

# 2023 LGBTQ+ Inclusion Business Primer

Poland



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Business

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# About Open For Business

Open For Business is a coalition of global companies making the case that inclusive and diverse societies are better for business and better for economic growth. The purpose of the coalition is to advance LGBT+ rights globally. Open For Business coalition partners share a deep-rooted commitment to diversity and inclusion in their own workplaces, and they are concerned about the spread of anti-LGBT+ policies in many countries in which they operate.

The coalition has live regional programs in the Caribbean, Central and Eastern Europe and East Africa, with a program in South East Asia in development. Each of these programs works with local civil society partners to mobilize advocates in local business communities and facilitate data-driven advocacy.

Around the world, millions of people face discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. Open For Business exists to promote LGBTQ+ inclusion all over the world. Organized as a charity Open For Business is a coalition of global companies taking action for more LGBTQ+ inclusive societies.

# Coalition Partners



# Foreword from the CEO

Since we launched our initial report, *The Economic Case for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Central and Eastern Europe: Hungary, Poland, Romania and Ukraine*, in 2021 and started our Polish Local Influencer Program, we have seen a tremendous response from Polish businesses, the media and the diplomatic community. The data in that report clearly showed that the current government's anti-LGBTQ+ policies and environment are keeping Poland's economy from reaching its full potential by creating a negative national reputation, encouraging brain drain, and not attracting the top global talent or investments the country needs to flourish.

From panel discussions we have held at the Karpacz Economic Forum, our own Open For Business: Poland Summit and in bilateral meetings with businesses large and small over the past two years we have seen companies use their channels of influence internally and externally to speak out on this crisis and create a more welcoming and inclusive environment for LGBTQ+ people. They do this because they know it is good for people, good for business and good for the economy.

As Poland prepares for its parliamentary elections this fall, we have created this LGBTQ+ Inclusion Business Primer with updated data and information to help the business community better understand how important the economic case for LGBTQ+ inclusion is for Poland's future. With your help and support, we can create a bright and inclusive future for Poland that is also economically strong and vibrant. Thank you for reading and sharing this report and please don't hesitate to reach out to our fantastic Polish team who support us.



**Dominic Arnall**  
Chief Executive Officer

# Executive Summary

Parliamentary elections will be held in Poland later this year, and the rights of LGBTQ+ people in the country are likely to come to the political foreground once again. In the 2020 Presidential election, the LGBTQ+ community was heavily demonized: during his re-election campaign, President Duda compared 'LGBT ideology' to communism.

As a coalition of global companies, many of which do business in Poland and across Eastern Europe, Open For Business is closely following developments. Our coalition partners believe that open, inclusive, and diverse societies are better for business, and this LGBTQ+ Inclusion Business Primer provides a clear overview of the economic impacts of LGBTQ+ discrimination in Poland.

## Key Report Findings:

**Poland is the EU's least LGBTQ+ inclusive country** according to ILGA-Europe, who place the country at the bottom of their Rainbow Europe ranking. The national government continues its verbal attacks on the LGBTQ+ community and although some local authorities have reversed their "LGBT-free zone" status, discriminatory acts are still in place in 67 municipalities and districts. A majority of Polish LGBTQ+ people still hide their identities at work.

**LGBTQ+ discrimination has a negative impact on Poland's economy.** Open For Business analysis estimates that the economic cost of LGBTQ+ discrimination is between 0.21 and 0.43 percent of GDP, or up to PLN 9.5 billion annually. This is the result of quantifiable factors such as lost productivity and health inequalities. Reduced foreign direct investment and brain drain raise this estimate significantly.

**Poland struggles to retain high-skilled workers.** Continued economic growth depends upon talent – and Open For Business analysis has shown that high-skilled workers are leaving for more open and inclusive countries. This will make it harder to sustain growth in the face of significant headwinds: a high inflation rate compared to its European neighbors, the continued war in Ukraine, and weakening domestic demand.

**Business in Poland supports LGBTQ+ inclusion.** Companies large and small across the country have been growing and expanding programs to support LGBTQ+ workers. An Open For Business survey of Polish hiring managers showed higher levels of commitment to diversity and inclusion compared to the other countries in the region.

**New evidence shows there is an 'Inclusion Dividend'.** New studies show that companies which have strong policies in place for LGBTQ+ people do better financially and report better than average earnings. There is also more empirical data showing that innovation, the driver of business success, correlates strongly with the higher levels of LGBTQ+ social inclusion.

# The current situation for LGBTQ+ people in Poland

Approximately two million LGBTQ+ people live in Poland.<sup>1</sup> Overall, the situation for LGBTQ+ people in Poland has rapidly deteriorated since 2019 with the gradual adoption of homophobic local government resolutions also known as „LGBT-Free Zones,” the attacks on Equality Marches, and repression of LGBTQ+ activists<sup>2</sup>. This was fostered by hateful statements by public figures, especially political leaders and representatives of the public media and the Catholic Church, linking homosexuality to pedophilia and declaring LGBTQ+ equality to be a demoralization of children and a threat to family values. In addition, LGBTQ+ discriminatory civic parliamentary bills were brought before the Polish Parliament in direct contravention of international human rights law and standards. In turn, law enforcement and services had the acquiescence of the Polish authorities to use excessive force against peacefully protesting LGBTQ+ rights defenders.

