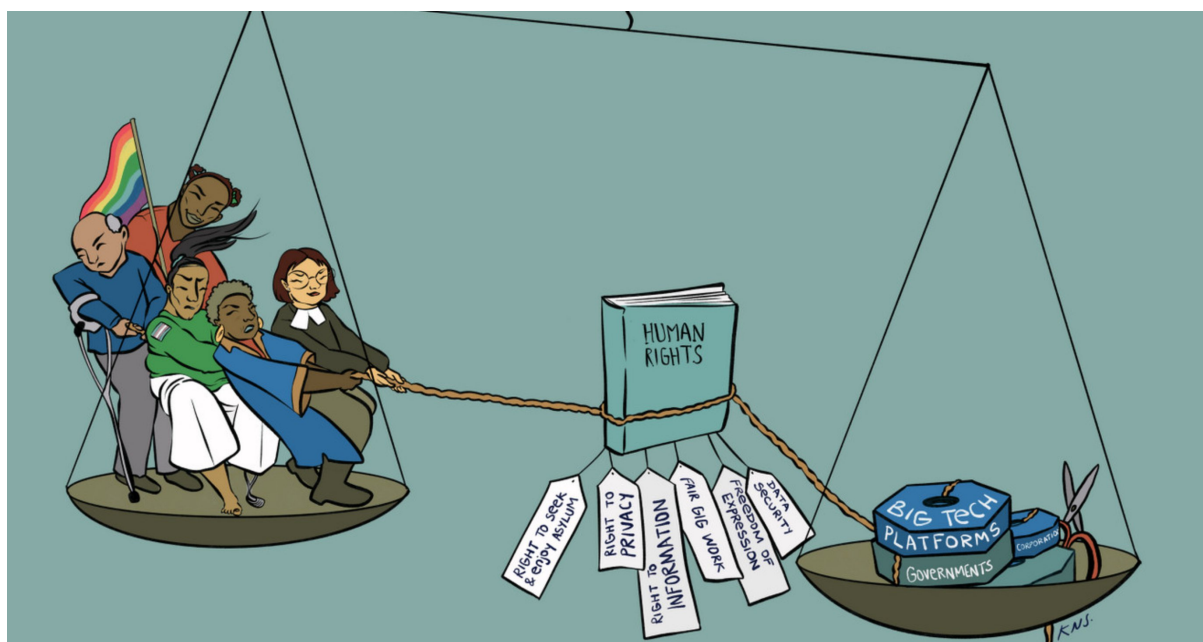


LGBTI Hub Community Consultation Report

September 2026



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1. Summary

In summer 2026, the Digital Freedom Fund (DFF) consulted with groups and individuals working on the rights of lesbian, gay, trans, and intersex (LGBTI) people as well as those working on sex workers' rights to determine whether we should create a space for these groups to form stronger partnerships and share knowledge to develop legal strategies that protect LGBTI people online. This report highlights that there is an urgent need to develop this collaborative space, especially to form joint strategies on topics such as legal gender recognition, surveillance and online hate speech against LGBTI people.

2. Background

In today's technology-driven world, it is more urgent than ever to protect LGBTI people. Digital systems are embedded in the everyday lives of LGBTI communities. People turn to online platforms to work, find community, access health information, express who they are, and stay safe — especially as physical spaces for LGBTI communities are becoming scarcer and LGBTI people have moved online for safety. Similarly, digital identity systems and public registers are becoming key to access essential government services, such as social services and welfare but also healthcare. This digitalisation creates challenges especially for the legal recognition of one's own name and gender.

Unfortunately, digital technologies were not designed to prioritise, centre, or even consider LGBTI people's best interests and safety. Many platforms rely on content moderation that cannot distinguish personal narrative from incitement, exposing LGBTI users and sex workers to shadow banning, deplatforming, and algorithmic amplification of hateful content. LGBTI content is frequently flagged as sexual, inappropriate, and flagged or removed from the platforms. At the same time, these systems collect vast amounts of sensitive data, ranging from health records to gender markers, old and new names, user locations, and more. This leaves LGBTI people particularly vulnerable to doxxing, blackmail, deadnaming, and state, law enforcement or border agency surveillance.

These harms are not evenly distributed across the LGBTI community, with Black people and people of colour, poor people, people on the move, sex workers, trans and intersex people, and those who exist at the intersections of these groups bearing the sharpest edge of these harms.

Profit and control, not LGBTI people's wellbeing and flourishing, are at the centre of these technologies. Given the universality of the issues LGBTI people are facing across platforms and borders, and the limited resources that those of us striving for their digital rights and safety have, we decided to consult with others working on LGBTI digital rights to

determine whether there is a need to establish a shared space to collaborate on legal strategies to protect LGBTI people.

3. Hub concept

The basic concept of the LGBTI Hub (Hub) is to create a space where 30+ groups across Europe, Latin America and Africa can jointly collaborate and share knowledge on legal strategies that protect LGBTI people from online harms. The Hub would help raise funding for some of the most promising cases developed, either directly through DFF or our funder network.

