þorvaldsdóttir**, advocacy officer, of Samtökin '78 (The National Queer Organization of Iceland) on the Current situation and Solidarity with the Trans-Community. Þorbjörg speaks about the importance of solidarity within the queer community. There has been a backlash and we need to stand together with the groups within the community who are experiencing hate speech or dangerous speech.

Þorbjörg proposed the question “What can cities do?”

Cities can:

- Assist LGBTI community building – provide venues for the LGBTI+ community. Having a place to do the work. Housing for events as well. Helping with the organisation of youth centres by offering housing. Older queer people will need care and they should not have to hide who they are.
- Protect and celebrate Pride – Cities can celebrate Pride publicly; this is very important. In Iceland this is a family event which is quite unique. Pride in Iceland is supported by the City of Reykjavík.
- Pave the way for LGBTI+ inclusive facilities and services – Sensitivity training for staff. Make sure that when LGBTI+ people need services they are not met with prejudice. This can also be inclusive bathrooms and changing rooms. Also, to gather data, to see how LGBTI+ are kids thriving in schools for example and what are the experiences of the community.
- Make an effort to humanize the LGBTI population – Cities can try to rehumanise the LGBTI+ population. Include queer families in the community. Inclusive campaigns are important. Making inclusive forms that people have to fill in is another part of this, if there is no box for you to put a cross in it is dehumanizing.
- Take a stand and push for change – Cities can often go further than states. Italian cities are now registering same sex parents who have had their children abroad as the parents of their kids. This is not something that is possible in Italy as a whole. In Reykjavík we decided to make all staff bathrooms gender neutral, before a regulation from the government came into action. This highlighted the issue.
- Reach out and listen to experts – It is important to foster community and talk to the organisations, ask them what do you need?

**Nils (Lausanne):** Asks about desensitisation, homo nationalism? The wording queer? The use of the Pride festival?

**Þorbjörg (S'78):** Homonationalism is a huge problem. It made people believe that nothing more can be improved. The community could not get funding or to get people to listen because everyone thought the fight was over, everything was done. Queer is a triggering word for many people in an international setting. In Iceland we say “hinsegin”, a direct translation of the word queer, which has not been used violently as elsewhere. The Pride festival can be difficult for people who do not feel a connection to the word. Some people may not want to be so visible which is valid.

**Johannah (Mannheim):** This is not a question but a comment. Everything seems very rainbowy in Reykjavík, for a lot of cities we are not used to seeing so many rainbow displays. It is nice but also just

a display of colour. What is behind that? It is interesting to hear about how it was so uncool to be homophobic in 2008 when you came out. Most cities here never reached that point.

**Florencio (Berlin):** Asks about dangerous speech and free speech? Regarding the increase in hate crimes, what is your strategy? What are the next steps?

**Þorbjörg (S'78):** There is always a discussion about the freedom of speech. The strategy is counter speech. The hard part about it is inflammatory things and lies spread faster than the correct information. There needs to be a rally of the allies. We have a project on Facebook called the predator watch. People for that group join online discussions and drown out the negativity. We need to make it socially unacceptable to speak like this.

About hate crime, we are working closely with the police. The root is the atmosphere, the lies, the misinformation, and the allowance to be hateful publicly. We see a rise in hate crimes and a change in debate at the same time. The root is the debate. There needs to be a shift back in the public discourse.

## Recap from learning session first block

Effective intersectional city politics (Cork)

**Shiobhán O'Dowd (Cork)** was the group leader.

Short introduction: definition of intersectional "An approach that recognizes the interconnectedness of social categorizations such as race, class and gender in individuals and groups, as well as the fact that different systems of discrimination are overlapping and interdependent." Taken from *Rainbow Cities in Action, Policy Guidelines for Municipalities* – useful glossary of terms included.

Discussion this morning about host city 2025 and this afternoon about creating a welcome and inclusive environment helps us realise that the Rainbow Cities Network itself has work to do in relation to intersectionality.

Cork, because of nature of local government in Ireland, works on Inter-Agency basis which assists also in intersectional approaches. Two key LGBTI+ NGOs central to Inter-Agency and in light of increasing transphobia, and anti-lgbtq rhetoric have fully embraced intersectional approaches – this feeds into Inter-Agency ways of seeing and addressing issues.

### 1- Defining problems and challenges

Each participant used two post-It is to define problems & challenges for the city and its citizens.

- i) City Administration//Organisational Challenges – emerged as the largest cluster.
  - Silo ways of thinking and operating
  - Intersectionality – issues too broad for one Dept but difficult to share or combine resources.
  - Eg LGBTI+ Homelessness requires Equality Section and Housing
  - Cross cutting issues but responses often are not.
  - Budgets/Revenues – Limited budgets makes funding for smaller (numerically) groups experiencing multiple discriminations impossible/v difficult.
  - Not concerned by the topic – no lgbtiq in my Dept, not enough diversity within city administrations
  - Problem often defined as too small population subset – eg LGBTI+ Migrant youth
- ii) Lack of understanding/knowledge of intersectionality emerged as second biggest cluster.
  - Difficulties in understanding leads to difficulties in practising intersectionality.

Not concerned by intersectionality – single focus.

Culture: Heterosexist, patriarchal, capitalist society dominant cultural frame – intersectional equality understanding competing with this cultural bias.

**iii) Intersectionality not embedded in policy plans or political frameworks.**

LGBTI+ NGOs often can be resistant to working intersectionality – doing/working with part of community they've always worked with.

Challenge of including everybody in a real way.