The current situation of LGBTQ+ people in Poland appears to reflect the highly polarized environment of the country. Key factors playing into it are: a seemingly improving general population's attitude towards LGBTQ+ people despite the hostile policy-making, alarming public authorities', influence of the international community (the European Union) as well as the impact of the private sector moving towards building inclusive workplaces more often.

## Legal landscape and public attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people

Poland has found itself at the very bottom of ILGA-Europe's "Rainbow Europe"<sup>3</sup> Annual Review of the Human Rights Situation of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex People ranking of European Union countries for the fourth year in a row. In 2023, Poland scored just a 15% rating in terms of the level of equal rights for LGBTQ+ people.

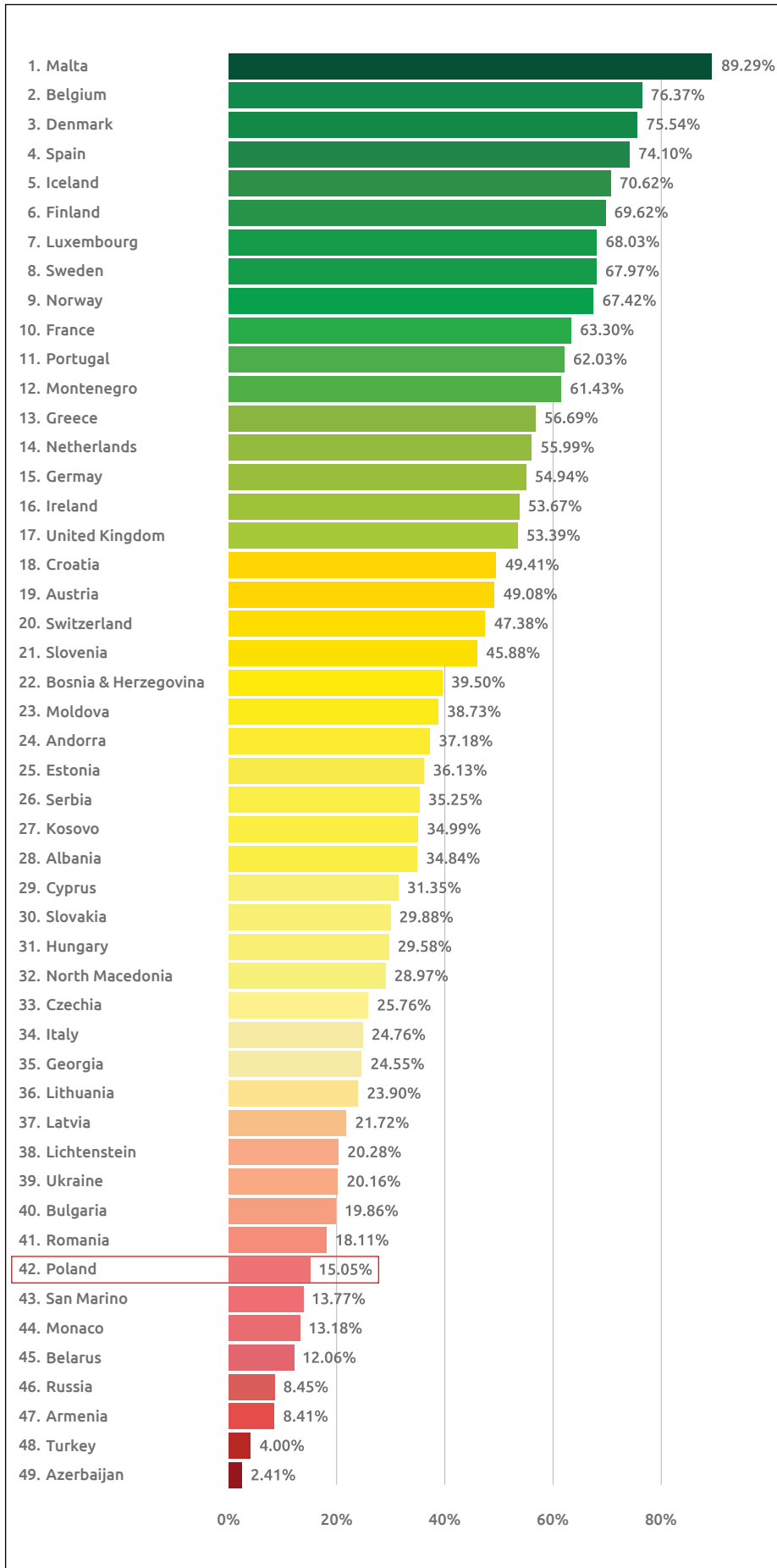
The country has seen worrying regulatory proposals and political endeavors in recent years, showing real risk to LGBTQ+ people in the country. A controversial regulatory proposal known as "Lex Czarnek"<sup>4</sup> similar to current laws in Russia and Hungary, was proposed in 2021 by Przemysław Czarnek, the Polish Minister for Education. If implemented, the proposal would greatly limit schools' ability to educate students about LGBTQ+ issues and provide legal grounds for dismissal and criminal sanctions for teachers and school management supporting LGBTQ+ students or discussing LGBTQ+ issues. While 'Lex Czarnek' was dismissed by a presidential veto in March 2022, Minister Czarnek announced that a new draft of the bill will be developed during the next parliamentary term, after the 2023 elections.