Through the consultation process and our existing network, we have compiled a list of over 80 LGBTI rights groups, sex worker rights organisations, digital justice organisations, legal organisations, funders and regional collectives (such as EDRi and ESWA) who could be invited to apply to join the Hub.

The Hub would build on almost a decade's worth of experience by DFF bringing together the digital rights community, and specific, practical expertise already running hubs on [AI](#) and [Digital Democracy](#). It also builds on our existing expertise of funding a wide range of legal strategies that fight for the protection of LGBTI rights including:

- [Litigation](#) challenging the blocking of access to online LGBTI content in Hungary, led by the Háttér Society.
- [Litigation](#) in Poland related to data protection and data transfer issues experienced by transgender people in the process of and after getting their legal gender formally changed, led by the Lambda Warsaw Association.
- [Litigation](#) in Italy to address systemic discrimination faced by transgender individuals due to the mismanagement of personal data by public healthcare entities, led by Rete Lenford.
- The development of a [legal strategy](#) to hold platforms accountable for the online promotion, distribution, and sale of materials linked to conversion practices in Spain, led by No Es Terapia.
- The preparation of [strategic litigation](#) to challenge systematic violations of trans refugees' digital identity rights in France, led by Urgence Homophobie.
- The [successful case](#) against dating app Grindr for disclosing sensitive personal information, including health information on HIV status, about users to third parties for behaviour-based marketing without a legal basis, led by None of Your Business (noyb) and filed by the Norwegian Consumer Council (NCC).
- [Research](#) looking at how the deplatforming and digital exclusion of Sex Workers—especially those who are Black, migrant, trans, and disabled—constitutes a violation of fundamental rights under Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination), in conjunction with Articles 8 and 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), and what legal pathways exist to challenge this form of systemic, digitally mediated discrimination, led by the Black Sex Worker Collective (BSWC).

4. Consultation Process

In summer 2026, we consulted with a range of different groups and individuals working on LGBTI rights and sex workers' rights and combined their input on our idea to set up an LGBTI Hub.

Our consultation had three goals:

- Find out whether there was a need to develop a shared space to collaborate on legal strategies for protecting LGBTI people from digital harm.
- If yes, what the key elements needed by the LGBTI rights community would be for the Hub.
- The most pressing topics relating to LGBTI rights and safety in the digital space, which the hub could work to address.

In July and August 2026, we had a mix of group and individual online calls with more than 20 people, gathering their input in an online collaborative board. These groups included LGBTI advocates; litigators; sex worker rights groups; groups working on wider digital rights topics who include a focus on LGBTI people, and several funders. Some additional groups who could not attend a call gave written notes in response to our questions. The group included attendees from across Europe and Latin America. The next round of calls will include organisations, LGBTI activists, and human rights defenders from and beyond our network in Africa.

5. Need for the Hub

There was overwhelming support for the development of a shared space, i.e. the LGBTI Hub, where groups could develop legal strategies to protect LGBTI rights. The more than 20 collaborators confirmed the importance of the Hub and many expressed their desire to take part, while recommending a range of other groups and associations that could also take part in the Hub.

For groups in Europe, the development of the Hub would be especially timely given that recently passed legislation, such as the EU Digital Services Act and AI Act, offer new avenues for protecting human rights online. However, there is a European policy to enforce online age verification systems which will ultimately risk the safety of many LGBTI people. Likewise, a lot of Latin American actors are facing similar challenges with digital gender recognition and have flagged that there is an opportunity to work together to create cross-jurisdictional legal strategies and build power back to the LGBTI groups.

Participants suggested that the following aspects would give the Hub added value that is currently missing from LGBTI rights spaces and discussions:

- Finding common strategies for systemic change across organisations working on anti-gender, anti-rights and anti-women movements to create power
- Sharing of knowledge and learning from different experts.

- Meeting other Hub participants in person.
- Financial support to most promising legal strategies
- Centring those with lived experience, queer-led organisations with intersectional focus most affected by online harms.

During the group calls, participants were able to upvote the topics that they found more pressing to address within the Hub's activities. This led to a list of what the consultations agree to be the most important issues. An interesting thread emerged across the call discussions where participants highlighted the need to centre LGBTI-led organisations and the people with lived experience in the Hub goals and to ensure cross-movement pollination.

6. Expected Impact

Through the Hub, we aim to:

- Have a larger, more resilient and more connected LGBTI rights community who have the skills and knowledge required address digital harms in their work
- Secure justice for LGBTI people through accountability of government and tech companies, better laws and stronger enforcement.
- Ensure technology is designed and used in a way that increases the well-being and safety of LGBTI people

7. Key LGBTI digital rights topics

Eight key themes emerged from the conversations about which topics were key with regard to the digital rights of LGBTI people.

