Change Driven by Employees

How to start, lead and develop LGBTQ+ ERGs

Employee resource groups *are groupings of employees based on shared identity, background, experiences or interests that are also formally established or supported by the company's management. Although their form and activities vary, their main aim is usually to promote the group's voice within the company, as well as to educate, raise awareness or provide advice.*

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BUSINESS
FORUM

Preface

Diversity and inclusion have become a pillar of many globally successful organisations in recent years. Businesses are responding to data about the experience of LGBTQ+ people in the workplace, which unfortunately still often includes prejudice, microaggressions and direct and indirect discrimination. Employee resource groups are a proven format for supporting (not only) LGBTQ+ people on the initiative of the employees themselves, but also with senior management involvement. Although this concept has been known in Western countries since the second half of the last century, the trend has only recently arrived in the Czech Republic. This guide is based on the first research conducted in the and thus reflects the practice of specific Czech employers.

An employee resource group can be established by any company, although a formal group structure is suitable for medium-sized and larger companies. Currently, employee resource groups are most prevalent in large multinational companies, which are implementing this trend across their offices worldwide. However, the concept is general-purpose and can also be implemented in sectors outside of office-type positions, such as manufacturing or logistics organisations, or in government institutions. For this reason, the guide also includes a short corporate glossary to help you get to grips with terms commonly used in international companies, so that it can serve as inspiration in your context in all respects. LGBTQ+ people can be found in all areas of the employment sector and employee resource groups can be a very effective way of eliminating prejudice and discrimination.

The guide is suitable for employees as well as those in managerial positions or specialists in HR and diversity and inclusion. The following chapters will take you step by step through the process for setting up, running and developing an employee resource group and will provide a number of specific examples from practice. There are plenty of useful tips in this guide, regardless of whether you're just thinking about starting a group or have more advanced experience. Nevertheless, always treat each topic as a recommendation and take your organisation's specific context into account. Take inspiration from the experience of other companies and don't be afraid to experiment: every step towards LGBTQ+ inclusion is significant and can have a huge impact on the experience of specific people in the organisation.

Diversity & Inclusion in Practice: Employee Resource Groups

Diversity and inclusion strategies are now common practice in many local and international companies. The term "diversity" means the range of employees. Diversity refers to identity-related categories such as gender, relationship orientation, age or race, as well as factors such as communication style, education, family situation, experience or religion. Organisations recognise that diverse work teams are a catalyst for innovation and success. At the same time, a modern organisation needs to reflect the composition of the society to which it provides products or services, to ensure it remains competitive.

However, to allow everyone in the organisation to fulfil their potential, it must also emphasise inclusion. The goal is for people with different experiences and needs to feel safe in the organisation, so that they can be authentic in the work environment without having to hide their identity or experience.

Organisations therefore need to develop their corporate culture by implementing diversity and inclusion strategies, i.e., programmes and projects to support different groups in the workplace, which educate and inform all employees, and analyse internal processes to ensure they are truly equitable. Employee resource groups are one of the most powerful tools to help create a more inclusive and safer workplace environment.

Employee resource groups are groupings of employees based on shared identity, background, experiences or interests that are also formally established or supported by the company's management. Although their form and activities vary, their main aim is usually to promote the group's voice within the company, as well as to educate, raise awareness or provide advice.

As one of the tools of corporate diversity management, employee resource groups have existed in Western countries since the 1960s, when they emerged as a response to racial tensions in the United States in the form of in-house support groups for African-American employees. Xerox Corporation is cited as the very first company to create board committees to address discrimination and help create a fair corporate environment. In the second half of the twentieth century, the trend of employee resource groups spread to other Western countries.

Today, however, the activities of employee resource groups are not limited to issues of race, but are formed according to the needs of employees based on shared identity or experience. Thus, there are groupings support-ing different groups, most often women (specifically in the technology or management sectors), workers from differ-ent regions and cultures, younger or older generations in the workplace, and of course the LGBTQ+ community. In the , these groups are a relatively new trend that has only started to appear in corporations in the last decade, but it is expanding significantly.

A key feature of employee resource groups is that they are formally embedded in the organisation. This means that an employee resource group is not an unofficial group of employees spending time together, but a work-ing group dedicated, in this case, to supporting the LGBTQ+ community.

The Business Case for LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Groups

If you are considering setting up an employee resource group, the following chapter will help you to identify key arguments that can be used when negotiating with management. The employee resource group is truly a universally beneficial tool for improving the situation of LGBTQ+ people, but also for making the organisation easily and inexpensively attractive on the labour market.
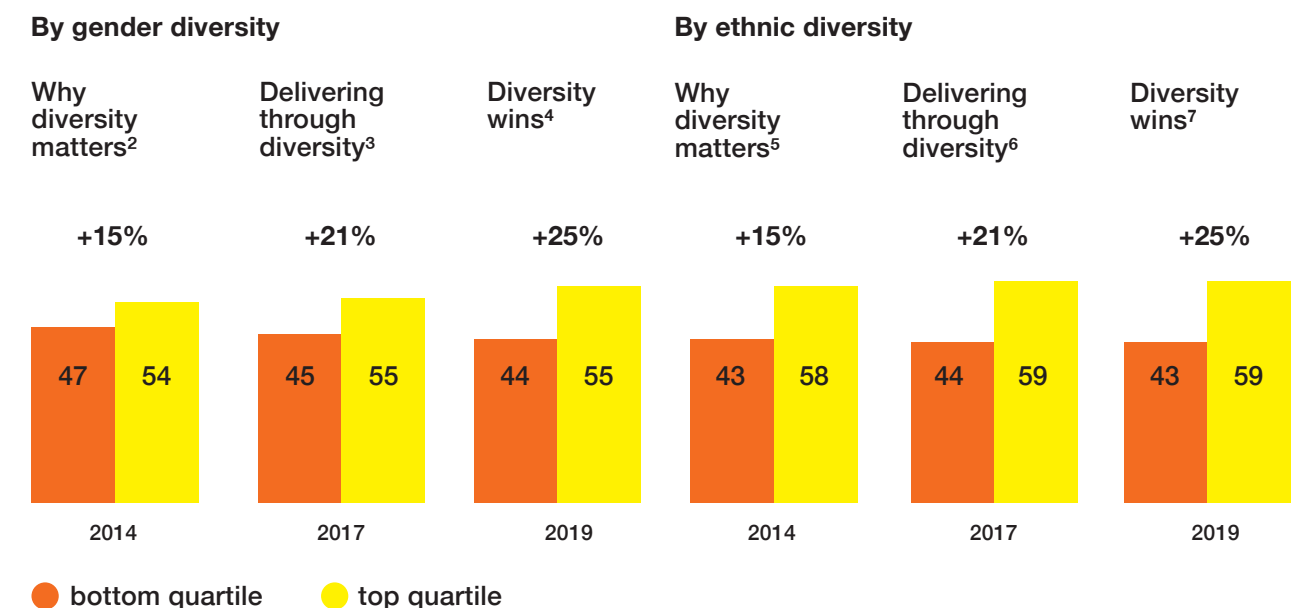
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For example: McKinsey & Company, Diversity wins: How inclusion matters (https://www.mckinsey.com/featured-insights/diversity-and-inclusion/diversity-wins-how-inclusion-matters)

Why address LGBTQ+ inclusion?

Long-term research has confirmed[1] that organisations are more likely to perform better financially when they are committed to diversity and inclusion. A more diverse and inclusive work environment allows for higher levels of employee engagement while increasing the overall productivity of the organisation. Diverse teams have lower error rates and higher levels of creativity and innovation.

The business case for diversity in executive teams remains strong.
likelihood of financial outferformance,[1] %

By gender diversity

Why diversity matters[2]	Delivering through diversity[3]	Diversity wins[4]
+15%	+21%	+25%
47 / 54	45 / 55	44 / 55
2014	2017	2019

By ethnic diversity

Why diversity matters[5]	Delivering through diversity[6]	Diversity wins[7]
+15%	+21%	+25%
43 / 58	44 / 59	43 / 59
2014	2017	2019

● bottom quartile   ● top quartile

1 | Likelihood of financial outperformance vs the national industry median: p-value <0.05, except 2014 data where p-value <0.1
2 | n = 383, Latin America, UK and US; earnings before interest and taxes (EBIT) margin 2010-13
3 | n = 991, Australia, Brazil, France, Germany, India, Japan, Mexico, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, UK and US; EBIT margin 2011–15
4 | n = 1,039; 2017 companies for which gender data available in 2019, plus Denmark, Norway and Sweden; EBIT margin 2014–18
5 | n = 364; Latin America, UK and US; EBIT margin 2010–13
6 | n = 589, Brazil, Mexico, Singapore, South Africa, UK and US; EBIT margin 2011–15
7 | n = 533; Brazil, Mexico, Nigeria, Singapore, South Africa, UK and US, where ethnicity data available in 2019; EBIT margin 2014–18
Source: Diversity Wins data set