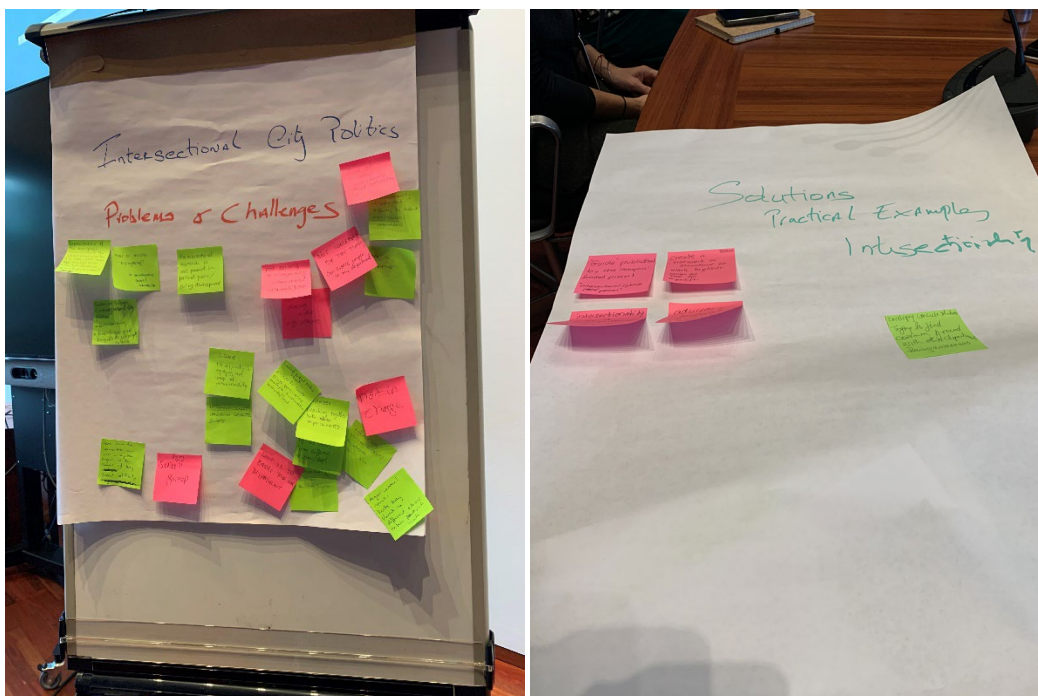
**2 – Developing concrete solutions & recommendations for cities**

Two working Groups as room structure dictated –

- i) Limited time, which was frustrating for everyone – mechanisms of continuing these discussions via Rainbow Cities Network – working group on Intersectionality.
- ii) Need to address silo thinking & ways of working in local administrations.  
Create Intersectional Network – include Women's Dept/LGBTIQ Dept/Migrant Dept
- iii) Advisory Group: Draw together heads or leads in Departments.

Good Practise Examples:

- i) Berlin Municipal Guide – Intersectional LGBTIQ Standard Protocols
- ii) Intersectional Networks/Advisory Groups – Berlin, Cork – InterAgency
- iii) Possible RCN Network/Working Group to share learnings, devise solutions.





## Tackling extremism and hate against the queer community (Heidelberg)

**Danijel Cubelic (Heidelberg)** was the group leader.

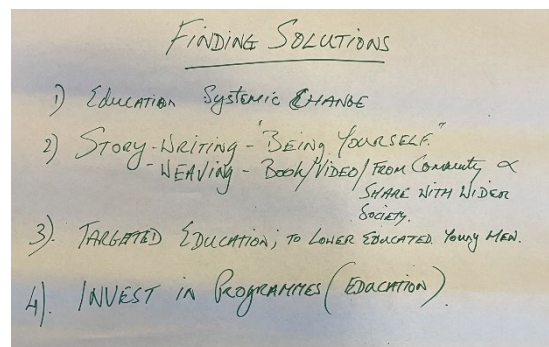
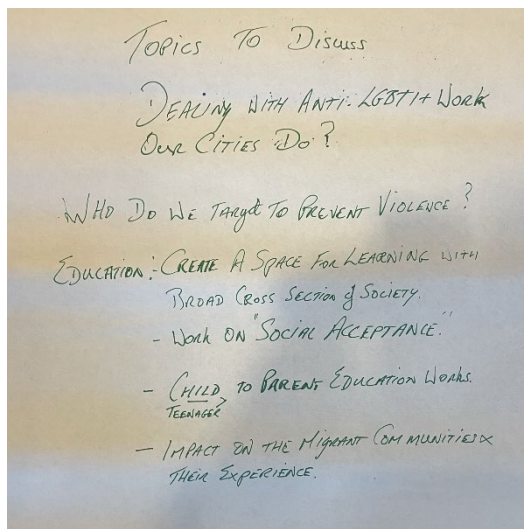
Many of the things we discussed were already mentioned in the inspiring talk this morning. When we talk about hate crime, we share a lot of problems. There is much more substantial hate. The growing visibility leads to violence. Should we then be less visible? This is what people are saying in our communities. We need to have a steady working group on the project. We must rethink our educational programs in schools for example to adapt to this new form of hate that is spreading.

### Who do we target to prevent violence?

- Education:
  - Create a space for learning with broad cross section of society.
  - work on "social acceptance"
  - Child/teenager to parent education works.
  - Impact on the migrant communities & their experience.

### Finding solutions

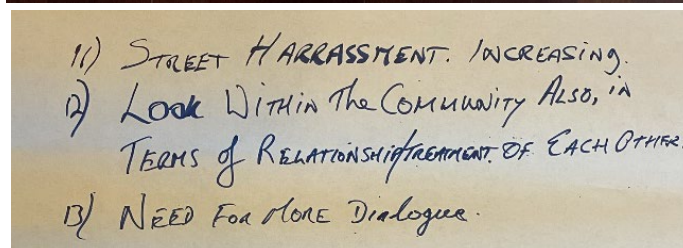
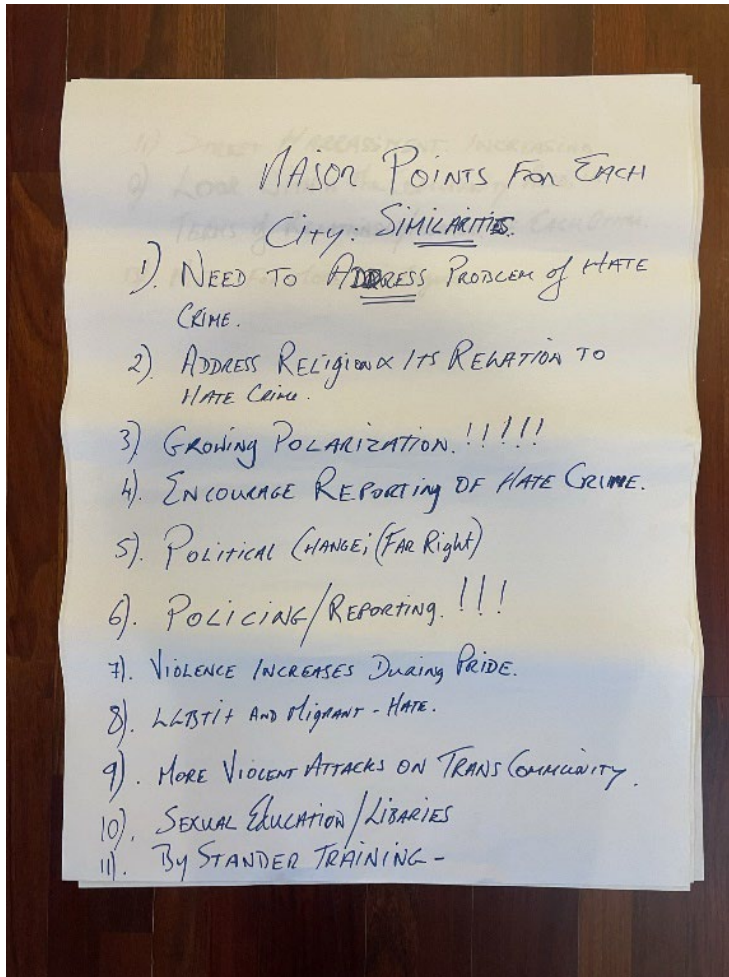
- 1) Education systematic change.
- 2) Story-writing – "being yourself".
  - a. Weaving – book/video/from community & share with wider society
- 3) Targeted education; to lower educated young men.
- 4) Invest in programmes (education).