1. Miłość Nie Wyklucza (2020) "Orientuj się!" available at: <https://mnw.org.pl/orientujsie/>

2. Amnesty International (2022) "They treated us like criminals - from shrinking space to persecution of LGBTI activists", available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/fr/documents/eur37/5882/2022/en/>

3. ILGA-Europe (2023) "Country Ranking 2023", available at: <https://rainbow-europe.org/country-ranking>

4. Prawo.pl (2023) "Lex Czarnek 3.0? Być może już jesienią", available at: <https://www.prawo.pl/oswiata/lex-czarnek-30-zapowiedz-mein,520780.html>



The 2023 "Rainbow Europe" Country Ranking by ILGA-Europe, ranks countries on a scale between 0% (gross violations of human rights, discrimination) and 100%(respect of human rights, full equality)

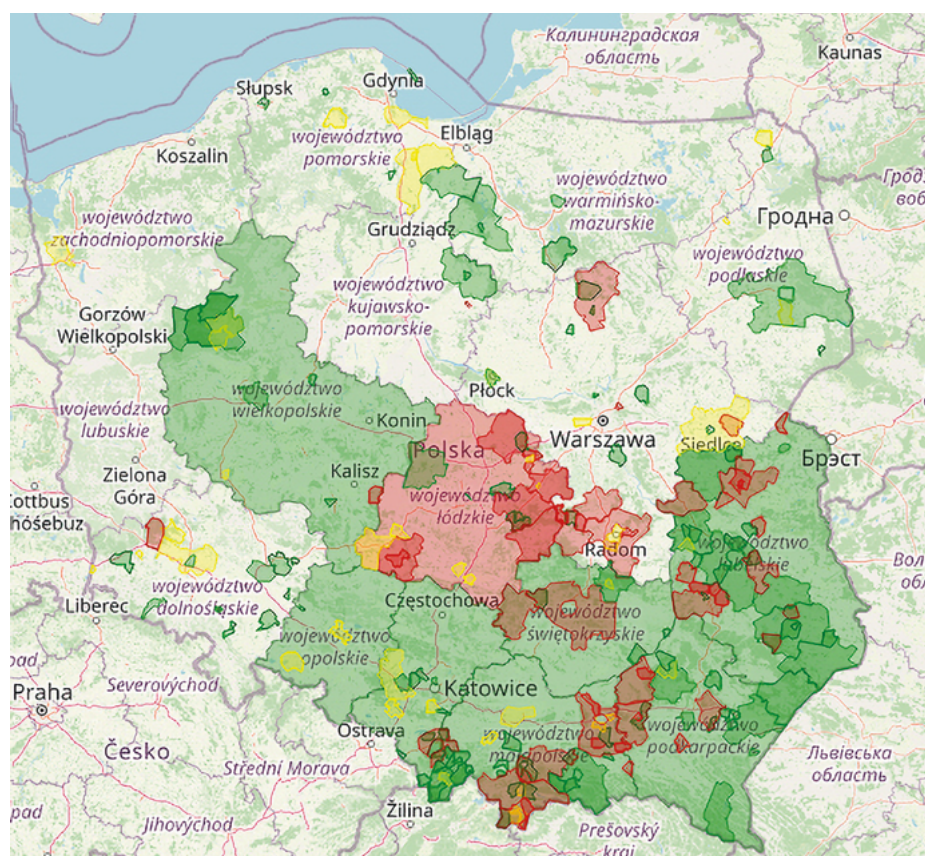


Hostility and hate-speech towards LGBTQ+ people by public officials have continued over the past two years. Hurtful remarks were made by high-ranking policy-makers and public figures, including the aforementioned Minister of Education, and the leader of the ruling party, Jaroslaw Kaczynski. These statements include publicly calling trans people “abnormal”<sup>5</sup>, and the identities of LGBTQ+ teenagers “a madness”<sup>6</sup> and more.

Alarming levels of prejudice have been reported by the Polish Ombudsman<sup>7</sup> (RPO), who has challenged the resolutions of some local authorities concerning the LGBT-free

zones and Local Government Charters of Family Rights, indicating that they unequivocally harm individual freedoms and rights, and violate the prohibition of discrimination under Article 32 of the Polish Constitution. In July 2021, the European Commission took action against Poland for policies it deemed incompatible with the Charter of Fundamental Rights.<sup>8</sup> Polish local governments were threatened with the suspension of relations with other, European partner cities and local governments, but most importantly with the blocking of the disbursement of European and Norwegian funds necessary for further de-

velopment. Although the European Commission closed its proceedings against Poland on 26 January, 2023 on the issue of „LGBT-free zones”<sup>9</sup>, it has conditioned the disbursement of funds according to new rules, i.e. compliance with the Charter of Fundamental Rights. This means that not a single euro will be available for spending by local authorities that do not comply with EU anti-discrimination rules. Following the intervention of the RPO, by May 2023, 20 local authorities have reported that they have reversed their positions.<sup>7</sup> However, discriminatory acts are still in place in 67 municipalities and districts in Poland.