LGBTQ+ people, i.e., people of diverse gender or relationship identities[1], make up a significant proportion of the population, with recent research[2] reporting an estimated 8–11% of non-heterosexual people in the Czech Republic. LGBTQ+ people thus represent a significant part of the Czech labour force. Yet, according to available data, they face harassment and various forms of discrimination and are very often afraid to be themselves in the work environment. This can also translate into limits or delays in career development, depriving the organisation of the opportunity to harness the potential of many talented individuals.
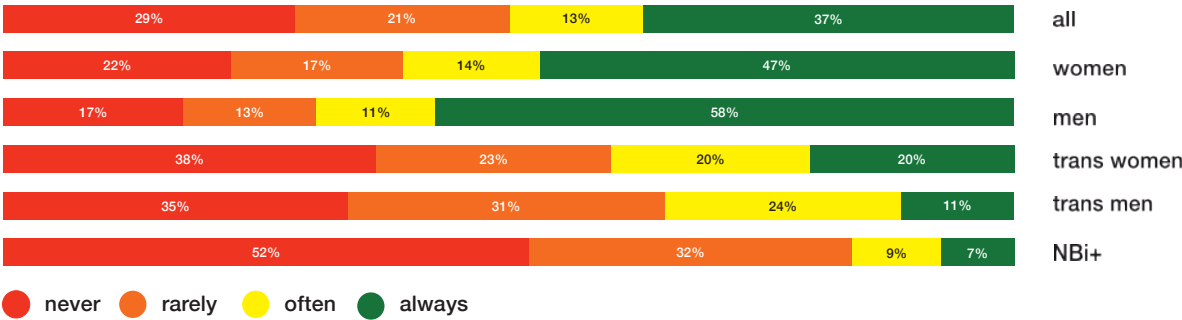
Recent research[3] maps the specific situation of LGBTQ+ people in the Czech Republic and provides important data on their experiences in the workplace. Over 50% of Czech LGBTQ+ people have rarely or never been open about their gender identity or relationship orientation at work. The most common reasons are concerns about the reactions of colleagues and the general deterioration of workplace relations, but also significant fears about threats to career progression within the organisation. 44% of LGBTQ+ people have faced negative comments related to their identity at work on at least one occasion in the last five years, and 22% avoid being open about their sexual orientation at work for fear of being harassed, assaulted or threatened. As the data shows, LGBTQ+ concerns often stem from specific experience, with 14% feeling discriminated against at work because of their sexual orientation in the last year alone.

1
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LGBTQ+ is an acronym that stands for people of non-mainstream sexual orientation or gender identity, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people. This abbreviation sometimes includes additional letters, which are represented here by the + symbol.
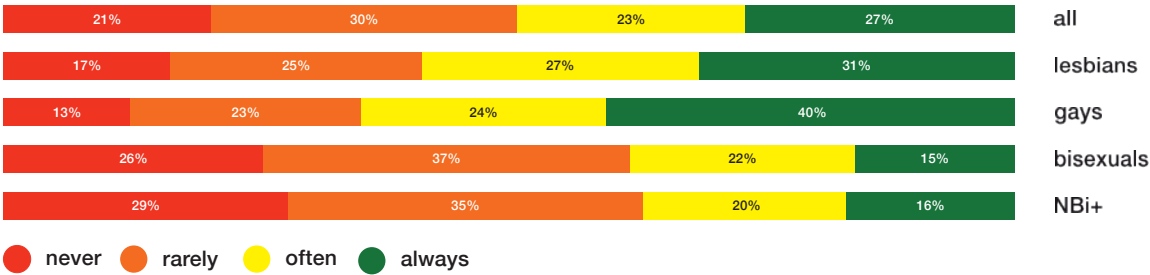
2
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http://sex.systemic.cz/archive/cze/textbook2017/Flegr.pdf.

3
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Pitoňák, M. and Macháčková, M. Být LGBTQ+ V Česku 2022. Research Report.

How often have you been open about your gender identity in front of your colleagues in your job over the past 5 years?

	never	rarely	often	always	
all	29%	21%	13%	37%	
women	22%	17%	14%	47%	
men	17%	13%	11%	58%	
trans women	38%	23%	20%	20%	
trans men	35%	31%	24%	11%	
NBi+	52%	32%	9%	7%	

● never ● rarely ● often ● always

How often have you been open about your sexual orientation in front of your colleagues in your job over the past 5 years?

	never	rarely	often	always
all	21%	30%	23%	27%
lesbians	17%	25%	27%	31%
gays	13%	23%	24%	40%
bisexuals	26%	37%	22%	15%
NBi+	29%	35%	20%	16%

● never ● rarely ● often ● always

What reasons do you think cause lesbians, gays, bisexuals, or transgender individuals in the workplace not to be outed?

concerns about reactions from colleagues

61%   61%
2018   2022

Fear of jeopardizing career advancement

57%   62%
2018   2022

Fears of possible deterioration of workplace relationships

77%   80%
2018   2022
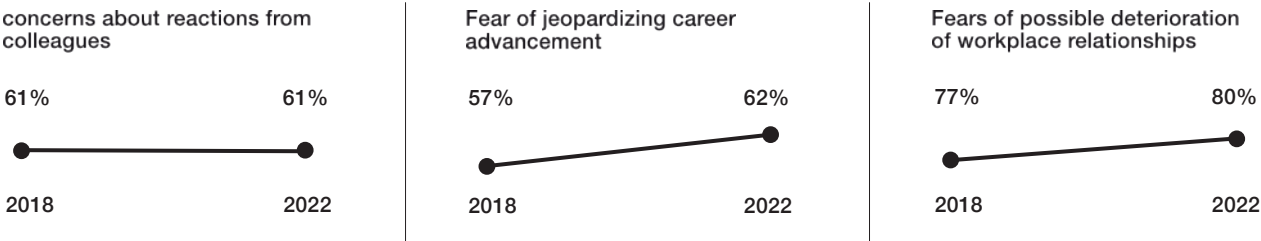
source: Pitoňák, M. and Macháčková, M. Být LGBTQ+ V Česku 2022. Research Report.

Do you avoid openly expressing your sexual orientation for fear of harassment, attack, or threat at work?

- PQA: 23%
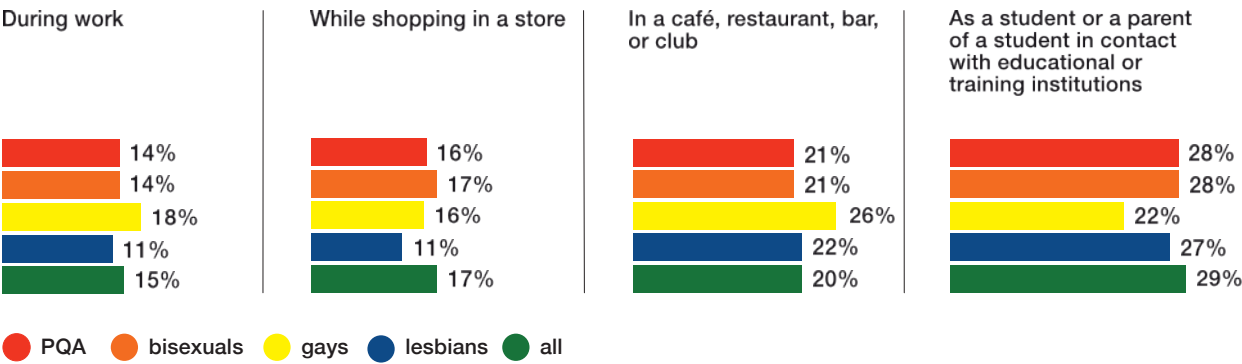- bisexuals: 24%
- gays: 21%
- lesbians: 22%
- all: 22%

● PQA ● bisexuals ● gays ● lesbians ● all
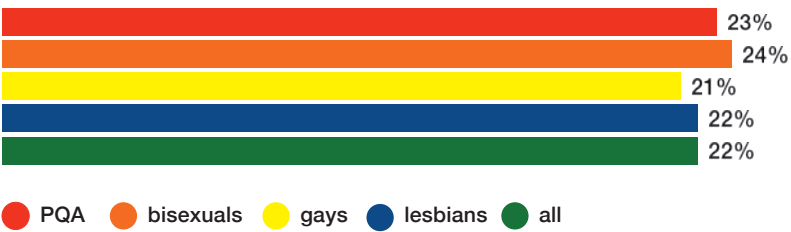
Have you personally felt discriminated against in the last 12 months due to your sexual orientation in any of the following situations?

During work	While shopping in a store	In a café, restaurant, bar, or club	As a student or a parent of a student in contact with educational or training institutions
14%	16%	21%	28%
14%	17%	21%	28%
18%	16%	26%	22%
11%	11%	22%	27%
15%	17%	20%	29%

● PQA ● bisexuals ● gays ● lesbians ● all

How often in the past 5 years in your job have you been subjected to negative comments or actions because of your sexual orientation?

	never	rarely	often	always	not applicable
all	33 %	31 %	12 %	1%	22 %
lesbians	31 %	38 %	12 %	1%	17 %
gays	43 %	34 %	10 %	1 %	12 %
bisexuals	29 %	32 %	13 %	1%	25 %
PQA	29 %	25 %	13 %	2 %	31 %

● never ● rarely ● often ● always ● not applicable

What will employee resource groups bring to the company?

Eliminating prejudice, microaggressions and direct and indirect discrimination against LGBTQ+ people is a complex and long-term task that requires an overall shift in corporate culture towards a more inclusive approach. However, this change can only be made one step at a time, so don't be afraid to start gradually. Every step towards LGBTQ+ inclusion is significant and can have a huge impact on the experience of specific people within the organisation. Setting up an employee resource group is a great tool to get an organisation's diversity and inclusion strategy moving and translate it into real practical outcomes. What specifically will employee resource groups bring to your organisation?