### Points for each city: Similarities.

- 1) Need to address problem of hate crime.
- 2) Address religion and its relation to hate crime.
- 3) Growing polarization.
- 4) Encourage reporting of hate crime.
- 5) Political change; (far right).
- 6) Policing/reporting!
- 7) Violence increases during pride.

- 8) LGBTI+ and migrant – hate.
- 9) More violent attacks on trans community.
- 10) Sexual education/libraires.
- 11) By stander training.
- 12) Street harassment increasing
- 13) Look within community, also in terms of relationship/treatment of each other.
- 14) Need for more dialogue.

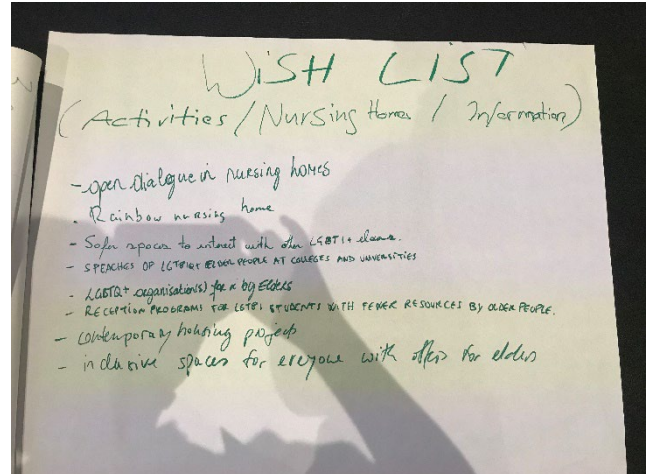


LGBTIQ+ Elders; support and services (Nuremberg)  
**Christine Burmann (Nuremberg)** was the group leader.

The group made a wish list. We need to empower ourselves and the community to make more of these. It is important to do networking, to connect the community to the senior workers in administration. Elder councils should also be used, there should be a seat there for LGBTI people. Social events are also great.

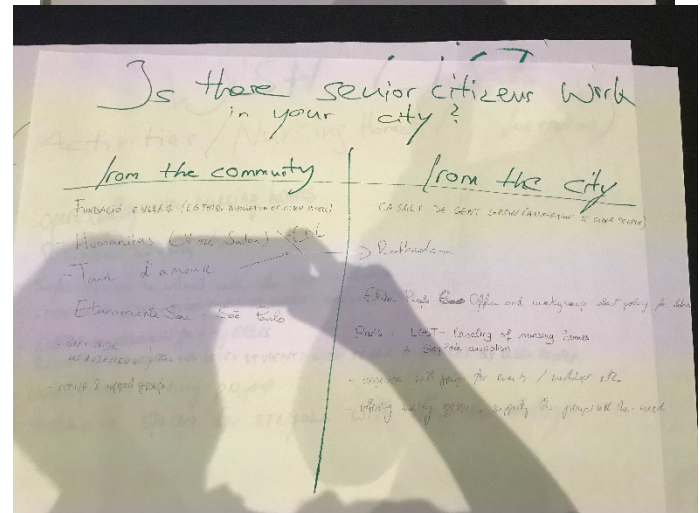
### Wish list

- Open dialogue in nursing homes.
- Rainbow nursing homes.
- Safer spaces to enter with other LGBTIQ+ elders.
- Speeches of LGBTIQ+ elder people at colleges and universities.
- LGBTIQ+ organisations for and by elders.
- Reception programs for LGBTI students with fewer resources by older people.
- Contemporary housing projects.
- Inclusive spaces for everyone with and for elders.



### Solutions:

- A regular queer seat at the elder's council
- Exchange between municipal senior citizen work and the queer community
- Roundtable with the queer community and stakeholders in the elderly and care sector
- Trainings for municipal senior citizen work and for the community for example to establish senior friendly pride and leisure activities.
- awareness-trainings for nursing and retirement homes
- Queer volunteer visiting service for queer seniors.
- Creating visibility in nursing homes via flags and watching movies like „Brokeback Mountain“ e.g.
- Biographical work
- Starting to archive the Stories of queer Elders.





## Meeting Local NGOs

**Manuel (RCN)** welcomes everybody after the lunch break. He welcomes onto stage the three non-governmental organisations that are presenting. After the presentation, there will be a panel discussion. The three NGOs are Trans Iceland, Women's Association Iceland, and The National Queer Organisation of Iceland.

Trans-Ísland (Trans-Iceland)

**Ólöf Bjarki Antonar (they/them), president of Trans Iceland presented.**

The organisation was founded in 2007 and is run by the trans community. The board consists of trans people. They focus on general human rights. Their work is based on volunteers and received the Human Rights Award from Reykjavik City in 2023. The Human Rights Awards are given out to NGOs, institutions or persons who notably defended human rights.

Their work is both through administrative advocacy and community-based advocacy.

The administrative advocacy is mostly based on comments on parliamentary bills and legislation, active communication with politicians, active communication with public administration, local governments, police, trans sports, and trans inclusive locker rooms etc. School events – on the local level

Community based advocacy – articles, public debates in press. Trans Iceland attends events, organizes events that trans people can afford and participates in Reykjavik Pride. They also distribute information and talk to health care providers and insurance companies and assist with legal forms.

