Guidelines on How to be a Better Ally by the IUSY QWG, 2nd edition

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What is an ally?

When we talk about queer allies, we generally mean a person or an organisation that is not part of the queer community, but are supportive of and speaking up for the community’s rights. Not being homo-, bi- or trans-phobic is important, but just tolerance is not the place where our struggle should stop. Thus, we invite our allies to join us and take an active part in queer politics.

To us as socialists and social democrats, we want words to follow actions. Allies are in a position where they are not directly affected by the hatred the queer community receives and, therefore are able to express themselves more freely. This structural advantage can and should be used! Allies should speak up for queer rights, in their own organizations, in families and in public. But, of course, you should always put safety first – speak up if you can, but choose your battles. However, it is important that allies show their support of the queer community in different contexts and constantly in order to normalize this support and show, that queer issues can be promoted by anyone – not just by those affected. Our policies are based on solidarity for others and not only on promoting the problems that affect oneself.

However, in order to really be able to speak about queer rights, it is important for allies to listen to and hear what issues the queer community wants to address. Allies should form their own political positions and opinions and share them in discussions, while still being respectful towards the voices of queer people, even if there is disagreement. Only open and honest discussions where all parties are treated respectfully can lead to inclusive political positions. Remember that being a queer
person does not make them an expert on homo-, bi- and transphobia automatically and everybody has to educate themselves on those issues. While measures, policies etc. on queer issues can be controversially discussed, it is important though to listen to experiences of people affected by queerphobic hate.

Since queer voices are oftentimes silenced in society, in order to support them, allies have to actively louden those voices. The easiest way is to give up spaces and opportunities to speak and let those spaces be occupied by queer people. Give up space so others can take it and listen to queer voices in order to be able to set your political agenda together with them.

Finally, it is important to state, that we have to find a good equilibrium between identity-politics and the recognition of marginalized identities on the one hand and emancipatory politics on the other hand. Of course, we need to fight for the acceptance of queer identities, but our main issue is to overthrow the patriarchal, capitalist society that determines homo-, bi- and transphobic discrimination. We should base our political strive on a dialectics of identity politics, based on experiences of queer people, and theoretical discussions about how to achieve a society where everybody can live free of oppression.

In showing solidarity, engaging in the queer fight and working with and for the queer community, allies themselves can become a valued and vital part in the strive for sexual and gender equality! So, keep fighting!

**How to make our organisations more Queer Inclusive**

We can make our organisations more inclusive by creating physical **Safe Spaces** for women and queer people at events. This as women and queer people are facing constant difficulties because our society is still guided by the patriarchy. Even in our events, it is important to create places to retreat, to have hierarchy free rooms where the pressure of sexist society doesn’t apply! Ideally there should be two different spaces one for queer and one for women*. These spaces have to be easily accessible and visible.

Another method to use would be to have **mandatory reflection** on queer and feminist issues in every resolution. We should aim to mainstream queer issues since the values of feminism and equality are of high importance for us, we should make sure that this applies to every topic we address. We should do it regardless of how unrelated the topic may seem at first sight. Women make up half of the population and queer people exist everywhere and we need to take their interest into consideration on every issue.

**Create readers/guidelines on queer issues**
Awareness raising and educational information about queer issues, positions, policies and guidelines should be created and spread in order to educate and reach as many people as possible, especially remote areas. In order to improve our way of communicating the queer struggle, it also vital to listen to allies and what they might find difficult to understand. That way we can make the problems queer people face more accessible to people new to the topic.

To have awareness team/trust teams
We need to have these types of teams during special events, it needs to constantly exist and could be elected. It is up to the MO whether the Members of the trust team should have or not any other official duties within the organisation. It is important to keep the trust team unbiased and approachable. The members of the trust team must have some sensitivity training. Also, it would be helpful to have a protocol to follow when people report incidents to the trust team. It is recommendable that the protocol in place must be voted on Congress.

Raising awareness to still have inclusive parties
There is a tendency to declare a feminist/queer position during the events but as soon as there is alcohol involved or just the change into a party atmosphere the respect for these positions can quickly be forgotten. We need to make sure that we live up to our standards even when the official parts are over and even more after we leave the events altogether.

Having Feminist or queer 15 minutes
before the start of the regular session/meeting of regional groups/meetings we have a short discussion about feminist or queer topic just to raise awareness about those issues.

We should promote queer people to be in charge of Queer Working Groups and other political positions
In order to push forward on queer topics, it is a good way to establish a Queer Working Group. To have a functional and efficient Queer Working Group it should be guided by people from the community. Therefore, people coming from the queer community need to be the ones coordinating the working group, especially on the international level. Allies are also welcome to contribute, keeping a sensitive approach. It will allow for a stronger working group that can focus on pushing queer issues onto the agenda. Additionally, to improve queer visibility it is important to encourage queer people to run for political positions.

We should revaluate our partners
It is important that we check the position of our partners regarding queer and feminist issues, and if they do not support feminist-queer topics, to consider finding alternatives.