→ **Improved employee engagement**

The advantage of these groups is that the activity is put into the hands of the employees who also represent the group and can thus directly raise the specific demands and needs of the LGBTQ+ community in the workplace with the company's management. The groups combine a "bottom-up" approach, i.e., from the rank-and-file, and a "top-down" approach through management support. Thanks to this principle, employee engagement increases significantly, as does their loyalty to their employer.

→ **Building internal resources and expertise**

An employee resource group also acts as an internal resource and can therefore save costs on external consultation and training in the areas of diversity and inclusion, helping everyone in the organisation to understand the issue in much greater detail.

→ **Versatility and replicability**

The format of employee resource groups is both versatile and replicable for other marginalised groups. By introduucing employee resource group guidelines, you can create a platform for bringing together other diverse employees.

→ **Attracting new talent to the organisation**

Internal activities designed to support the LGBTQ+ community also send a very strong message to the job market. Many LGBTQ+ people actively check whether an organisation will be safe for them and provide opportunities for career progression when looking for employment. The group's activities serve as a way to attract new talented employees, not only from the LGBTQ+ community, but also from among their supporters. The issue of diversity and inclusion is very important and influences their choice of employer, especially for the upcoming generations.

→ **Developing existing talent**

Last but not least, employee resource groups help members develop professional skills such as strategic management skills, event management, stakeholder communication, marketing and communication skills and more.

Establishing an Employee Resource Group

The following chapters will take you through the steps you need to take to set up an employee resource group. As each organisation's situation is different, the different practices are categorised according to how advanced your organisation is with regard to diversity and inclusion. This makes it easier to identify the focus of your arguments when negotiating within the organisation. Each chapter describes the perspective of creating employee resource groups from the bottom, i.e., from employees. This has proven to be a workable practice as it ensures that the leadership of the group is left to the community itself or its supporters. Yet, as the above research[1] shows, it is absolutely essential that support for employee resource groups is also provided from the top, i.e., from management. Each chapter therefore provides information on the key roles played by the company and management in the process of establishing an employee resource group.

Start at the bottom

If you want to set up an LGBTQ+ employee resource group in your organisation, you can't do so without people from the workforce actively supporting and developing the group from the start. Management support is crucial, but the group cannot do without committed employees who are passionate about the issue. They may be people directly from the LGBTQ+ community or enthusiastic supporters. Often the initiative comes from just one person who wants to push the group through the organisation. The opposite model, i.e., when company management promotes the establishment of a group without having specific people who would like to lead the initiative, does not usually work, is more difficult for people in the organisation to accept and can thus be entirely ineffective.

The active individual or group must develop plans for the process of negotiating with management to establish the group, with respect to the current level of diversity and inclusion strategies.

[1]
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Švarcová, M., Employee Resource Groups jako nástroj pro dosahování LGBT rovnosti v korporátním prostředí (https://dspace.cuni.cz/bitstream/handle20.500.11956/171776/120411691.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

The organisation does not work with diversity and inclusion in any way	In this case, the most challenging work is right at the beginning, because your task is to convince the organisation management that covering D&I topics in the workplace is worthwhile. Unlike more advanced organisations, it may be advisable in your case to consult with HR or members of the management team at the outset to identify the right negotiating channels. You may not get a formal employee resource group established on your first attempt. It depends on the support you get from the organisation's management. Nevertheless, introducing more general diversity and inclusion strategies into the organisation can also be a key factor for future development in this area.
The organisation has a diversity and inclusion strategy, but the concept of employee resource groups is not in place	A key topic for you will be the format of employee resource groups and why they are beneficial to the organisation. Become familiar with the organisation's existing activities to promote diversity and inclusion and build directly on them.
Employee resource groups exist in the organisation, but there is no LGBTQ+ group	In your negotiations, focus primarily on the importance of including LGBTQ+ issues in the existing concept of employee resource groups. Meet with representatives of other groups in the organisation and learn in detail how the groups function and how their topic has historically fit in with the existing groups.
An LGBTQ+ group already exists elsewhere in the organisation but is absent locally	The focus of your arguments for supporting an LGBTQ+ employee resource group will be the local aspect. Focus on the situation of LGBTQ+ people in the Czech Republic and the specifics of the local labour market.

The role of the company and management

→ Supporting the employee initiative and understanding the importance of diversity and inclusion to the organization
→ Listening to the needs of employees

CSOB experience:

The LGBTQ+ employee resource group at CSOB was originally formed from an informal grouping of several LGBTQ+ colleagues who subsequently initiated the formation of the group and went on to sign the Pride Business Forum Memorandum. The Czech branch has thus become a pioneer of this initiative within the whole international organisation.

Skoda Auto experience:

The employee resource group at Skoda Auto was inspired by other employee resource groups that already existed within the international group. Within a few months of the initial discussion, a committee was formed to ensure the group was formally established in the , and subsequently opened the group to all colleagues in the organisation.

Amazon experience:

When starting an employee resource group, it is important not to be afraid to enlist the help of like-minded colleagues to help with organising. Glamazon in Prague is a very informal grouping. Leadership, finance, and administration are provided by the group's President and ideas, implementation, PR, and a great spirit are provided by colleagues across buildings and divisions.

Preparing the group's mission, vision, and strategy

Once you have one or more people who have decided to found a group, you need to prepare carefully for negotiations with the organisation management. You need formal recognition for the group; you need to set up formal processes and define how they work, free up resources, and last but not least, obtain support in promoting the group. To be successful, you need to present a convincing argument in support of forming the employee resource group. This step is absolutely crucial and should be given sufficient time.

The key message you need to prepare is **what you want to achieve by setting up and running the group, how you want to achieve it and how these activities will benefit the organisation.**

At this stage, you need to create a specific **business case,** i.e., to develop the rationale for establishing and running the group, its benefits, costs, and outputs. Pay attention to these recommendations in relation to your organisation's progress on diversity and inclusion and focus on substantive arguments. Base the level of formality on your organisation's standard practice. If it is customary to present the business case in a formal form, develop it as if it were a different business project. However, in general it is sufficient to present a prepared summary to the management via a presentation.

Strategic group management necessarily involves defining the group's **mission and vision.** The mission explains why the group exists and how it achieves its goals, i.e., it answers in simple terms the questions of who we are, what we do and why we do it. The vision is then a look into the future that describes what the group wants to be. The mission and vision should always be specifically formulated for the context of your organisation and also sufficiently concrete. Although this step may seem too corporate, it will help you to be clear from the start about what the group is for and what it wants to achieve. Similarly, a properly formulated mission and vision will enable company management to understand the group.

Next, **short and long-term goals** need to be developed and steps to achieve them need to be identified. A specific chapter is devoted to setting and measuring goals to help you get a feel for the issue. When starting a group, however, take special care to ensure that your short- and long-term goals are realistic. Initial objectives will be primarily focused on the group's inner workings and on building awareness within the organisation. As part of the initial planning, be sure to include projected and realistic timelines and the group's funding needs.

Also try to find competing companies of similar size and focus in the local market that are already working with diversity and inclusion strategies and stress the need for **competitiveness** in business and on the labour market. Focus on the fact that the concept of an employee resource group is universal and therefore does not have to apply to LGBTQ+ people only. Many issues that may arise in organisations and influence **HR strategy** can be addressed through employee resource groups. Examples include national minorities in certain sectors of the organisation or age diversity. Try to identify the most pressing issues in the organisation and think whether the concept of employee resource groups could help.

Work with the theme of **coming out** and then going back "into the closet". LGBTQ+ people may not only be excluded from the team due to fears about coming out, they may also be more cautious about **potential promotions or lateral changes** that, while they may help the organisation to make better use of their skills, pose the unnecessary risk of new team members and non-acceptance. Use available resources and examples from companies as well as specific personal stories, if available, to support your argument.

The organisation does not work with diversity and inclusion in any way

Your task is to convince the organisation's management that it is worth raising **D&I issues in the workplace.** Use the information provided in the Business case for LGBTQ+ employee resource groups chapter and try to present the group's benefits as comprehensively as possible in the context of its minimal costs. Keep the group's budget requirements to a minimum and focus on the non-financial support you need from management, which primarily means **allowing workers to devote themselves to the group during working hours.**

The organisation has a diversity and inclusion strategy, but the concept of employee resource groups is not in place

In this case, you are seeking to **expand your existing activities with an employee resource group format.** Therefore, focus on the arguments about why the current diversity and inclusion strategy is not sufficient and what employee resource groups have to offer additionally, without incurring dramatic costs.

Employee resource groups exist in the organisation, but there is no LGBTQ+ group

Your negotiation should be based on the question of **why no LGBTQ+ group has been included in** the current system. Introduce the experience of LGBTQ+ persons and workplace situations that create a demand for a safe and supportive environment. Sharing good practice in the local market will be particularly helpful in this case.

An LGBTQ+ group already exists elsewhere in the organisation but is absent locally

The core of your negotiation will be to emphasise that the reasons leading to the creation of LGBTQ+ employee resource groups in other countries are also **valid in the Czech Republic.** Connect with existing groups and ask them to collaborate in creating a local business case. Use the available data on the situation in the Czech Republic, and/or contact NGOs, which will have many relevant resources.