Kvenréttindafélag Íslands (Women's Association Iceland)

**Birta Ósk Hönnudóttir (they/them), vice-representative of WAI presented.**

Iceland has a reputation of being the paradise for women, we use global gender gap index – World Economic Forum 2023. This measure measures just cis men and women.

WAI was founded in 1911 – to make men and women even politically.

In the recent years, more legislation in Iceland has passed on the matter. The act on Gender Autonomy was passed by Althing in 2019 and it provides for the right of persons to define their gender. Since then, we talk about men, women, and a 3<sup>rd</sup> gender.

Representation in parliament was even, also participation in the labour force is more equal and in 60's. Grass root organisations play a big role in this change.

The women's strike has been held already for 6 times. 1975, 1985, 2005, 2010, 2016, 2018 and in 2023. This year it was the first time non-binary persons were included, women and non-binary people struck for their rights. Around 60.000 to 100 000 women and non-binary people gathered downtown to protest the gender pay gap and gender violence.

The Icelandic Feminist movement recognized the situation of non-binary people and how they are discriminated by the patriarchy like women. Non-binary people are different situation than women and the strike rightly addressed their situation and their place in society.

Samtökin '78 (The National Queer Organization)

**Daníel E. Arnarsson (he/him), Executive Director of S78 presented.**

The S'78 began in Denmark in 1975. The founder was harassed in Reykjavik, so he decided to move to abroad and got to know similar organisation there.

- Our goals – equal rights for all, visibility, full protection, professional services. We are happy that our organisation is involving all queer people.
- Our service: counselling and support, education and training, advocacy and legal work, community for all, youth work, history, and culture.
- The service has grown the most in the past few years.
- The NGO does counselling, they employ psychologists, lawyers, family counsellors for everybody needing the service. They also have contracts with municipalities – education schools – kids but also staff members. Soon the organization will introduce a new program for companies.

Daníel describes the organizations work on the 2019 Gender autonomy act – it took 5 years of work – regulations are still being updated according to laws. At the organization they have youth work and work with different groups aged 10-12, 13-15, 15-18.

Now there are 7-8 people in full time position at the organization, and 20 people are contractors and do education.

Daníel describes the challenges the organization has faced:

- Vast growth in few years.
- Government and municipalities.
- Building a good workplace – NGO works as you know for less money and in worst conditions.
- Clear vision for future.

Questions for the NGOs

**Florencio (Berlin):** Asks Birta about gender in constitution, the equal status of men and women, and all genders. Also, which group is the most vulnerable to in the labour market and health care.

- **Birta (WAI):** Women is subjected to violence, immigrant women, refugees, and trans women are the groups we focus on.
- **Ólöf (TI):** Violence is more visible against trans women especially disabled trans women. Immigrants and refugees are also a vulnerable group.
- **Daníel (S'78):** Trans people are not getting health services which has an influence on their mental health. We see that intersex and asylum seekers from Africa are more often victims of violence.

**Florencio (Berlin):** Ask about LGBTQ+ refugees in Iceland.

- **Birta (WAI):** Recourses we are mostly serving asylum seekers, refugees are under minority stress. New changes have been passed through the laws on foreign

persons that makes Iceland more closed for specific countries. Systematic racism is a known problem– the colour of your skin does have a lot of influence on the decision.

- **Ólöf (TI):** Trans and queer people are discriminated by the authorities – the government uses the Dublin regulations to send people the streets in countries they came to first. According to new laws the asylum seekers are losing all the support and are sent to streets.
- **Daníel (S'78):** We just won a case against the Directorate of Immigration where asylum seekers had to proof that they were gay. The District court decided that the Directorate of Immigration had wrongly not believed the homosexuality of an asylum seeker.

**Kieran (Cork):** What works in communication between NGOs and city councils?

- **Daniel (S'78):** We are lucky in Reykjavik, where it's a small community. We know each other and if you know somebody– you just contact them. The current city council is very open, and the city has done a lot for the community. We get invited to collaborations and there is a lot of communication, The Human Rights and Democracy Office is in good contact, and Reykjavik is ahead of the state and other municipalities. We've had a contract with Reykjavik City since 2005
- **Ólöf (TI):** adds the same, Trans Iceland feels included we don't have to knock on doors, rather the city knocks on ours.

**Natan (Zurich):** Asks Birta if they can elaborate on trans and non-binary people and women working together. In Swiss strikes there was a controversy on invisibility of other groups.

- **Birta (WAI):** The debate that trans and other groups make the women invisible makes no sense for me. The Icelandic Feminist Movement has always been with trans women. But we know – we must be in this together it is the same battle with different lenses but also have a lot in common.  
The one referring to feminism and being against trans have never been a part of feminism movements.
- **Daníel (S'78):** The Icelandic WAI has never been a part of the anti-trans movement that is visible in Europe. Daniel also talks about the non-paid work of human rights NGOs – if you are in the committee on building bridges you get paid, otherwise not.

End of discussion panel with the NGOs.

**Manuel (RCN)** introduces a small plan change. Svandís (Reykjavik) a former board member has arrived at City Hall. The board gathers on stage and thanks her for being a part of the board and for being in Reykjavik which has been amazing.

## Learning session 2

**Manuel (RCN) introduces the workshops and thanks moderators of learning sessions.**

Learning session 2

There are three workshops:

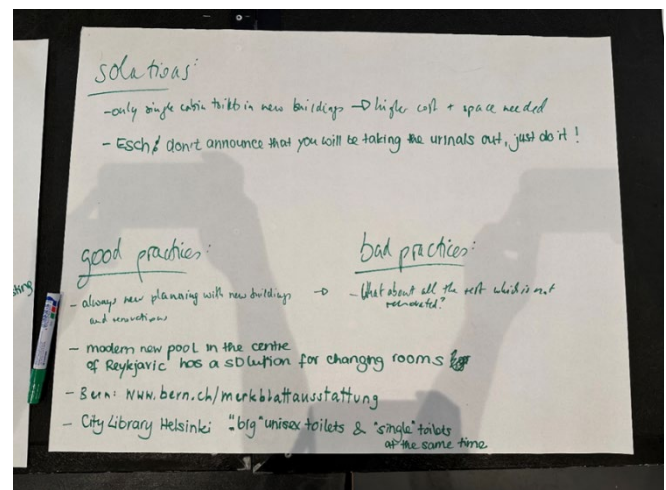
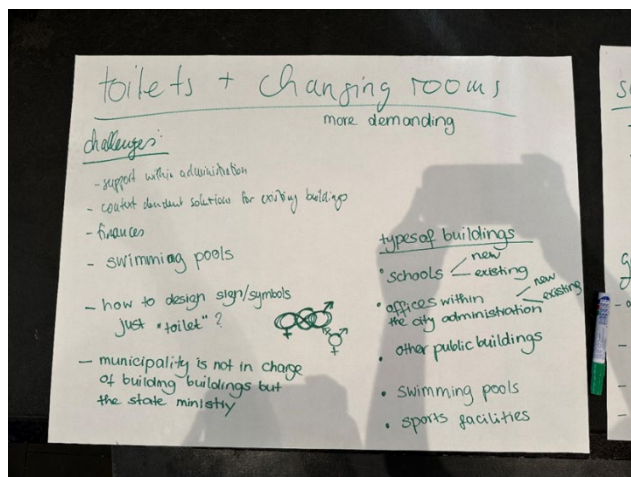
- IV. Moving beyond the gender binary in city administration (Heidelberg)
- V. LGBTIQ+ Homelessness (Berlin)
- VI. Rainbow Centres & Spaces, how to facilitate a diverse queer centre (Sao Paolo)