Map of local governments with “LGBT-Free Zones” enacted (red), rejected (dark green) and with ongoing discussion (yellow). Source: “Hate Atlas” atlasnienawisci.pl

5. Oko.press (2020) “Oni nie są równi normalnym ludziom”. Brunatna kampania sztabu Dudy przeciw osobom LGBT”, available at: <https://oko.press/oni-nie-sa-rowni-normalnym-ludziom-brunatna-kampania-sztabu-dudy-przeciw-osobom-lgbt>

6. TVN24 (2022) “Kaczyński o osobach homoseksualnych. Publicyści komentują słowa prezesa PiS”, available at: <https://tvn24.pl/polska/jaroslaw-kaczynski-o-osobach-lgbt-i-12-letnich-lesbijkach-patryk-michalski-i-dominika-sitnicka-komentuja-6218776>

7. Biuletyn Informacji Publicznej RPO (2022-2023) “RPO: uchylić uchwały “anty-LGBT” tam, gdzie jeszcze obowiązują. 20 samo-rządów tak zrobilo”, available at: <https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/pl/content/rpo-uchwaly-anty-lgbt-samorzady-odpowiedzi-kolejne>

8. Council of Europe (2021), „Report on the fact-finding mission on the role of local authorities with regard to the situation and rights of LGBTI people in Poland”, available at: [https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/Raport\\_Rady\\_Europy\\_%20%28jez.polski%29.pdf](https://bip.brpo.gov.pl/sites/default/files/Raport_Rady_Europy_%20%28jez.polski%29.pdf)

9. Notes From Poland (2023) “EU ends legal action against Poland over anti-LGBT zones”, available at: <https://notesfrompoland.com/2023/02/16/eu-ends-legal-action-against-poland-over-anti-lgbt-zones/>



„Local authorities have a big role to play, because they have concrete tools to implement equality policies and influence the development of the social awareness of their residents from an early age. These tools are the introduction of anti-discrimination and sexuality education in schools, in line with World Health Organisation standards and guidelines, and the support of NGOs working for diversity and acceptance.”

**Robert Biedroń**

Member of the European Parliament  
and former Mayor of Slupsk

All of the above-mentioned measures, together with the absence of marriage equality, lack of laws protecting against bias-motivated and hate crimes, and a relatively complicated legal procedure for lawfully-recognized sex change make LGBTQ+ people living in Poland vulnerable to situations that negatively affect their quality of life, their sense of security and ultimately their health. This also discourages peaceful activism, not only of the LGBTQ+ community, but also of activists working in their defense and for their rights.<sup>2</sup>

However, the concerning state of political discourse in the country does not correspond with social attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people, which have been improving in recent years. IPSOS polls for Oko.press<sup>10</sup> published in late 2022 have shown that the public's support for civil partnerships and marriage equality is growing. According to Kantar Public's survey commissioned by the weekly Tygodnik Polityka, 57% of Poles supported marriage equality in the summer of 2022.<sup>11</sup> The numbers are an improvement compared to 2021, when 35% of those surveyed supported civil unions, 21% supported marriage equality and 39% of respondents were against any legal solutions in that regard. 60% of those surveyed also agreed that Poland should abolish the so-called 'LGBT-free zones' in order to meet EU requirements to receive funding.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD) Life in Transition Survey (LiTS) shows that the familiarity and acceptance of LGBTQ+ people in Poland tends to lag other EBRD-EU countries. For example, when asked, nearly a third of respondents report that they agree or strongly agree that same-sex sexual activity should be criminalized, this is 10 percentage points higher than that of the EBRD-EU regional average.

While in a cross-country perspective attitudes look less favorable relative to some other economies in Emerging Europe, previous studies (including by researchers at EBRD) highlighted that legislation affects attitudes. In particular, there is a statistically significant increase in favorable attitudes towards sexual minorities when same-sex relationships are recognised by law. These effects are widespread across demographic groups, suggesting that laws can exert a powerful influence on societal attitudes (see, for instance, Aksoy et al. 2020).<sup>12</sup>

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10. Oko.press (2022) "Wyborcy PiS gotowi poświęcić pieniądze z UE, byle utrzymać strefy wolne od ideologii LGBT [SONDAŻ]", available at: <https://oko.press/wyborcy-pis-gotowi-poswiecic-pieniadze-z-ue-byle-utrzymac-strefy-wolne-od-ideologii-lgbt-sondaz>

11. Wirtualnemedi (2022) "Miłość Nie Wyklucza stawia w Polsce billboardy z apelem o wprowadzenie równości małżeńskiej", available at: <https://www.wirtualnemedi.pl/arttykul/milosc-nie-wyklucza-rownosc-malzenska-mowie-tak>

12. Aksoy, et.al. (2020) "Do laws shape attitudes? Evidence from same-sex relationship recognition policies in Europe, available at: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0014292120300313>

13. EBRD (2022) Life in Transition Survey and authors' calculations.

Notably, the table below suggests a greater empathy towards the LGBTQ+ community among those who work in the private sector, relative to the rest of the population in Poland.<sup>13</sup>