The role of the company and management

→ Leading an open dialogue about the group's benefits and its strategic direction

Novartis Experience:

To establish the Employee Resource Group and define its mission, we began by engaging in collaborative brainstorming to clarify the purpose and desired outcomes. After gathering a variety of ideas, we refined them to create a mission that is focused and impactful. Our mission revolves around advocating for LGBTQ+ rights and promoting a truly inclusive work environment. For other organizations looking to create an ERG, it is recommended to develop a clear and concise mission that aligns closely with company values and objectives. This will help ensure support from leadership teams. Additionally, setting goals that create a meaningful impact and planning engaging activities are crucial to driving employee engagement within the ERG. When shaping the mission and strategy, avoid misalignment with company values. Additionally, be cautious not to establish unattainable goals—aim for aspiration without overreach. Strive for balance by outlining 2 to 3 short-term and 2 to 3 long-term goals, targeting areas of maximum impact. Consistently assess the plan based on input and engagement and make adjustments as needed to maintain relevance and effectiveness.

Negotiating with management and setting up sponsorships

Once you have prepared the documents, you need to identify the key people in the organisation with whom you will discuss establishing the group. This chapter guides you through key positions in the organisation whose competencies are related to managing an employee resource group in terms of content or process.

As a first step, focus on finding any sponsor from senior management. The sponsorship role, as you will see later in the guide, is crucial for the group to function and is a significant help, especially when setting up the group. The sponsor should be a person for whom the topic is important and who wants to promote it in the organisation. They should also have links to senior management with experience in strategic management and who can help the group translate its plans into the "language" of the organisation. Consult the sponsor about the prepared business case and include their suggested changes and suggestions. However, don't expect the person in the sponsorship role to prepare and present the business case for you. This role will help add credibility to the organisation and open the right doors for you, but leading the group is the responsibility of the staff.

It should be borne in mind that the internal structures of organisations are often very different and, in the case of an international company, may also include people at a regional or global level. Always base your decision on your own experience. It is possible that identifying key stakeholders will not be easy and you will come across other links that will need to be maintained during the life of the group. The key issue in this step is who can make decisions on particular issues with regard to how the employee resource group will function. The following list shows the basic roles that may be important to you. Always be clear about what you want from the sponsor and how they can help you before you act. If you are unsure, consult with the sponsor on how to design the meeting and in what order to approach the stakeholder groups. Also, always be open to discussion. Even though you have a detailed plan for how the group should work, you need to be flexible and ready to change it based on feedback. The group's mission statement will help you anchor yourself in the group's core focus, from which you do not want to retreat.

→ **Management, local management, board**
Usually there are several people in senior management who are responsible for the strategic leadership of the organisation. This group or individual is usually competent to approve the initiative at the local or divisional level.

→ **Regional or global management**
In the case of an international organisation, you may have to look harder to establish who is competent to make decisions on individual processes, especially if these processes are global. Try to obtain support from local management and ask for direction through international links.

→ **HR department**
The HR department will be a key partner in your initiative, as it usually covers all workforce-related agenda.

→ **D&I councils or other D&I roles**
If your organisation has a diversity and inclusion council or individual employees, they are undoubtedly an essential step in the negotiation process.

→ **Employee engagement, happiness management, etc.**
In some organisations, there may also be teams or individuals who are responsible for employee engagement and various community activities.

→ **Leadership of employee resource groups**
If your organisation already has an employee resource group structure in place, get in touch with the leadership at a local, regional or global level. There will most likely already be a process for setting up local groups that you can follow.

→ **Trade unions**
If there are trade unions in your organisation, they may have discrimination issues on their agenda. Before setting up the group, meet with them and agree to work together, so that the union does not see the employee resource group as competition, as this will enable you to complement each other.

The organisation does not work with diversity and inclusion in any way	Make the most of the connections of the person sponsoring the group. If you know people in the organisation's management more intimately, reach out to those you know might have an interest in the issue of diversity and inclusion. Prepare a large amount of data that you will be able to use to support your negotiations to establish the group.
The organisation has a diversity and inclusion strategy, but the concept of employee resource groups is not in place	Build on your existing strategy. Get in touch with the organisation's key responsible people and agree on the way forward. In negotiations, ideally act together so as not to appear as competing initiatives.
Employee resource groups exist in the organisation, but there is no LGBTQ+ group	Check with existing employee resource groups about key people in the organisation with whom they maintain relationships and whom they have approached for endorsement. If there is an international employee resource group structure, contact the global leadership to ask who can officially include an LGBTQ+ group.
An LGBTQ+ group already exists elsewhere in the organisation but is absent locally	Conduct negotiations at two levels: with local management and with international management of the employee resource group. Get in touch with key local stakeholders and agree to work together – mention the needs of the LGBTQ+ group and discuss how they can help the group within their remit.

The role of the company and management

→ Recognising the value of the group in the context of the business
→ Helping the group identify specific key people and processes
→Openly supporting the values of the employee resource group externally as well as internally
→ Providing long-term support to the group and communicates regularly with the group

Amazon experience:

All employee resource groups at Amazon have a central leadership for the region that has a process for setting up a local group. This applies not only to Glamazon (LGBTQ+ employees and allies), but also to Women in Amazon, PwD (People with Disabilities) and others. The most important thing about starting a local cell is to have management backing, known as the Executive Sponsor, who will cover Glamazon's activities and give them the necessary weight or visibility. Czech Glamazon is lucky to be supported directly by the company's CEO. The budget is also allocated by the central Glamazon board, so there is no need to deal with other sponsors, but sometimes the costs are also split between PR or HR, depending on the event.

Processes and existing practices

A step that is often overlooked, thus causing problems that are often very difficult to rectify, is embedding the employee resource group in internal regulations. In other words, you need to ensure that the group is formally recognised by the organisation and that it has clear operating rules. This is absolutely essential for the group to function sustainably.

In order to link the group to existing procedural practice, the first step is to analyse any internal guidelines and regulations where the group needs to be included. The persons you identified in the previous step as competent to approve will be of considerable help in this step. Focus on a few basic aspects that should be considered in internal policies or processes:

→ **Employee involvement in the group**

In order for the group to be truly sustainable, the conditions under which employees can participate in its activities must be clearly defined. Although the group is initiated from the bottom, it is clearly an activity that benefits the company, so insist that the time devoted to organising events is included in working hours. Examples of good practice include allowing up to 10% of working time to be allocated across the board for employee resource group purposes or other specific time slots (e.g., 1 hour per week). This creates space for all people in the organisation to negotiate time capacity with their managers and eliminates the risk of a grey area where people in the group do unpaid work for the organisation. Clarify these conditions at the outset, specifying whether they also apply, for example, to people with alternative jobs (part-time, contract, agency workers). Once the guideline is established, make sure that the organisation management devote sufficient energy to informing all people in the organisation, especially managers, to respect this option with their subordinates.

→ **Linking work for the group to appraisal and remuneration**

If work for an employee resource group is part of the job description, it should also be part of the appraisal and remuneration process. A key aspect of active participation in a group is the development of many skills outside of your normal work. You can negotiate the inclusion of the group's activities in employee training plans.

→ **Setting up financial planning**

As a representative of the group, ensure that the process for requesting and approving funding for the group is clearly set up. You will learn more about this in a special chapter. When setting up the group, find out how budget cycles work in the organisation and clarify the long-term process with all those responsible for approving finances for the group.

→ **Engage the group in the communication channels you use**

Identify the key communication processes in the company that will help you promote the group internally and externally. There is a separate chapter on group promotion, which will help you identify key teams and tools for different types of communication.

→ **Creating a visual identity**

To make the group recognisable at a glance, it is good practice to create a name, logo and visual identity that you will use consistently in the future. If other employee resource groups already exist, take inspiration from them, but always create your own group design. The exception is if there is already an LGBTQ+ group in other countries, because a common name and logo will probably need to be adopted.

The role of the company and management
→ Helping the group identify specific key people and processes
→ Formalising the group and links it to internal processes
→ Setting up and adhering to the financial planning process and secures resources for the group
→ Guaranteeing a fair playing field for all

Leading an Employee Resource Group

The work does not end once an employee resource group has been successfully established. In order for the group to function effectively and sustainably, it is necessary to think conceptually about various aspects of leadership. Whether the group is new or long-established, the following chapters will help you identify and develop key themes related to leadership and development.

Defining roles in the ERG

Employee resource groups can be thought of as small non-profit organisations within a company. For them to function properly, it is necessary to identify several roles that are key to setting up a system within which employees and organisation management can work together. Diversifying the types of membership can thus help reach a wider group of people in the organisation. When filling individual roles, the abilities and capabilities of individual candidates must be taken into account. These abilities and capabilities should be clear from their job description and seniority in the organisation. These roles are based on the experience of specific companies and are mentioned within employee resource groups globally. However, the list of roles may vary from organisation to organisation.

→ **Group leadership**

Usually one or two people share the leadership role within a group. This role can be long term or even rotated after one or two years to provide opportunities for others in the group to develop their strategic leadership skills. The leader represents the group internally and externally, deals with sponsors, HR and organisation management, has a key role in the strategic planning of group activities and connects all other members of the organisational team. The role of the leader or manager of an employee resource group tends to be the most time-consuming of all these roles, and at the same time it is necessary for this person to be truly committed to the issue and able to motivate others.