Moving beyond the gender binary in the city administration (Heidelberg)

Marius Emmerich presents.

Changing rooms, toilets are more demanding.

Early in the conversation, the group concluded that these issues depend on national laws, meaning that limits how much the cities can do. The role of the city needs to be considered: as an employer and service provider. The challenges are financial resources and differences in responsibilities between cities. Types of buildings are different, which includes different challenges.



**Good practises include:**

- New planning with new buildings and renovations.
- In Reykjavík there are gender neutral changing rooms in swimming pools.
- Bern: [www.bern.ch/merkblattausstattung](http://www.bern.ch/merkblattausstattung)
- City library Helsinki: "big" unisex toilets and "single toilets at the same time."

**Solutions:**

- Only single cabin toilets in new buildings -> Higher costs + space needed.
- Esch: Don't announce that the urinals will be taken out, just do it.

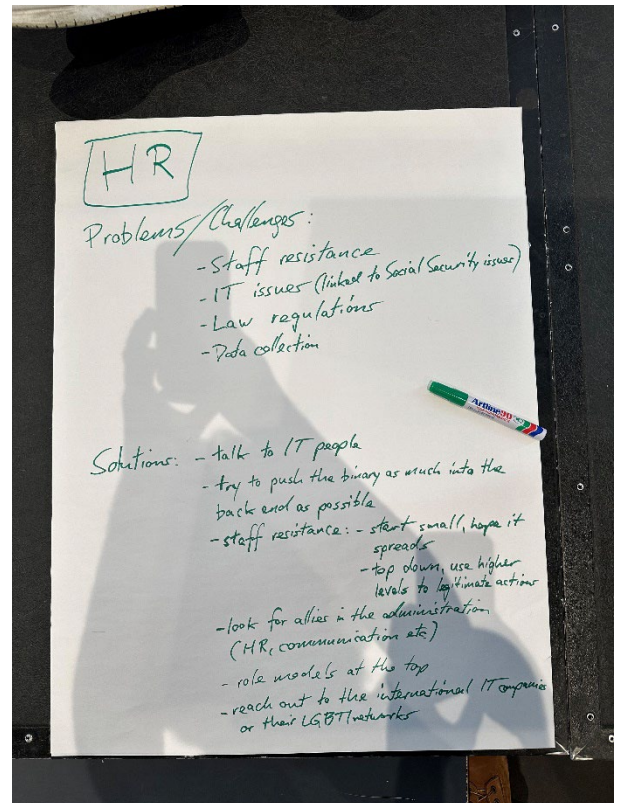
Message – build alliances within city administration provide guidelines for city administration. We would like to talk about it more – can we share files some cities are doing something about it already. We should work on it further.

## HR problem and challenges

- Staff resistance
- IT issues
- Law regulations

## Solutions

- Conversation with IT.
- try to push the binary as much into the back end as possible.
- Staff resistance: start small, hope it spreads; top down, use higher levels to legitimate actions.
- Look for allies in administration.
- Role models at the top.
- reach out to international IT companies or their LGBTI networks.



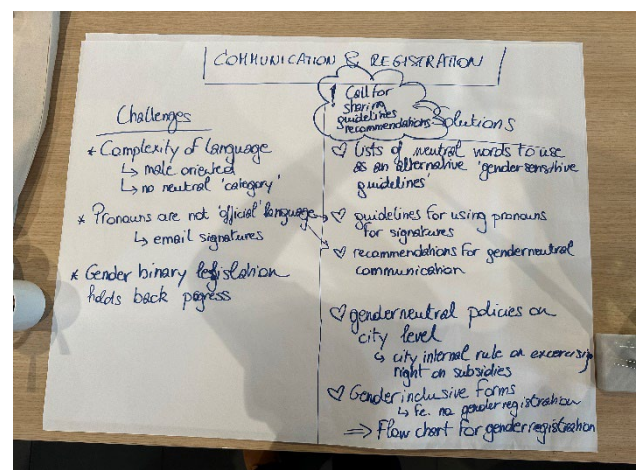
## Communication and registration

### Challenges

- Complexity of language; male oriented; no neutral category
- Pronouns are not official language; email signatures.
- Gender binary legislation holds back process.

### Solutions – Call for sharing guidelines and recommendations:

- Lists of neutral words to use as an alternative, “gender sensitive guidelines.
- Guidelines for using pronouns for signatures.
- Recommendations for gender-neutral communications.
- Gender-neutral policies on city level; city internal rule on exercising right on subsidies.
- Gender inclusive forms; f.e. no gender registration.
- Flow chart for gender registration.





## LGBTIQ+ Homelessness (Berlin)

Florencio presents.