### LGBTQ+ attitudes and perceptions in Poland

	Overall, excluding private sector	Private sector	p-value
<b>Panel A</b>			
There is widespread discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation	33%	44%	0.001
Same-sex sexual activity should be criminalized	32%	24%	0.005
<b>Panel B</b>			
I know someone who is attracted to people of the same sex	20%	27%	0.018

**Panel A** shows the per cent of respondents who agree or strong agree with the two statements while **Panel B** shows the percent of respondents who reported that they know someone who is attracted to people of the same sex. The p-value is the resulting p-values from a two-sides t-test for the equality of means. These statistics are based on preliminary data. The EBRD-EU regional average is a simple average across 10 economies with at least 1000 interviews each. The survey started in October 2022 and is expected to be finalized across all economies later in 2023.

Moreover, the will for self-expression among LGBTQ+ people and allies has also grown in the country recently. In 2022, Equality (Pride) Marches were held in 29 towns and cities across Poland. This number has been growing since 2001, when the first anti-LGBTQ+ discrimination march was held in Warsaw.

# The impact of violence and discrimination towards LGBTQ+ people in Poland

Despite improved public opinion towards LGBTQ+ people in Poland, the 2021 report, "Social situation of LGBT people in Poland - 2019 - 2020"<sup>15</sup> by the Centre for Research on Prejudice at the University of Warsaw, commissioned by the Campaign Against Homophobia, notes that 89% of LGBTQ+ people have encountered homophobic or transphobic remarks over the last year. In addition, an incredible 69% of LGBTQ+ people have suffered from some form of violence during the past 12 months because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. And over the past four years, the number of LGBTQ+ people in Poland who meet the diagnostic criteria for depression has almost doubled. In the latest poll, 55% of respondents declared that they sometimes have suicidal thoughts, compared to 45% in 2017 and 38% in 2010.

## Inclusion in the Workplace

While the legal situation, the political environment, and the level of violence against LGBTQ+ people in Poland is alarming, there are some positive advancements being made by private sector companies to support LGBTQ+ inclusion, despite statistics that still show continued difficulties experienced in the workplace.

According to the Campaign Against Homophobia, 25% of LGBTQ+ people in Poland conceal their gender identity and/or sexual orientation at work completely, while 35% hide their true self from some of their colleagues.<sup>13</sup> Only 28% of surveyed LGBTQ+ people state that they have disclosed their identity or orientation at work in the past two years and believe they are able to talk about their private lives as freely as heterosexual and/or cisgender people.<sup>13</sup> On a relatively positive note, 53% of transgender people who disclosed their gender identity in the workplace feel that they have support from colleagues and supervisors.<sup>13</sup>

Research also shows that hiring and promotion decisions are based not only on potential employee's fitness for the job, but also on prejudice.<sup>16</sup> LGBTQ+ candidates, even at the recruitment stage, receive fewer callbacks than their heterosexual counterparts.<sup>14</sup> It has been suggested that "employees of companies that do not care about a safe work environment for LGBT+ people face problems such as difficulties concentrating on tasks at work, fatigue caused by constantly hiding their sexual orientation and gender identity from colleagues, avoiding specific people and integration events, working remotely due to lack of acceptance in the office, dissatisfaction and depression."<sup>15</sup>

14. Miłoś Nie Wyklucza (2022) "Parada i Marsze Równości 2022", available at <https://mnw.org.pl/marsze2022/>

15. Centre for Research on Prejudice, UW, commissioned by the Campaign Against Homophobia (2021) „The social situation of LGBT people in Poland - 2019 - 2020”, available here: <http://psych.uw.edu.pl/2021/12/08/sytuacja-spoeczna-osob-lgbta-w-polsce-raport-za-lata-2019-2020/>

16. IZA Institute of Labor Economics (2022) "Reducing Sexual-Orientation Discrimination: Experimental Evidence from Basic Information Treatments", available here: <https://docs.iza.org/dp14998.pdf>

The good news is that many workplaces are becoming more open and inclusive towards the LGBTQ+ community. According to the report “Safe havens: Why Talk about LGBT+ People in the Workplace?” published in 2022 by NGO Love Does Not Exclude and Skanska Property, over the past couple of years, the country has seen an increase in the number of new initiatives, groups and employee networks focusing on LGBTQ+ people in the workplace.<sup>17</sup> The authors argue that these networks help break down prejudices and foster acceptance building, increasing the visibility of LGBTQ+ people in the private sector.

14 companies (3M Poland, Accenture Poland, BlaBlaCar, Deloitte Polska, Dentons Europe, Google Poland, Intel Technology Poland, JLL Poland, NatWest Group, Nokia Poland, PwC Polska, QIAGEN Business Services, Skanska Property Poland, Standard Chartered Global Business Services Poland) and their internal LGBTQ+ employee networks contributed to the publication, which aims to create more inclusive workplaces. Data shows that as many as 72% of Polish enterprises implement Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) policies and activities.<sup>15</sup> Open For Business’ survey of hiring managers in Poland in 2019 shows that 41% of HR leaders consider their company to be committed to having a diverse and representative workforce (31% consider their organizations to be “extremely committed” to building an inclusive workforce) and that 44% of managers surveyed also stated that their companies’ commitment to diversity and inclusion has grown over the period of 2-3 years.