→ **Committee**

The team responsible for planning and organising the activities and activities of the group. These are the group's

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most committed members who are actively involved in running it. The size of the committee is usually around ten people, but this depends on the size of the organisation and the employee resource group itself. It is very useful to name the necessary roles in the group and to establish at least an outline of their workload and the necessary time allocation. The specific division of roles is usually not strictly prescribed, even in official guidelines on employee resource groups. If other employee resource groups already exist in your organisation, ask them what their roles are on the committee and how they function. You can also take inspiration from the following list of roles based on the practices of different companies. However, always take into account the specifics of your organisation. Not all roles will be universally relevant and some may not be on the list.

○ **Communication and group promotion**
A role focused on sharing information and news about the group's activities, managing intranet pages and communication channels, creating newsletters, flyers or other promotional materials, working with the company's internal communication departments, liaising with the team managing the organisation's social media

○ **Budget and finance management**
A role focused on managing the finances provided to the group from a variety of sources, administering expenses, purchase orders and invoicing, preparing the budget plan and negotiating with sponsors

○ **Event management**
Arole usually held by several people, consisting of the practical organisation of internal events and programmes

○ **Training programmes**
A role focused on planning, organising and delivering training to group members as well as the organisation's general population, working with internal and external trainers

○ **Member engagement, community development**
A role focused on planning and delivering networking and consolidation activities for members, external LGBTQ+ community events, volunteering

○ **Recruitment and onboarding**
Arole focused on recruiting and onboarding new members to the group

→ **Sponsorship roles**

For the group to function smoothly and effectively, it is beneficial to establish a close relationship with one or more individuals from the senior management team, known as sponsors, who will actively support the group and its focus across the organisation. The sponsors, as the most senior people in the organisation, will help the group set a vision and strategy that is sustainable and defensible to the organisation's management. "Opening the door" to management is also important. Being involved in the strategic decisions of the organisation means that the sponsor will take into account the needs and suggestions of the employee resource group and help to initiate discussion in situations to which members would not otherwise have direct access. For example, they can take the LGBTQ+ perspective into account when introducing new benefits, processes, communications or external appearances. The goal of sponsors is not to blindly favour an employee resource group, but to allow their voice to be heard in the context of the business. The sponsorship role may also involve financially assisting the group, either by releasing the sponsor's own budget or through helping to negotiate a budget with the management.

→ **Membership and supporter role**

For the group to function properly and engage in effective outreach, it is important that it has a sufficient membership base. Members are those who are interested in the activities of the group and wish to participate in its events. This can include people from within the LGBTQ+ community or outside of it. In this case, we are talking about supporters, known as allies, who are crucial for the group to function, as they promote the issue even in circles that are not primarily devoted to it. However, employees usually have the option of signing up to an internal mailing list or online platforms used by the organisation. The employee resource group then regularly informs members about upcoming events or other opportunities to get involved.

What to think about

→ Keep in mind that membership of an LGBTQ+ group can be sensitive. People from outside the community may feel that the group is not for them, and conversely, some in the LGBTQ+ community may fear that membership is involuntarily ostracising them. **Communicate that the group is for everyone,** i.e., LGBTQ+ people and their supporters.

→ Active membership in an employee resource group is a great **opportunity for employee development.** Don't be afraid to fill roles in the committee with junior people, who will try many new things outside their regular job. Commitment to the group can also be reflected in the personal **development plans** of individual employees.

→ Divide the roles in the group according to who can do what and what they wish to do. Often, employee resource groups bring together **people from different departments** who can help the group with different knowledge and experience of company procedures (for example, finance, marketing or HR).

→ Don't be afraid to **share roles** on the committee. Primary work priorities can easily change, and this can paralyse the work of the whole group. If several people share the role, you are more assured of continuity.

Setting and measuring the goals of employee resource groups

Employee resource groups, as formally constituted initiatives within the organisation, must be able to plan and report on their results. Compared to other projects in the organisation, however, measuring the group's impact can be quite difficult, given that the issues involved are personal and often very sensitive. This chapter will therefore take you through the basic rules for setting group goals and outline the options for evaluating their results.

Planning and goal setting

As mentioned in the chapter on starting a group, all goals should be linked to the mission and vision you have set for the group. In other words, you need to design activities in relation to what you want the group to achieve. The group's objectives may vary and are usually more general than specific activities. The group's objectives should be planned annually as standard, possibly with a timeline that correlates with the budget approval process. However, it is also useful to have long-term goals that go beyond the standard planning interval, especially for more challenging plans. When planning your goals, focus on the questions:

→ **What resources are needed to meet the goal?**

→ **What actions do we need to take to meet the goal?**

→ **Who will be responsible for implementing each goal?**

→ **What timelines are realistic?**

→ **Who will we work with (internally/externally) to achieve the goal?**

→ **How will we measure success?**

Consult the sponsors about the group's goals and inform other stakeholders and the group's members about them. Keep in mind that group goals may change over time depending on the current situation and priorities, but should always be tied to the group's mission.

Measurement and data collection options

First of all, it should be stressed that the collection of data on the relationship orientation of workers is very problematic in the light of European data protection law. For this reason, and also because of the large number of closeted people in the organisation, it is not appropriate to set metrics on the number of LGBTQ+ persons in the organisation. However, there are many other ways to obtain useful data on how well a group is achieving its goals and on the perception of LGBTQ+ issues in the workplace. Use both quantitative and qualitative methods for data collection, as they are complementary and will help you understand the issue on multiple levels. Quantitative methods tracked over time will reveal trends and shifts in the individual categories measured, while qualitative methods reveal the context and depth of the issues. You can use the following methods to measure the success of specific group activities.

→ **Feedback on events**

The most common way to find out if an event was successful is to distribute feedback questionnaires immediately after the event. Questionnaires can be electronic, which will make it easier to analyse the responses, or paper-based, which generally have a better return rate. The questionnaires should include rating scales and open-ended questions where people can share comments and ideas.

→ **Attendee numbers**

monitor attendance in addition to the views of people attending group's events. Keep an eye on what types of events are seeing a decline or increase in attendance and consider whether you need to improve promotion or adjust the programme accordingly.

→ **Group membership numbers**

Also regularly monitor the number of people enrolled in the group. It is especially useful to monitor this number before and after major events to see how you are doing in reaching out to potential members. Update the membership lists regularly so you can remove those who have left the organisation.

→ **Role in the committee**

One of the group's important tasks is to set up a functional committee and to succeed in carrying out its plans. Therefore, also focus, for example once a year, on evaluating the committee, sharing successes and challenges and setting plans for the next period.

→ **Traffic to websites, posts**

If you have intranet sites with basic analytical tools, monitor the number of visits to the sites themselves or to individual posts. For example, you can find out which day and time is the best time to send out newsletters through your intranet site traffic.

In order to map the situation in your organisation, you not only need to evaluate the activities that have taken place, but also collect key data on attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people and their experience in the organisation, which you can use to develop a strategy for the next period. Backing up the group's plans with real data is key to addressing pressing issues in the organisation and also gives the group more credibility with management. Tools for effective data collection include:

→ **Regular company-wide surveys**

Organisations often have regular company-wide surveys that measure employee satisfaction in various areas. Aim to include questions on perceptions of the LGBTQ+ experience, or at least questions themed around diversity and inclusion more generally. These questionnaires enable data to be collected from a large sample of the organisation's population, but usually provide more general information.

→ **An external process to evaluate approaches to LGBT+ inclusion**

One of the best ways to obtain a detailed analysis of approaches to LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace and the functioning of the employee resource group is to enter awards competitions in this area (e.g., the Pride Business Forum's LGBT+ Friendly Employer Awards). Participating companies are subjected to a detailed questionnaire which gives them the opportunity to analyse their activities in detail and also to find inspiration for the future.

→ **Comprehensive D&I analysis**

There are external contractors that can provide you with a detailed internal analysis of your processes and company culture in relation to diversity and inclusion. This data is normally collected every few years and the results are tracked over time. However, they are usually very costly.

→ **Information from HR**

Stay in close contact with the HR department and ask them if the issue of LGBTQ+ discrimination has come up in internal complaints, conflicts or, for example, in conversations with people leaving the company. Due to the sensitivity of the information, you will probably not have access to the details, but you can focus more on these areas as part of your activities to prevent similar situations.

→ **Formal and informal feedback**

Feedback is very important in the context of employee resource groups, even if it is informal. Listen to what topics resonate with the company and give members regular opportunities to share their experience with you.

→ **Interviews, focus groups**

If you need to gain deeper insight into situations or problems, you can conduct individual interviews or create focus groups with employees, where you have the opportunity to explore the attitudes, opinions, experiences and concerns of the participants through a moderated discussion.

What to think about

→ Do not underestimate the importance of qualitative methods. There is a need to understand the context of LGBTQ+ inclusivity and to give employees the space to openly share their experience.

→ Don't plan haphazardly. Goals, plans and budget go hand in hand.

→ Be consistent in your data collection. Collect data in the same format so you can easily analyse it. For example, you can use Net Promoters Score or other methods for consistent evaluation.

→ Think about what data is available in your organisation. In the context of diversity and inclusion, very little data can be measured across the board, but you can identify key indicators on how the topic is perceived in the organisation and how successful the employee resource group is.