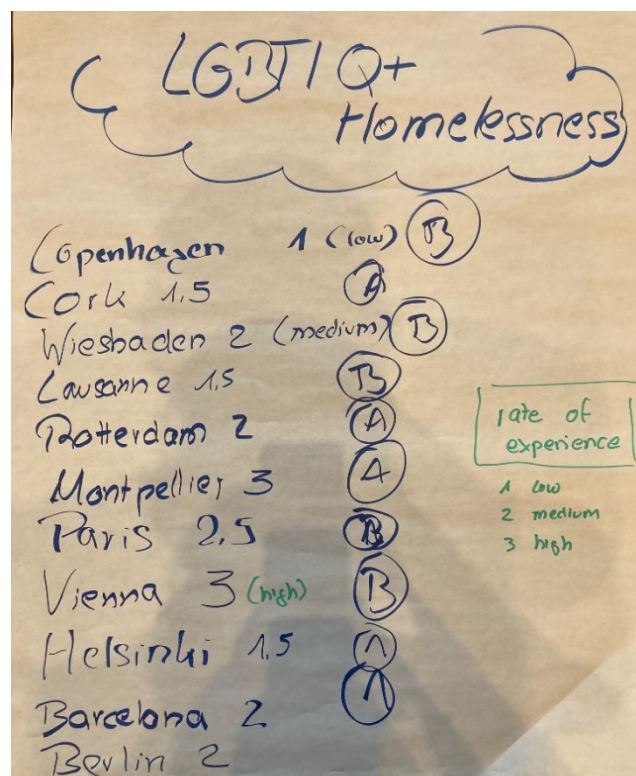
The workshop was a positive big surprise, all the cities had an awareness. Had a ranking on experience depending on what which city does in the issue.

### Lessons learned:

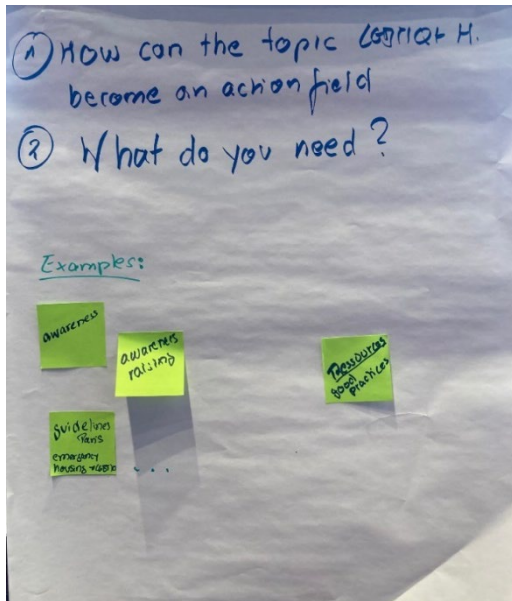
- Numbers are important, we need data.
- Definitions are important, housing, homelessness,
- Other groups of homelessness have some “solutions.” F.x. For women.
- Find an agreement within the city, talk to different departments.
- Making solidarity visible, using a symbol or an icon in the places where homeless people are or in the shelters. They may not out themselves as LGBT+.
- Train social workers and those NGOs who work with the group.

### Resources and good practises were found within cities participating.

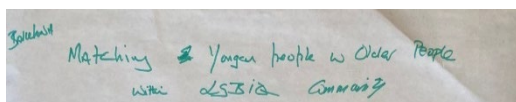
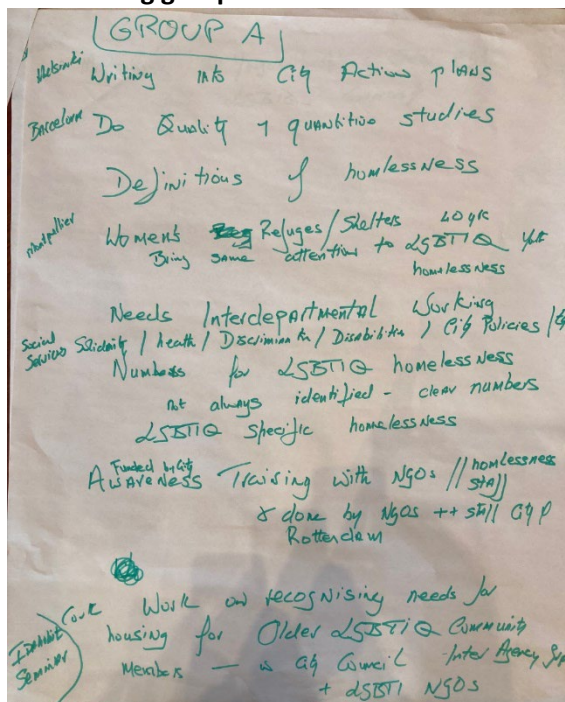
- Paris has f.x. guideline.
- Training program for social workers in Rotterdam.
- Study going on to collect data in Berlin.
- Montpellier, women’s refugees’ shelters, bringing LGBT youth.
- Barcelona, matching older people with younger people within LGBTQ who are in danger of homelessness.



## Working group session – two working groups (A & B):



### Working group A:



Helsinki: Writing into city action plans.

Barcelona: Do studies on the topic

Montpellier: Womens refugees/shelters 40 years. Bring same attention to LGBTQ+ homelessness.

Needs interdepartmental working.

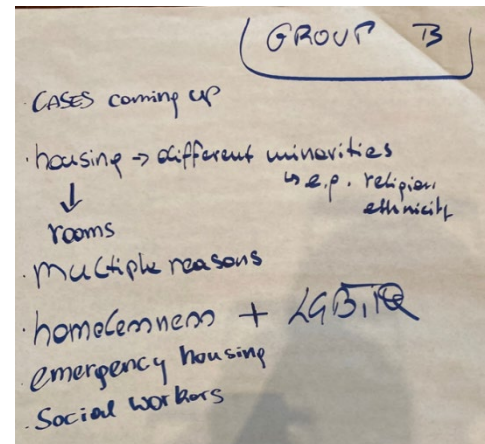
Numbers for LGBTQ+ homelessness not always identified.

Funded by city awareness. Training with NGOs and homelessness staff, done by NGOs+ city staff Rotterdam.

Cork: Work on recognising needs for housing for older LGBTQ+ community members with city council, Inter Agency group+ LGBTQ+ NGOs

Barcelona: Matching younger people with older people with LGBTQ+ community.