„Work done by Open For Business gave us the very first credible and useful data and arguments source for the economic case. I have been using the Economic Case for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Central & Eastern Europe report as a door opener and a way to start the discussion on LGBTQ+ inclusion in the workplace on a regular basis. Having this argument in our toolbox allows us to speak up about the general situation of LGBTQ+ people in Poland and D&I as a wider topic as well.”

**Rafal Dembe**

Coordinator of Santander Embrace Network,  
Director of Strategy and Business Support  
at Santander Bank Polska

17. Love Does Not Exclude, Skanska Property Poland (2022) “Safe Havens - Why Talk about LGBT+ People in the Workplace?”, available at: <https://biznesniewyklucz.pl/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/safe-havens-2022.pdf>

# The Current Economic Situation in Poland

While Poland remains one of the largest economies in Central and Eastern Europe, in 2023 it has faced an economic deceleration and a continued struggle with high inflation as well as an increase in the cost of living, similar to other EU countries. While a short-term recession was experienced in the first quarter of the year, a general annual GDP increase of 1.2% is predicted by the Polish Economic Institute. In June 2022, inflation reached a level of 15.5%, the highest rate recorded in the past 25 years. It is estimated to remain at a relatively high level of 13% (yearly average) in 2023.<sup>18</sup>

The European Commission's economic forecast for Poland predicts real GDP growth slowing down to 0.7% in 2023 and rebounding to 2.7% in 2024 with the unemployment rate estimated to remain stable.<sup>19</sup> The high inflation rate will remain the major factor slowing down economic growth. In fact, Poland may suffer from one of the highest inflation rates in the EU in 2024.<sup>20</sup>

Poland's economy is transforming. Its current strengths include the ICT sector with an estimated worth of €44 billion in 2021, making up circa 4.1% of Poland's GDP and expected to reach 4.5% in 2025.<sup>21</sup> While agriculture and manufacturing continue to be important pillars of the country's economy, emerging industries (e.g. automotive and aerospace) are having a growing impact on Poland's growth.<sup>22,23</sup>

However, Poland faces a number of economic challenges in the coming years. OECD points to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, weaker domestic demand and a deteriorating external environment as the drivers of growing energy prices.<sup>24</sup> An aging population and a decreasing number of actively working Poles may also prove to be a major obstacle for growth.<sup>25</sup> In fact, an analysis of World Bank/LinkedIn data from our 2021 report shows that workers in "jobs of the future" in technology, the sciences, and finance, are leaving Poland for more LGBTQ+ friendly countries and are being replaced by workers from less inclusive societies.<sup>26</sup>

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18. Przegląd Gospodarczy PIE - zima (2022), Polish Economic Institute

19. European Commission (2023) "Economic forecast for Poland", available at: [https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-economies/poland/economic-forecast-poland\\_en](https://economy-finance.ec.europa.eu/economic-surveillance-eu-economies/poland/economic-forecast-poland_en)

20. EY (2023) "Polska: wzrost gospodarczy nieznacznie szybszy niż wcześniej prognozowany, inflacja w europejskiej czołówce", available here:

[https://www.ey.com/pl\\_pl/news/2023/04/ey-european-economic-outlook-q1-2023](https://www.ey.com/pl_pl/news/2023/04/ey-european-economic-outlook-q1-2023)

21. Polish Investment and Trade Agency (2022) "THE INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY SECTOR", available at: <https://www.paih.gov.pl/publications>

22. Polish Investment and Trade Agency (2023) "Why Poland: Sectors", available at: <https://www.paih.gov.pl/sectors>

23. Bradford Jacobs (2021) "The Fastest Growing Industries in Poland", available at: <https://bradfordjacobs.com/blog/the-fastest-growing-industries-in-poland/>

24. OECD (2022) "ECONOMIC OUTLOOK, VOLUME 2022 ISSUE 2: PRELIMINARY VERSION", available at:

<https://issuu.com/oecd.publishing/docs/poland-oecd-economic-outlook-projection-note-novem>

25. Newseria Biznes (2022) "Poland is aging faster and faster. The demographic tsunami is looming", available at:

<https://biznes.newseria.pl/biuro-prasowe/nieruchomosci/poland-is-aging-faster-and-b1006267594>

26. Open For Business (2021) "The Economic Case for LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Central and Eastern Europe", available at: <https://open-for-business.org/cee-economic-case>



## LinkedIn-World Bank Migration data - where skilled workers are going to and coming from

Brain drain – losing to these countries	GBGR/ GBTR score	Net loss to this country	Brain gain – gaining from these countries	GBGR/ GBTR score	Net gain from this country
Germany	81% / 87%	-1.61	Ukraine	67% / 40%	+2.59
Switzerland	70% / 73%	-1.27	India	37% / 60%	+1.66
Netherlands	93% / 80%	-0.85	Belarus	22% / 20%	+1.62
Spain	93% / 67%	-0.70	Turkey	26% / 13%	+1.27
Australia	89% / 80%	-0.58	Brazil	74% / 40%	+0.75

Countries gaining from / losing to - The net gain or loss of members from another country divided by the average LinkedIn membership of the target (or selected) country during the time period, multiplied by 10,000. Annual Average, January 2017 -December 2019

Skilled workers are leaving Poland for more LGBTQ+ inclusive countries.