Novartis Experience:

Novartis receives significant support and direction from its Global Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Culture Team due to its global scope. These teams focus on four global areas: participating in the Stonewall Global Workplace Equality Index, raising awareness about LGBTQ+ equity within the company, demonstrating active support to the LGBTQ+ community through various initiatives, and raising awareness and celebrating LGBTQ+ inclusion through global events and communications. Annually, the core Employee Resource Group team reviews and customizes these global focus areas to fit the local context, while also addressing local needs and selecting yearly objectives and aspirational goals if resources permit. After the goals are approved by the local management, they are communicated via the intranet.

Budget and financing of activities

At least a minimum budget allocated by the organisation is crucial for the group to function. There are activities that the group can undertake without financial cost, but this approach is very limiting and suggests that the organisation only cautiously supports LGBTQ+ issues. As mentioned in the previous chapter, strategic activity planning is very important in the context of the budget. Putting the individual financial requirements into a strategic framework will help those who will approve them to understand what the costs are for and their relevance to the group's specific objectives.

Organisations provide financial support to employee resource groups in various different ways. So when negotiating your budget, take your organisation's situation into account and, if you have the opportunity to draw inspiration from the experience of other employee resource groups or similar projects, ask how best to proceed. The budget is normally planned for a one-year period and is approved before the end of the previous year. It is therefore important to plan activities well in advance and to already have the background information and justification for each item in order for the financial plan for the following year to get approved.

For a better orientation in possible financing approaches, consider the options mentioned below, which are based on company practice and which will give you an idea of where it is possible to apply for financing.

→ **A central budget for D&I initiatives**

Organisations that provide long-term and comprehensive support for diversity and inclusion projects may have a dedicated budget that also funds employee resource groups. However, even in such cases, you will need to submit an activity plan to negotiate the final amount for your group. You can check with D&I managers, employee resource groups or HR to find out if there is a budget.

→ **Regional and global employee resource groups**

If there is a multinational structure for employee resource groups in the organisation, it is possible that they will have their own budget which they divide between their "branches" in each country. Check with them to see if there is funding available for a local group.

→ **Sponsors**

Formal sponsors of employee resource groups may also have financial support within their purview. They can allocate part of their budget or help negotiate a larger budget with management. However, this approach can be very unstable when sponsors are not very active or have no spare budget.

→ **Fund-raising in the organisation**

This approach is primarily suitable when ad hoc financial support is needed. Members of the group can reach out to their connections in the organisation in various positions and request the release of portions of individual budgets. However, as a permanent approach, this is inappropriate, as it prevents the possibility of long-term planning.

→ **Budget for training, HR, employee activities**

In some cases, especially if financial support cannot be found otherwise, it is possible to try to apply for funding for group activities according to their type. For example, the group's educational events may fall under the shared education budget, promotional materials under the marketing budget, and the cost of membership in LGBTQ+ organisations under employer branding or corporate social responsibility (CSR).

What to think about

→ Bear in mind that financial plans are approved well in advance and usually once a year. So **plan ahead** and, if possible, include a **contingency for unexpected expenditures.**

→ **Payment processing** in organisations can be very complicated. Make sure you know the correct procedures or check with the persons responsible. Some organisations may have a complex **supplier approval process**, so plan well in advance.

→ **If you have an approved and allocated budget, use it.** It is common practice that an unused budget is taken to mean that the group does not need the money and the budget for the following year may be reduced.

→ Financial support comes with requirements for consistent **reporting on spending and costs.** So keep careful records and set up how you will report your costs with your budget managers and administrators in advance.

Work and activities

This chapter will give you a closer look at the wide range of activities that employee resource groups can carry out. When planning activities, it is always important to ask yourself some basic questions:

→ **What do we want to achieve with this activity?**

→ **Who is the target group for the activity, i.e., for whom are we doing the activity?**

→ **Do we have sufficient resources (financial, personnel, etc.) for the activity?**

Newly formed groups usually place the greatest emphasis on building community through networking activities for the membership base. However, there are many other target groups within and outside the organisation that the group can address. They can be people in managerial roles, the general population of organisation employees, other companies, non-profit organisations and the public. Activities should conform to the group's mission and strategy and of course be realistic in relation to the budget. Take inspiration from existing employee resource groups in your organisation or create a group programme according to the following list.

Networking activities

The primary goal of an employee resource group is usually to create a safe community for LGBTQ+ workers and their supporters, which is what networking or other activities that bring people together help us achieve. These are among the most common types of group activities and can have varying degrees of formality. You can use the following list based on the experience of specific companies as inspiration for planning your own activities.

→ **Informal meetings and activities**

Members should always be introduced first, both to each other and to the principles of the employee resource group. In addition to meetings to address the group's operational issues, include informal meetings that can help consolidate relationships. You can organise barbecues, brunches, picnics or dinners together or, for example, escape games, board games or pub quizzes.

→ **Movie nights**

Movie nights in the company building are also popular. They usually take place after working hours, when the group watches a film on LGBTQ+ issues together. After the screening, there is often an informal discussion and sharing of experiences.

→ **Cultural events**

Groups can participate together in exhibitions, concerts, theatre performances and other cultural events, especially those with an LGBTQ+ theme. A popular cultural programme is the annual queer film festival Mezipatra. After the cultural event, you can organise a short discussion, write a post or otherwise communicate the experience to other people in the organisation.

→ **Trips and sporting events**

If members are sporty, you can organise one-off or long-term sporting activities together. An annual highlight in this area may be the charity run against homophobia, transphobia, biphobia and stigmatisation of people with HIV Fun & Run organised by Prague Pride.

Company experience:

Employee resource groups across the board agree that the biggest networking event each year is participation in the Prague Pride parade. Members of the group may participate in the parade as individuals or represent their organisation. The visibility of the organisation in the parade is a great tool for spreading awareness of support for LGBTQ+ issues, both to the general public and to members of the LGBTQ+ community in the workforce. Check with your organisation management to see if you can speak at the event on behalf of your company and if you need financial support for banner printing, t-shirts or even car hire, be sure to include this item in your budget planning.

Škoda Auto Experience:

We most often organize networking activities that are of an informal nature and their main goal is to connect with colleagues, when, if from different fields, we often have a lot in common. At the same time, we try to create a community, deepen ties and new friendships, or perhaps share our own experiences. We have already visited Advent markets, we regularly organize "Beer and chat" meetings. Last year, we managed to co-organize a tour of the Sychrov state castle, which was focused on elements of LGBT+ history. Several times a year we organize a joint tourist trip.

Awareness-raising and educational activities

Employee resource groups often take on an "expert role" in the organisation in relation to LGBTQ+ issues, so one of their main goals is to raise awareness of the experience of LGBTQ+ people and the barriers they often face in their working and private lives. Awareness-raising and educational activities may have varying degrees of formality and may be facilitated by external trainers or internal staff, most often directly from within the employee resource group.

Choose awareness and education topics based on what experience there is in your group or what resonates in your organisation. For example, you can find out from HR if there are any issues related to LGBTQ+ discrimination that need to be addressed in internal complaints or exit interviews. Most often, however, it is worth starting from the ground up, explaining what the LGBTQ+ community is, what its members' experience is, and what problems they may face in their personal and professional lives. Key topics include coming out, microaggressions in the work environment, discrimination, verbal and physical attacks, as well as the situation of LGBTQ+ persons in different countries, which is especially true if you have a multicultural environment in your company. However, it is important not to talk only about gay, lesbian and bisexual people, but also focus on other members of the LGBTQ+ community who often face a lot of misunderstanding in society. You can also focus on educating your organisation about inclusive language, working in teams or avoiding bias in the selection process. Choose the format of the educational event based on the audience and what you want to achieve. The most common educational formats include:

→ **Sharing stories, discussion**
It can be difficult for those in the organisation who do not have direct or mediated experience of LGBTQ+ issues to understand them. Therefore, one of the basic tools to bring this experience closer to them is to tell authentic stories. It is very helpful if someone in the organisation shares their story, and if this is a person from the management, such actions have an even greater impact. However, not everyone may be comfortable talking openly about their experience, and this should always be respected. You can therefore approach external speakers who are ready to speak publicly and answer questions from the audience. While it is desirable to open up story-sharing to questions and discussion, it is important that this section be moderated by someone who can address questions that may be inappropriate or offensive and explain to the audience why it is not okay to phrase them in this way.

→ **Employee training**
A more formal employee training method is a directly designed training or workshop. It has clear objectives, content, and learning methods and is suitable if you want to impart specific knowledge to people in your organisation. Again, training can be internal or external and can now also be delivered in person or online.

→ **Manager training**
The managerial role carries with it specific responsibilities and demands on team leadership, which is also reflected in the area of diversity and inclusion. You can therefore organise a training course or workshop just for people in managerial positions to help them develop their knowledge in specific situations related to person management.

→ **Training for HR and recruiters**
You can also design special training for HR professionals who are responsible for contacting candidates and managing the recruitment process, but also for looking after employees, supporting management and dealing with various situations, including those involving discrimination or harassment.

→ **Awareness campaigns**
You can be creative and try different formats as a form of spreading awareness. Take advantage of the platforms your colleagues follow, whether it's company social media, newsletters or flyers. You can create a campaign consisting of short stories or calls to action, such as joining a group, joining an allyship programme, a call to speak out against inappropriate comments, jokes or insults, etc.

