**Human rights, diversity and respect**

**The Lesbian and Gay Federation introduces itself**

The Lesbian and Gay Federation in Germany (Lesben- und Schwulenverband in Deutschland, or just LSVD) is a civil rights organisation representing the interests of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex people (LGBTI). Human rights, diversity and respect – we want LGBTI to be accepted and recognized as self-evidently belonging to everyday society.

A democratic society must assert the right for every individual to be different, at any time and in any place, without fear of repercussions. Living a self-determined life, free of fear, requires there to be full legal equality. We work to create a society that recognizes and values self-determination and a diversity of lifestyles as an enrichment.

Specific goals of the LSVD include lobbying for Germany’s Basic Law to extend constitutional protection against discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity; programmes at federal and state level to promote acceptance and diversity; legal and social recognition of rainbow families; enforcement of the right to sexual self-determination; LGBTI-inclusive school curricula; refugee policies that provide both protection and opportunity to persecuted LGBTI people; and foreign and development policies that promote respect for the human rights of LGBTI people at EU and global level.

The LSVD has since 1990 been fighting discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity. During this time, LGBTI people have achieved many personal and social freedoms. More and more people live confidently and openly. Attitudes among the wider population have become more liberal. Our Federation has been a major driver and enabler of changes in Germany: the introduction of same-sex marriage; the General Act on Equal Treatment; the final and complete removal of Section 175 – which criminalized homosexual activity – from Germany’s statute books; the law pardoning and compensating men sentenced under the terms of Section 175; improvements for transgender people; the establishment of a monument to homosexuals persecuted under Nazism; and representation on TV and broadcasting councils.

Through our work, we give LGBTI a voice in society, politics and institutions. We stand firm against homosexual and transphobic slurs and smear campaigns, we work for effective protection against discriminatory action and violence, inform politicians and the public, and are heard when it comes to the interests of LGBTI: in the Bundestag, by the Federal Constitutional Court, in the media, in public forums and political parties, trade unions, and interest groups. With campaigns, initiatives, events and statements, we do the vital persuasive groundwork to build majorities within parliaments and society for equal rights, diversity and respect.

Closely linked to its political work, the LSVD is also a point of contact for people seeking information and advice. We provide support for questions and problems confronting LGBTI due to prejudice, social or legal discrimination and exclusion. We also raise awareness among professionals, for example, in youth work, elderly care or family and educational counselling.

The LSVD is represented in all federal states with regional associations. As well as its many individual members, it also has over 130 professional associations, regional groups, projects and companies among its membership nationwide.

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