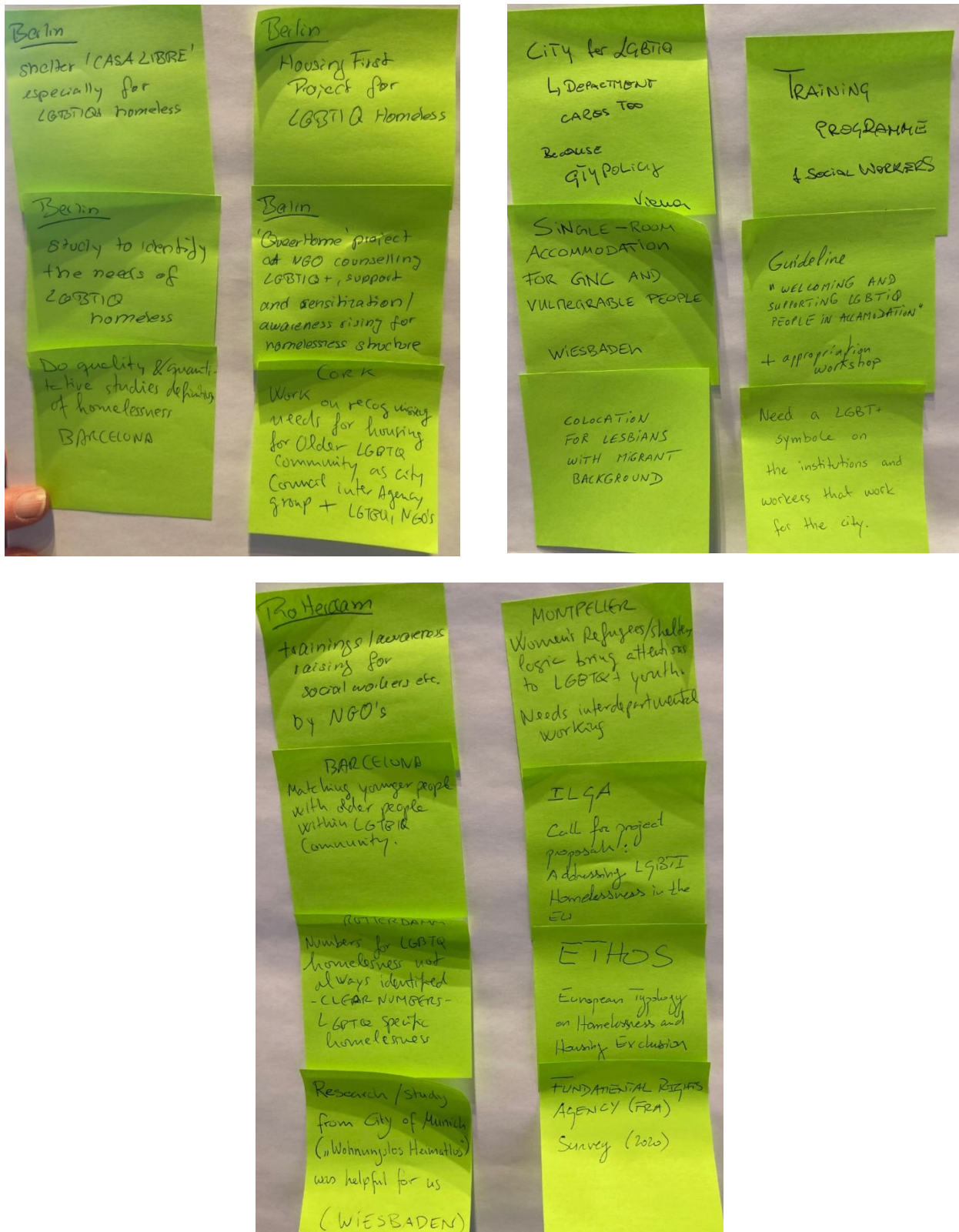
- Cases coming up.
- Housing -> different minorities; ep. religious ethnicities.
  - Rooms
- Multiple reasons for homelessness
- Homelessness + LGBTIQ emergency housing
- Social workers



# Ressources & good practices



## Resources and good practices in the cities – in detail:



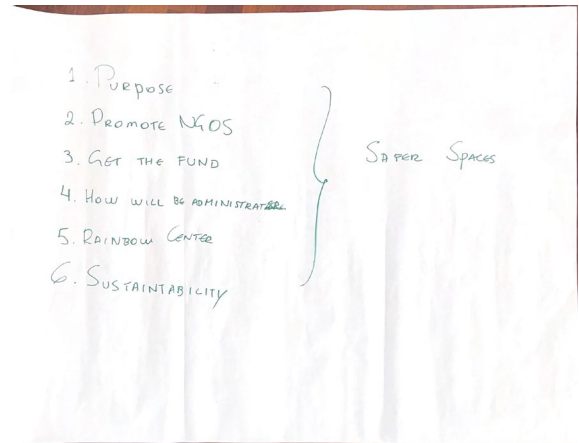
Rainbow Centres & Spaces, how to facilitate a diverse queer centre (Sao Paolo)

Yuri presents and suggests that this work is taken further at the next annual meeting.

There are five rainbow centres in Sao Paolo, each has 15 people working who aid LGBTQ population, legal, psychological etc.

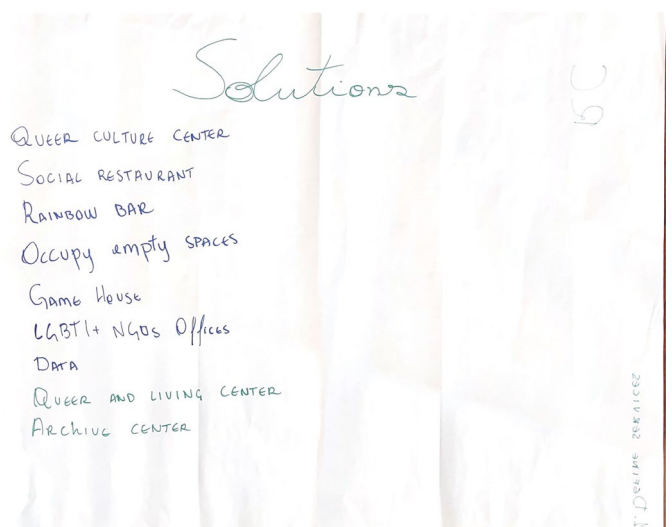
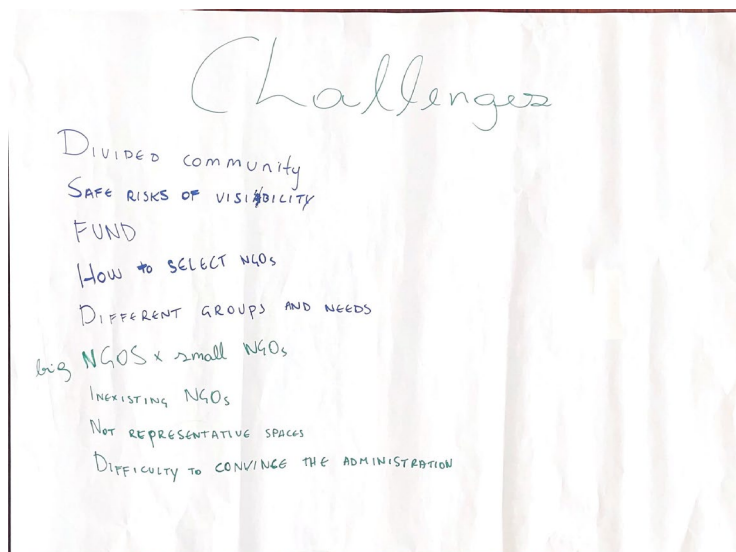
The workshop did a draft of six steps how to have a rainbow centre.