Despite recent government efforts to attract the younger Polish diaspora back to Poland,<sup>27</sup> Poland continues to rank relatively high (4.6 out of 10) on the 2022 Global Human Flight and Brain Drain Index, especially among European countries.<sup>28</sup> Business leaders in Poland continually cite the challenges they have for finding top talent to work in Poland, as demonstrated by the high number of open positions at many firms. This is especially true for global employers who have multiple European operations and compete internally for talent with their colleagues in Western Europe.

The two Polish cities included in Open For Business' 2022 Cities Ratings,<sup>29</sup> Warsaw and Wroclaw, also declined in this bi-annual rating of 144 global cities on their combined economic viability and LGBTQ+ inclusivity.

27. Euronews (2023) "Poland's reverse brain drain: Meet the Poles returning me to work in its booming tech sector" [https://uk.style.yahoo.com/polands-reverse-brain-drain-meet-114041712.html?guccounter=1&guce\\_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xLmNvbS8&guce\\_referrer\\_sig=AQAAAF0xUmOXMLpHFg5V11481yp0WFBv65svFRn-sugJRdOEXy9uhvndVCRstbelNsB2ct-F-pHT3MryDibN6TwK3lavq9zoQPJUOairTrVY3K5IrYJ6Wa5nUDuNtjnZ\\_cYuT5dtKnaOLt6CX\\_k-ETXb94wNTD09zxvQRo011wxrAcSy](https://uk.style.yahoo.com/polands-reverse-brain-drain-meet-114041712.html?guccounter=1&guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAAF0xUmOXMLpHFg5V11481yp0WFBv65svFRn-sugJRdOEXy9uhvndVCRstbelNsB2ct-F-pHT3MryDibN6TwK3lavq9zoQPJUOairTrVY3K5IrYJ6Wa5nUDuNtjnZ_cYuT5dtKnaOLt6CX_k-ETXb94wNTD09zxvQRo011wxrAcSy)

28. Fund For Peace, Human Rights and Brain Drain Index 2022, available at

[https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/human\\_flight\\_brain\\_drain\\_index/#:~:text=The%20average%20for%202022%20based,available%20from%202007%20to%202022.](https://www.theglobaleconomy.com/rankings/human_flight_brain_drain_index/#:~:text=The%20average%20for%202022%20based,available%20from%202007%20to%202022.)

29. Open for Business (2022), Cities Ratings Report.



## Polish Cities in Open For Business Cities Ratings 2022

City is partially open for business					
BBB	Tallin				
BB	Ljubljana	Prague	Vilnius		
B	Athens	Budapest	Riga	Warsaw	
CCC	Bratislava				
CC	Belgrade	Bucharest	Sofia	Wroclaw	Zagreb
City is partially open for business					
DDD	Kiev	Skopje	Tibilisi	Tirana	
DD	Moscow	Sarajevo	St Petersburg		
E	Baku				

Cities listed in red have declined since 2020. Warsaw and Wroclaw saw declines in their ratings from 2020-2022, along with a number of other Central and Eastern European cities.



„Discrimination should not and must not take place. The key challenge today is retaining talent, because real talent is the rarest resource in the economy. If we give it up ourselves, we will lose many opportunities and hurt our competitiveness. While things are moving in the right direction, it is happening too slowly.”

**Prof. Witold Orłowski,**  
Former Presidential Economic Advisor,  
PwC's chief economic advisor in Poland

## The Cost of Discrimination and the Inclusion Dividend

Open For Business' 2021 report, "The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in Central and Eastern Europe" *estimated that the economic cost of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in Poland costs the country between 0.21 and 0.43 percent of GDP, or up to PLN 9.5 billion annually*<sup>22</sup>. Per the below chart, this estimate is based on direct costs that can be calculated, such as wage gap and health inequalities facing the LGBTQ+ community.

### Every year, LGBT+ discrimination costs Poland:

<b>PLN 4.6 billion – PLN 9.5 billion</b> (USD 1.2 billion – USD 2.6 billion)		<b>0.21% - 0.43% GDP</b>
<b>PLN 2.9 billion – PLN 4.4 billion</b> (USD 788 million – USD 1.2 billion)		<b>Economic discrimination</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGBT+ discrimination in the workplace leads to a wage gap</li> </ul>
	<b>PLN 1.7 billion – PLN 5.1 billion</b>	<b>Health inequalities</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LGBT+ discrimination leads to unequal health outcomes that reduce productivity</li> <li>• Higher prevalence of depression and HIV among LGBT+ people results in lost earnings and productivity</li> </ul>

As noted previously, the lifting of "LGBT-Free Zones" has already helped local Polish regions have access to European and other funding opportunities. Similarly, a statement signed by over 40 leading economists and lawyers in the country in July 2022 shows numerous ways that the country's economy could be strengthened by passing marriage equality laws which would allow LGBTQ+ couples greater financial and legal rights that are currently available only to straight couples.<sup>30</sup> The signees cite the economic benefits of marriage equality in terms of taxes, inheritances, health security and improving the situation for spouses on the labor market.