→ **Awareness-raising events for other companies or the public**
If you have experience or good practice in your organisation on certain topics related to LGBTQ+ inclusivity, you can organise events for other companies or the public. You can inspire others and show that your organisation is really active on this issue.

→ **Educating members**
Last but not least, don't forget about educating members within the group. Take advantage of inter-company networking to be inspired by the best practices of other companies

Experience of MSD Czech Republic:

MSD has a long-standing relationship with Pride Business Forum and uses their experienced facilitators to deliver training workshops to staff, line managers or senior management. In addition to the basic topics and information about the LGBTQ+ community, the workshops also include practical exercises in which participants have the opportunity to put themselves in specific situations experienced by LGBTQ+ people in the workplace. We also address the issue of coming out and the forms it can take. The workshops are very interactive, full of discussion and above all create a safe environment for sharing and questions from all participants.

CSOB experience:

The LGBTQ+ employee resource group at CSOB has created an internal course for employees focused on LGBTQ+ awareness. The course always includes people from the workforce to give specific testimony from the perspective of LGBTQ+ people and the situations they face in and out of the workplace.

Vodafone experience:

Vodafone has produced a training video for staff in stores to ensure a sensitive and inclusive approach to transgender clients. Through a dialogue between a trans employee and the sponsor of an LGBTQ+ group, the video explains how to approach trans people when dealing with common situations in branches.

Škoda Auto Experience:

In the past, within Škoda Auto, we have organized or co-organized some events open to the entire company, for example, we hosted Ester Janečková and discussed the S barvou ven counseling, we streamed the LGBT+ debate: Why should I be interested? with Michal Pitoňák, or we screened the documentary The Law of Love, which was complemented by a very beneficial discussion with interesting guests.

Advisory and ambassadorial activities

Employee resource groups also represent the voice of the LGBTQ+ community both within and outside the organisation and can therefore highlight their needs and demands in relation to employee issues as well as business issues. In other words, the group ensures that the perspective of the LGBTQ+ community is taken into account in important decisions. It can also act as an advisory body for the issue for all people in the organisation.

→ **Employee benefits alignment**
Currently, there is still no legal framework for equal marriage, and so the law does not protect people in same-sex couples in the same way that it protects heterosexual married couples. The key role of the employee resource group is to initiate discussion and change within the organisation. The organisation's task is to review existing measures and introduce new ones that allow everyone to enjoy the same benefits and reconcile work and private life, regardless of relationship orientation and gender identity.

→ **Counselling for LGBTQ+ persons in the organisation**
The group can publicly act as a partner for all LGBTQ+ employees and offer them assistance in dealing with various situations in and outside the workplace. The group should never replace professional help or conflict and discrimination resolution in the workplace, but it can provide contacts and refer a person in a difficult situation to a specific type of help, either inside or outside the organisation.

→ **Advice for others in the organisation**
Similarly, the group can serve as a source of advice for staff and those in leadership positions who need advice on situations related to LGBTQ+ issues, such as coming out in the team, observing inappropriate behaviour or simply wanting to learn more about the topic.

→ **Consulting for HR and D&I teams**
The HR agenda has many aspects related to LGBTQ+ issues. The employee resource group should partner with the HR department and provide insight especially in the area of inclusive recruitment, i.e., eliminating bias in the selection process, educating people in the organisation, aligning benefits for same-sex couples, but also in the areas of conflict resolution and discrimination. At the same

time, the group can highlight certain situations in the workplace that may be problematic for LGBTQ+ people and work with the HR or D&I team to suggest solutions.

→ **Facility management**
Especially in the context of transgender and non-binary people, a big issue in the workplace is the location and designation of toilets. The employee resource group may also negotiate about flying a rainbow flag on the building or otherwise modifying the premises.

→ **Business advice**
If relevant to your company, think about how an employee resource group can support services for your clients. Suggest user improvements to external services or products that take into account the perspective of the LGBTQ+ clientèle.

→ **IT and systems**
Internal IT systems often do not allow for name changes or preferred pronouns, which is a major complication, especially for transgender and non-binary people. The employee resource group can help identify non-inclusive features of IT structures and work together to correct or eliminate them.

→ **PR and marketing**
Employee resource groups can also consult with the marketing and PR departments on sensitive and inclusive outward-facing communications, including, for example, the representation and portrayal of LGBTQ+ people in advertising or other promotional material.

CSOB experience:

In the past, the Proud employee resource group at CSOB has provided some tips for changing services or the way they are provided to make them more inclusive for the LGBT+ community. An example of this would be the approval of a mortgage loan. Are spouses viewed the same as registered partners*? Who belongs to the household and are the related definitions applicable and understandable for rainbow families? Trust is important in a relationship with a bank. Clients entrust us with sensitive information and we must always respond with dignity and respect for all. We know that our journey is far from over and we are currently working with ERG Proud to properly address our clients by their preferred name if they wish to use it.

Community outreach

This type of activity focuses on how the employee re-source group can help and support the LGBTQ+ community at a company-wide level through the company. Activities related to providing help outside the organisation are often included under corporate social responsibility strategies (also known as CSR – Corporate Social Responsibility or ESG – Environmental, Social, and Governance). Check whether your organisation has implemented this strategy and can build on it. Referring to social responsibility can help you with internal negotiation activities.

→ **Working with non-profit organisations, volunteering**
Find out about non-profit organisations in your area that focus on LGBTQ+ issues. Get in touch with them to discuss ways to support them, be they financial, volunteer or advertising. Organise volunteer events for employees. In some organisations, people have paid free days that they can use to volunteer in the non-profit sector. You can try to negotiate this opportunity on a one-off basis or, if you agree, arrange within the group to volunteer over a weekend. Prague Pride, for example, seeks help in organising the festival every year.

→ **Public events**
If you are more advanced in supporting LGBTQ+ people in the workplace, you can organise public events to help raise awareness and share good practice through your company brand.

→ **Fund-raising and charity events**
Organise an employee or public fund-raising event to help fund organisations supporting the LGBTQ+ community. The company can then make larger financial contributions to specific organisations.

→ **Support key issues**
Publicly support key societal issues affecting the LGBTQ+ community. If you have the opportunity, reach out to your company management to make a statement in support of equal marriage, for example by signing the company's We Are Fair appeal.

What to think about

→ Prioritise. If you like more of these activities, schedule them into multi-year plans. So plan realistically, taking into account how many active members the group has and what activities can make the biggest difference. It's worth starting with fewer activities.

→ Don't force group members to share their own stories if they don't want to. Personal stories have a big impact, but they require preparedness and a really strong corporate background that supports psychological safety. Use the option of an external speaker, if necessary.

Amazon experience:

The Glamazon employee resource group is actively working with We Are Fair to draw attention to the need to introduce equal marriage. Primarily we are trying to raise awareness that partnership registration is not marriage and to highlight their differences. Most people are not aware of the differences and consider the issue was closed when registered partnerships were instituted. When they find out more information, they are primarily surprised and then wonder why we don't have equal marriage yet. For example, to raise awareness among our employees, we brought Lucie Zachariášová from We Are Fair to our distribution centre to explain the most pressing issues regarding the fight for equal marriage and to answer all our managers' questions. We have prepared a quiz for our employees this summer on the differences between partnership registration and marriage.

Recruiting and engaging members

A sufficient membership base is a key prerequisite for employee resource groups to function. To ensure this, you need to promote the group sufficiently, not only to the management, but also internally in the organisation. In the following chapter you will find a useful overview of how to recruit new members and how to involve them in the group's activities.

Communication settings

Managing an employee resource group requires setting up communication channels both internally and externally, which are directly related to the tools you normally use in your organisation. Whether it is communication tools or the way you plan events in your organisation, always try to check with established groups or other projects that are designed to reach out to employees.

A crucial task is to set up internal collaboration, i.e., how you will coordinate work, share materials and plan events within the most active core group. For these needs, be sure to use tools that are available to everyone in the organisation, particularly where employee resource groups work across teams and divisions. Determine how you will communicate within the group, where you will collect shared materials, and how you will ensure substitutability in case the organisational team members' capabilities or priorities change.

However, it is equally important to use the right communication channels for the organisation, i.e., for all employees, including those who might join the group in the future. Set up an easy and efficient way for people in the organisation to sign up for group membership. In order to get the group into the corporate consciousness, it is crucial to use its name, logo and other elements of graphic identity consistently. Also identify any channels that will help you promote the group internally. Work with intranet sites, newsletters, and virtual or physical bulletin boards. You can also mention the group's events at company-wide meetings and presentations, which receive a lot of attention. Use inclusive language in internal communication. In the context of

the LGBTQ+ community, using the correct terminology will set a pattern for addressing these topics within the organisation.