We should work together with Feminist Groups
Women, as well as queer people, are facing the same or similar oppression in patriarchal structures. So, it is important that we unite forces against oppression one way of doing this is to work together with other strong voices who have the same aims.
Regular reflection rounds
Those take part during events that last more than one day, at one point of the event, after the half. We should provide safe rounds for queers and women to reflect on the atmosphere of the event. At the same time, mandatory reflections on feminist issues and masculinity for men should take place, those should be facilitated by some member of the feminist group. To secure the privacy of the groups and people in it, it is important to make sure they start and end at the same time. While the men discuss feminist or queer issues and texts (it is really important that it doesn’t become “men club” or connection round) women and the queer group exchange the conference and. Any discrimination they faced and discuss what they would like to change regarding ant discriminatory regulations or guidelines in the future. Women and queer group can also work as safe space if someone wants to discuss the other topics. Also, it is important to reflect on allyship at the certain event and in general and how it can be improved.

Sharing international best practices
To improve every MO’s and IUSY’s queer inclusiveness there should be possibilities to exchange best practices and experiences with other MOs in IUSY.

How can we as individuals support Queer Rights?

First of all, we must accept and recognise that if we do not belong to the queer community (maybe even if we do), we do not know all that can be known on queer issues or about all the experiences of people who are queer. Therefore, education is important, not only to raise awareness but to educate ourselves. It is important that people understand more about queer rights and queer people to be able to better understand the struggles and support queer people.

Listen, be open to learn more about your queer friends. Ask them about their situation and the challenges they are facing, and support them. Ask how you can help them. If someone comes out to you, don’t make a big deal about it and treat them normally and show that you accept them for who they are. Don’t make judgements or be subjective. Remember, if someone has come out to you, they have not necessarily come out to everyone, be respectful of their privacy.

Reflect on your privileges, or the certain structural advantages that you may experience or have while others do not. With queer individuals facing stigma, violence, and discrimination in a heterosexist patriarchal society on a daily basis, non-queer individuals tend to have certain privileges. It is important that we use our privileges to help, speak up, and stand with the marginalized.
Speaking up when we hear something offensive like homophobic jokes for example or hurtful things about queer people is another thing we can do. As an ally when you intervene, you’re educating people around you, and demonstrate that you are supportive of equality and inclusion for all. We need to use our voices to address situations that others feel they cannot.

Share your knowledge and support with friends and family as well as online. Share events for queer rights, articles etc. use social media to increase respect for and normalize queer rights. Start by speaking to the people closest to you and show that queer people are just like anyone else, they are human too.

Best Practice examples for Social Media: The idea is to celebrate queer identities and normalize equality and acceptance for them.
- Do a “my favourite queer movies/books” week on your Instagram (stories/postings) and present a medium every day in order to promote queer writers/moviemakers etc. You can also use this for presenting queer people that inspired you
- Apply a filter with a queer-flag to your Facebook/Instagram-profile picture in order to visualize your support
- Celebrate queer identities and important days on social media via posts of support.
- React on social media as well when there are queer issues in your society. (e.g. violation of rights, acts of violence etc.)

Support queer artists and cafés: Especially in times of the global pandemic, little bars, and cafés as well as artists etc. have a hard time keeping up their businesses. This affects queer spaces and individuals even more since they already are part of a subculture. So if you have the financial means to do so – support queer artists by donating to them or buying their art, go drink a coffee to go with your friends in the local queer bar or buy a gift card from a local queer business in order to keep them financially stable during those times.

Join organizations that support the advocacy and legislation for gender equality and non-discrimination against queer individuals. Allies can serve as the bridge for tolerance and acceptance especially in campaigns to pass pro-queer policies and laws.

How can we as organisations/IUSY create legal change?

One of the most important ways that organisations can create change, social as well as legal, is through awareness raising. We need to change the mentality and prejudice of many parts of the society and we need to normalize the existence of queer people in order for them to be able to enjoy equal human rights.
There are many ways for organisations to do this; an important first step is to keep queer rights on the agenda. For instance, organisations can host more activities that deal with queer issues in order to come up with policies, initiatives and positions that will work towards creating better laws and social equality for queer people. Moreover, we should also take an intersectional approach which includes the queer outlook when addressing social and economic issues. Organisations can also work on mainstreaming queer issues into all parts of their programmes. It is important to systematically work with normalizing queerness and educating the members of the organisations about queer issues. This way organisations can be a voice and help amplify the voices of queer people and push their own mother parties, as well as other parties to adopt better policies and laws to protect and create equality for queer people. Don’t forget to involve the queer community within your organisation!

Once you have developed your positions, articles or policies, make sure you spread them far and wide. Maybe hold regular demos or events. As a political youth organisation, you have a great opportunity to be a great queer rights ally by pushing your mother parties to be more progressive and to act for queer equality. We need to do advocacy work both towards the society but also towards decision makers. You can also work together with civil society who are already working on queer rights, perhaps they have policy changes ready that you can help push to the parliament or your mother parties. When our mother parties are in government on any administrative level, it is our duty to insist and remind our party to include the queer perspective and aspect in the decision-making process. When legal solutions are achieved (e.g. Anti-Discrimination Act, Marriage Equality Act etc), we as socialists must monitor the implementation of these Acts of Law and serve as a voice when the legal solutions are not being applied.

In the same way, awareness raising is extremely important in all levels, not just through speech and actions, it also includes who we choose to show in our publications. We should always show the community, as it is – diverse, so push and ensure that queer people and couples are also included in our own publications as well as mother parties.

CONGRATULATIONS!

You are now ready to be an ally to the queer community in your organization and your society! You can now join the common effort to make our organizations and societies into a place of equality, solidarity and zero tolerance to any form of violence or discrimination. These guidelines are compiled by the IUSY Queer Working Group based on positive practice in IUSY, as well as IUSY Member Organizations. For any further questions or issues, feel free to contact us on [insert e-mail].