- Step 1: Defining a purpose: Why is it important for your city, what services are provided.
- Step 2: Promote NGOs that can be able to demonstrate the centres and cooperate with city administration.
- Step 3: Get a fund, because it's difficult.
- Step 4: Gather data.
- Step 5: How to administrate.
- Step 6: How to find the facility, functioning years ahead.



In cities where you can't do a rainbow centre,

because of challenges, find safer spaces like a gay bar or youth centre, have activities etc.



## Rainbow Cities in Action brochure

The brochure is a toolbox to use. Cities are of different size and administration structure, and it is for them to use. The brochure is for every LGBTQ officer and other working for the case of LGBT+.

Tools in the toolbox are divided into policy strands and policy fields.

Policy Strands includes 4 tools, policy Fields includes 13 tools.

The brochure includes good practise examples and as well as a glossary. We need facts and numbers to back our claim, so we included argumentative tools.

This is a project that took over 2 years, ranged over the cities and NGOs were invited to participate. Covid influenced the work of it, they only had a couple of months to make the actual brochure.

Grace felt honoured to be asked by the board to make the brochure. The size of the brochure was something she thought about before making it. While writing it, she realized that this was not a small brochure, its more than sixty pages but in it there is so much valuable expertise and knowledge.

A lot of Taiwanese cities were really interested in participating in the RCN after seeing the brochure.

*Discussion about the brochure:*

**Goedele Frans (Mechelen):** asks about how to use p. 47 of the brochure.

**Siobhán (Cork):** Probably a lot of states and cities have quality policies, Ireland has a framework for human rights and quality. The thing about neutrality, you cannot be neutral about hate and most states have strong statements about that. Great effort from the cities in the network especially cities that hosted policy workshops, thanks them.

**Florencio (Berlin):** Thanks for it. Thinks it is perfect, the hiccups are a part of it. Likes to reach out to cities in the network that share the same friend cities as Berlin to send them the brochure. Says that they collected so many good practises a treasure box in Cork. It would be nice to see something happening with this treasure box.

**Susanne (Cologne):** Big thank you for me as well. I would like to ask the board what they learned from it. What are the lessons? Many meetings and thinks the cost of traveling puts pressure on the cities.

**Grace (Hanover):** In Cork we talked about putting all the good practises in the brochure and talked about having it online.

**The board answers the questions. Johannah (Mannheim):** This is something we took from this vast number of good practises. This is based on what we are doing anyways, we do one pagers now, highlighting good practises from each city. One of our core things in this network is to collect that. A digital tool on the website could be a helpful tool – grouping good practises. We have the treasure box already and next up is how we are using it in the future.

**Juliane (Hanover):** Answers the question as well. The funding – She was on maternity leave so there was a bit of confusion on the board and the support was not as she liked. The numbers were different from what she calculated. There was not paid a euro extra for the project. There is no funding from the public sector, it is nearly impossible to get right now. We learned a lot from all of this, about the time-consuming travelling.

**Marius (Heidelberg):** We were not one of the cities of the original list of participants, we were extra contributing city because we joined the network after the decision of making it. For us in Heidelberg it carries fruits that we participated in making this first official guideline of this sort. The travel was invested in by our city. The guidelines have already been presented to city council. They were all very much interested in it. This is written by experts and is not based on opinions; it shows us all the things that we do not have capacity for. Next year we will have participative forum for this brochure, getting in touch with communities to see how this impacts them. This provides us arguments to get more funding into the issues.

**Danijel (Heidelberg):** The document is for the whole city government. The next city report is included there, we had a meeting with the director of the office and presented it with her. I recommend to everybody to work with it. Introduce it as well to the community. This gives us an accountability check.

**Manuel (RCN):** Thanks the cities for investing time and resources.

**Andjela (Podgorica):** We are happy to be a member of the network. With colleagues from Kotor this brochure was translated into Montenegrin. We hope that we have a chance to implement it into our policies.

**Florencio (Berlin):** Hopefully, it will be more efficient next time. The toolbox is something that we can give back to the cities. Would like to follow up on that. Digital tools sponsored by Bergen can be used. I can ask the ministry for the technical part. Every city in the RCN network can use this treasure box.

**Juliane (Hanover):** Thank you to cities that participated, but especially to Manuel and Grace. This was Manuels idea, and it was a hard job for Grace. Thanks, the old and new board to making it happen.

**Manuel (RCN):** Thanks Geneva, Heidelberg and Bern commitment was visible and recognizable. One of the biggest challenges was to engage the cities, etc through travelling. He thanks the cities and Grace.

## Conclusion and next steps

**Before the closing remark Manuel (RCN) Invites Helsinki on to stage.**

**Helsinki:** Welcomes everyone to Helsinki next year. Compliments the city of Reykjavik, they have set the bar high.

**Manuel (RCN) invites to the stage the board of Rainbow City Network.**

**Johannah (Mannheim):** The board thanks for a great conference in the last few days.

Follow up on diversity and inclusion session. RCN is a place for learning, we are meeting each other and connecting. We were wondering how we can connect better.

It is important to – get to know we are getting bigger we have to achieve more diversity and inclusion in the network we want to invite you for the journey with us. I hope to see a lot of you in future meetings thank you for participating in all the sessions looking forward.

**Julianne (Hanover):** The conference was very fruitful, thanks to Reykjavik – we liked the atmosphere, the flowers on the tables and the hospitality – thank you Þórhildur and Guðný. All the cities in network are equal. Thank you, Manuel, for all your work.

Finished!

## The board of Rainbow Cities Network

Manuel Rosas Vazquez, managing director, Mannheim.

Juliane Steeger, chair of the board, Hanover.

Johannah Illgner, deputy-chair, Mannheim.

Siobhán O'Dowd, treasury, Cork.

Þórhildur Elínard. Magnúsdóttir, secretary, Reykjavík.

Tale Nesmann Berntsen, general board member.