Last but not least, you must not forget about communication outside the organisation. This will be important for you if you are a member of inter-company organisations, or when publicly presenting the company, working with non-profit organisations and organising events for the public. Identify ways in which you can promote the group's activities externally. In addition to posting on social media, you can contribute to professional journals, attend conferences and present your own papers. Let those in leadership speak for the organisation and the results of the employee resource group. They often have a great impact and can make a significant contribution to changing the atmosphere in the labour market and in the public. Under the European directive on non-financial reporting[1], some companies are obliged to publish what is known as an annual non-financial report in their annual reports, i.e., information on environmental, social and employment issues, respect for human rights and the fight against corruption and bribery.[2]

[1]
—
Corporate Sustainability
Reporting Directive (CSRD) –
2022/2464/EU

[2]
—
the obligation to report ESG
information applies to
companies that
(a) have securities traded on
regulated markets on an
exchange (except for micro
companies)
(b) meet at least 2 of the 3
following criteria:
→ have more than 250
employees
→ have a net turnover of at
least CZK 1 billion
→ own assets on the balance
sheet exceeding
CZK 500 million

Amazon experience:

Because the LGBTQ+ group has members from both the office and the shop floor, it uses an internal Wiki page that lists what is planned and what events have already taken place, as well as who people can contact if they want to get involved or have an idea for an event. For larger events such as Prague Pride, the group recommends using a project management tool that allows you to record and control all individual organisational tasks.

How to reach new members

The following chapter will guide you through the possibilities for promoting the employee resource group internally and reaching out to new members by being sufficiently visible. Having a sufficiently large committee that is directly involved in running the group and organising its activities is crucial for the group to function. The aim is also to have as broad a platform of grassroots membership and supporters as possible. To put it more bluntly, the ideal vision is to ensure that everyone in the organisation knows that the group exists and that most of the employees are either active in it or at least sometimes attend its events. Although it is difficult to approach this ideal state, it is certainly advisable to devote sufficient time and capacity to promoting the group. The following list will help you to understand the opportunities for internal group visibility.

→ **Open events for the organisation**

Iclude educational and fun activities for the entire (local) company population in the employee resource group programme. One or two such events a year is enough; the aim is to draw attention to the group's existence and to reach those who would like to pay more attention to the issue. Invite these people to join the group. The group should not be exclusive; everyone in the organisation should be able to join.

→ **Recruitment and onboarding of new employees**

Take advantage of the recruitment and onboarding (training) processes your organisation has in place. Work with the HR department to include information about the group and opportunities for involvement in initial training materials or presentations. You will also make it clear that the company does not tolerate hateful or discriminatory behaviour towards LGBTQ+ people.

→ **Attend corporate events**

Secure a place at major corporate events that could raise the profile of the group's activities. You can set up a fun booth with quizzes at a company party or have a short entry at company-wide meetings. You can also sponsor charitable or volunteer initiatives within the company.

→ **Management meetings**

Keep management informed about the employee resource group's activities and achievements. People in leadership positions can then promote the group to their teams or become active sponsors themselves.

→ **The company's social media and website**

As previously mentioned, many LGBTQ+ people actively seek information about whether a company promotes the principles of inclusivity before joining an organisation. It is therefore important to communicate the activities of the group externally. Use the company's social media or website to share the group's success stories. At the same time, many people who already work at the site follow the organisation's social media, meaning that it is not uncommon for them to learn about the group's activities through external channels.

→ **The snowball method**

Don't underestimate the importance of informal networking. Encourage group members to mention the activities in their teams and other work circles. A personal recommendation or invitation to an event usually works best.

→ **Allyship programme**

Create a programme to engage supporters. For example, introduce a way of visually supporting the LGBTQ+ community by wearing rainbow lanyards on entry cards, stickers or other symbols. You can also make good use of this campaign if you want to involve colleagues outside the office (e.g., in production, logistics, etc.) who do not have access to company computers. Such symbolic support is of great importance to LGBTQ+ people in the workplace and makes them feel safe in the organisation.

What to think about

→ Avoid **"pinkwashing"**, i.e., using marketing designed to promote a company's LGBTQ+ inclusivity when it is not inclusive. If you do not specifically support LGBTQ+ activities in your organisation, do not use the rainbow logo or sell rainbow products. Only promote what you actually do for the community.

→ **Respect different audiences.** Although the aim of the group is to raise awareness and inform people about the experience of LGBTQ+ people, please respect that not everyone is interested in the issue. Some people take longer to find their way to issues like this, and some just quietly respect it but don't want to participate in the group's actions. However, do not tolerate hate speech or bullying.

Novartis Experience:

To attract new members to our Employee Resource Group, we carefully choose inclusive and well-organized activities for both LGBTQ+ community members and allies. One successful example is the Prague Pride Fun and Run event, where our initial sponsorship and limited promotion resulted in 15 participants. As we expanded the event and invited associates, their friends, and families for a post-event picnic, engagement surged to 80 participants the following year. By 2023, our participation naturally increased to 120 associates, who then become integrated into our communications strategy and actively participate in activities like flag raising and pride parades. We also leverage giveaways and refreshments during "road shows" to spark dialogue and encourage membership growth, as well as utilize personal storytelling to foster empathy and relatability among potential members.

Employee resource group collaborations

As can be seen from the wide range of activities mentioned, the role of employee resource groups is truly complex and, with a little bit of exaggeration, the group can be called an in-house non-profit organisation. However, in order for the group's work to kick-start a change in corporate culture and support the LGBTQ+ community as a whole, it is advisable to establish different types of collaboration across the portfolio of activities.

→ **Working with LGBTQ+ groups regionally and globally**

If your organisation has other employee resource groups in other locations, keep in touch and share your experience. As well as helping each other with global processes, you can also ask members of the local group to share the life experiences of LGBTQ+ people in their local area.

→ **Collaboration with other employee resource groups**

If there are other communities locally that represent a different group of employees, work closely together and plan some activities together. The added value of this collaboration is an intersectional perspective, i.e., the perspective of people who are in the position of several minority identities at the same time (e.g., LGBTQ+ Roma).

→ **Collaboration with trade unions**

If there are active trade unions in your organisation, they are likely to include discrimination issues in their agenda. Work as closely as possible with them so that your activities complement each other and do not create any rivalry.

→ **Inter-company networking**

Sharing good practice is an extremely useful source of valuable information and inspiration for the functioning of the group. Since the concept of employee resource groups is still a relatively new trend in our area, organisations that want to address the issue work together in a very open and community-based way. Consider getting your organisation involved with Pride Business Forum, a foundation that brings together businesses active in LGBTQ+ issues

and provides them with many useful resources and spaces for sharing. The foundation also annually recognises the best companies in the Czech market in this area and gives awards to specific managers who are committed to improving the situation of LGBTQ+ people.

→ **Working with non-profit organisations**

Find out about non-profit organisations in your area that focus on LGBTQ+ issues. Get in touch with them to discuss ways to support them, whether it be financial, volunteering or advertising. You can work with non-profit organisations over the long term and provide them with official patronage. Don't be afraid to choose lesser-known NGOs, such as those that focus on regions.

Frequently solved problems

You may encounter a number of complications and challenges when implementing and managing employee resource groups. Based on the shared experience of companies working with the concept of employee resource groups, we offer a summary of the most common, including advice on how to approach them.

Employees don't understand why the company is addressing LGBTQ+ issues

There may be voices from within the company complaining that an LGBTQ+ employee resource group is inappropriate in the workplace.

What to do:

Publish specific stories and experiences of LGBTQ+ employees. A personal story often calms controversies and shows what situations are really happening and why these topics need to be raised. If you have the opportunity to share stories from people in senior management, take advantage of it, as they have a greater reach and people in the organisation place a lot of value on them. You can also provide employee training to give them a basic insight into the issues. If dissenting voices come from a particular part of the organisation or from particular people, don't be afraid to approach them with an offer to meet in person and discuss the issues they have concerns about. Someone from management or HR can assist you at such a meeting if you need support. And last but not least, don't despair if you get similar feedback, just like in society, there are always many different perspectives within an organisation. Creating an inclusive and safe environment won't happen overnight, but by consistently taking action and raising topics that used to be taboo, you will send a clear message to the organisation that will lead to change.

The group is unable to find long-term financial support for its activities

There is no formal process for approving the budget and therefore the group cannot plan ahead.

What to do:

Begin by discussing possible pathways to a more sustainable budget with sponsors. You may need to develop a business case similar to the one needed when initially setting up the group, and start discussions with people in decision-making positions. Emphasise the overall vision of the group and link each item of projected costs to specific objectives. Alternatively, try to apply for funding for group activities according to their type. For example, the group's educational events may fall under the shared education budget, promotional materials under the marketing budget, and the cost of membership in LGBTQ+ organisations under employer branding or corporate social responsibility (CSR).

There are only a few active members in the group and we are unable to find more

There are only a small number of people on the group committee who do all the work.

What to do:

Limit activities for a wider audience and make strengthening the group's organisational core your main goal for the year. Communicate more openly that the group is for everyone, including supporters, to eliminate the fears of those who would like to join but think the group is not for them. Seek help on specific projects and roles. Write down specifically what you want from the person you are recruiting and roughly what the job will look like. People in the organisation often have no idea what such work entails and are therefore rather reticent. As soon as there is an imaginable description under the open role offer, interest usually increases. Last but not least, reach out to managers to motivate their teams to join your group (and possibly others).

Corporate terminology

Allyship Program

a programme for supporters to visibly show their support for the group

Business Case

a project plan, document justifying the project launch

CSR, Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility strategy

D&I, Diversity & Inclusion

Diversity and Inclusion strategies

Employee Engagement

engagement of employees

Employer Branding

building the employer's brand

ESG, Environmental, Social and Corporate Governance

measuring the sustainability and social impact of an organisation

HR, Human Resources

Personnel Department

Onboarding

welcoming and training new employees