1. Legal gender recognition & identity documents

Access to rights frequently breaks down when someone changes their legal name or gender marker. Recurring issues are binary-only gender fields in online forms and public registers, registries that force disclosure of both old and new names, gendered ID numbers, and no consistent cross-border recognition of identity between states. Digital systems then compound this: deadnames persist in recommendation systems, autocomplete, data broker records and web archives; LLMs trained on gender data can out trans people; and in some jurisdictions (such as Germany and France) law enforcement can access deadname data. GDPR's Art. 9 "sensitive data" protections and the question of legal recognition for trans people and trans parents came up as a possible lever here.

2. Censorship, age restrictions, and content moderation of LGBTI and adult content

Sweden's criminalisation of adult content and the UK Online Safety Act 2023 were flagged as precedents that sweep up LGBTI content by treating it as "pornographic" regardless of age rating. Related topics include social platforms restricting LGBTI-themed content as

"political advertising," the blocking of words deemed "inappropriate" that often catch queer and sex-positive language, the restriction of health education pages under content guidelines, the censorship of LGBTI creators generally, and AI content-violation policies that fail to distinguish personal narrative and resistance against oppression from incitement and violence. The policing of language on AI platforms was named as a further version of this problem. Age verification requirements raise a range of issues including the possible exclusion of teenagers under 18 from LGBTI related information and community and the blanket exclusion of trans people due to online identity verification systems. Further, AI-based age assurance/estimation were flagged as particularly unreliable as well as risky for queer, trans, and gender-nonconforming people.

3. Algorithmic governance & platform accountability: from disinformation to shadowbanning

On the one hand, this topic includes the shadowbanning and demonetisation of LGBTI content/creators by opaque, unaccountable platform systems, and deplatforming via "real name" policies that exclude trans people. On the other hand, participants raised the algorithmic amplification and monetisation of anti-LGBTI and hateful content, weak enforcement against hate speech, and AI systems producing anti-LGBTI+ information.

4. Surveillance, data collection & privacy risks

Another theme was how the mass and targeted collection of data exposes vulnerable groups: from state spyware used against human rights defenders, journalists and activists to the mass collection of migrants' data at borders and during asylum processes; data brokerage of health and inferred-health data; sensitive data harvested via LGBTI dating apps; ad-tech data-sharing practices; and data breaches/doxxing of patient databases, membership lists and donor files. Specific harms named included outing via shared e-files or when accessing gendered screenings/treatments, digital data used to blackmail queer people by individuals or states, queer refugees pressured to submit video/data to "prove" their LGBTI status, and deepfakes/image-based abuse.

5. Sex workers' digital rights

Sex workers have been flagging the digital rights issues they are facing for over a decade, acting as the "canaries in the coalmine" for the wider community. Sex workers are often the first and hardest hit. Alongside being affected by the other topics listed, specific issues include arbitrary crackdowns on advertising (police posing as clients to run arrest operations), breaches of privacy/confidentiality used to control data on sex work, no safe/anonymous digital payment options, and a broader post-COVID shift of sex work to online spaces as physical venues closed, raising new safety & privacy issues.

6. Systemic & political context

Broader trends noted included the geopolitical drift toward authoritarianism, systemic discrimination baked into the digitalisation of public services (including AI-driven ones)

and into the judiciary, the use of moral panics (including through disinformation propagated online) to mobilise fear and legitimise violence against LGBTI people (funded by religious extremists), coordinated attacks on LGBTI rights defenders, defamation/smearing campaigns, criminalisation more broadly, and weak legal remedies (especially around elections).

7. Intersectionality

Participants flagged that these harms aren't experienced uniformly: almost all of these issues affect LGBTI people who are poor, racialised, migrants, women, trans, intersex, disabled, and those working in precarious and stigmatised jobs more sharply and in specific ways. For instance, the racialised nature of surveillance and state violence mean that different bodies experience the same regulations very differently. Any approach to tackling these topics must account for these differences and be led by those who are affected, in line with the disability justice principle “nothing about us without us”.

8. Key Targets

The participants felt like the main targets for defending LGBTI rights were:

- Big Tech, including Meta, Google, TikTok, Apple and OpenAI
- Other key companies such as digital identity vendors, game and EdTech providers, and gambling companies
- Governments and municipalities: a few initial target countries and regions were identified including France, Germany, the UK (in Europe) and Brazil (in Latin America).
- Use of EU independent authorities like Digital Service Coordinators and Data Protection Authorities

9. Next Steps

To continue the process of creating our first LGBTI Hub, our next steps are:

- Share this report with further interested groups to get their feedback and input during in-person meetings such as the TGEU Council days and Privacy Camp.
- Host an online meeting in September, bringing together those who have provided input so far, and other potential Hub participants, to analyse the discussions so far and plan the launch of the Hub.
- Reach out to more groups, especially BIPOC-led and trans-led groups and more groups in Africa to get their additional inputs.
- Revise this report in line with that feedback and then share with the broader community consulted and other funders.

- Partner with more foundations and other philanthropic bodies to raise additional seed funding of EUR 500,000 on top of funds already committed for launching the Hub and funding the promising legal cases and strategies that are developed within the Hub.
- Full launch of the Hub in 2027 with a public invitation for interested groups and individuals to apply to join.