"A policy that promotes discrimination is stealing talent from the Polish economy and it costs money. When people are deprived of economic opportunities due to discrimination, market economies cannot fully tap into their greatest resource – human capital – and grow sustainably. We need more high-quality data and research to enhance greater public awareness and better policy-making."

**Marcin Tomaszewski**

European Bank for Reconstruction  
and Development

30. Onet (2022) "Ekonomiści i prawnicy apelują: małżeństwa jedнопłciowe pomogą polskiej gospodarce", available at: <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/kraj/ekonomisci-i-prawnicy-apeluja-malzenstwa-jednoplciowe-pomoga-gospodarce/jxpkeg3>

# Business and economic performance

Since the publishing of our 2021 Central and Eastern Europe report, a number of international research studies have shown that greater LGBTQ+ inclusion positively impacts on business performance.

- In one 2021 study, it was found that a relationship exists between higher levels of representation of LGBTQ+ people among organizations' executives and firms' value as well as their financial performance.<sup>31</sup> More good will on behalf of employees and customers towards companies showing LGBTQ+ friendly policies and practices indirectly leads to benefits in scope of human capital (talent drawing and retention) and reputational benefits.
- A 2022 study on the relationship between national innovative capacity and the social inclusion of LGBTQ+ people also shows a strong correlation. In this case, it is argued that trade openness facilitates cross-border diffusion of knowledge and technologies, which may foster technological innovation.<sup>32</sup>
- Another study in 2023 looked at the correlation between firms with LGBTQ+ friendly policies in place and found that they had higher profitability and market evaluations than companies that don't.<sup>33</sup> This confirms an analysis from our 2021 report that showed that those companies in the WIG-ESG Index of the Warsaw Stock Exchange performed better than those listed on the more generic WIG-20 Index.<sup>22</sup>



“We are blazing a trail when it comes to economic research involving the inclusion of LGBT+ people in the economy. It’s incredibly important because in addition to the moral imperative, there’s also a financial imperative. It is optimistic that companies are beginning to recognise the importance of talent. Initiatives like Open For Business are very important, because thanks to them we see good changes that are not yet coming out in research, but are creating cultural changes in Poland.”

**Prof. Ewa Balcerowicz**

Vice-President of the Council of the Association of Polish Economists

31. Lourenço, Isabel Costa, Donatella Di Marco, Manuel Castelo, Branco, Ana Isabel Lopes, Raquel, Wille Sarquis and Mark T. Soliman (2021) “The Relationship between LGBT Executives and Firms’ Value and Financial Performance” in *Journal of Risk and Financial Management* 14: 596, <https://doi.org/10.3390/jrfm14120596>

32. Trung V. Vu (2022) “Linking LGBT inclusion and national innovative capacity” in *Social Indicators Research* 159:191–214, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-021-02743-2>

33. Sanjukta Brahma, Konstantinos Gavriilidis, Vasileios Kallinterakis, Thanos Verousis, Mengyu Zhang (2023) “LGBTQ and finance” in *International Review of Financial Analysis* 86, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.irfa.2023.102547>

# Leading by example - case studies of corporate LGBTQ+ inclusion practices

Companies around the world are building more inclusive workplaces for LGBTQ+ employees. Leading enterprises of various sizes operating in Poland also recognize that LGBTQ+ inclusion go hand-in-hand with improved business performance and attracting talent<sup>24</sup>. A deep dive into the ways Polish businesses and their in-house LGBTQ+ employee networks embrace these opportunities to support their LGBTQ+ colleagues and the wider Polish LGBTQ+ community was published last year in the report “Safe Havens: Why Talk about LGBT+ People in the Workplace?” by Miłość Nie Wyklucza (Love Does Not Exclude Association) and Place of Pride (the LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group network of Skanska Property Poland).<sup>16</sup>

In addition, in June of this year, 29 multinational and Polish companies signed a letter highlighting the importance of LGBTQ+ inclusion that was published in Forbes Women magazine. A selection of case studies demonstrating how some companies are practicing inclusive policies and activities towards the LGBTQ+ community are presented below. This is by no means an inclusive list, as we know that scores of Polish companies have major inclusion programs in place, merely a representative list of efforts that have been effective and that reach beyond the walls of these enterprises.

## Broadcasting inclusion - TVN Warner Bros. Discovery

TVN WBD consistently promotes a culture of openness and respect, exemplifying their commitment to diversity as one of Poland's largest commercial broadcasters. The broadcaster have long been dedicated to raising social awareness about the needs and challenges facing the LGBTQ+ community in Poland. TVN WBD journalists address important and challenging topics concerning the LGBTQ+ community. Piotr Jacoń, a renowned TVN reporter, was honored with the esteemed Equality Crown award from the Campaign Against Homophobia for his series of reports covering the stories and struggles of transgender people and their parents in Poland.

Entertainment, in the eyes of TVN WBD, serves as a powerful tool to foster social awareness. Demonstrating this belief, TVN WBD produced „Prince Charming,” the first gay dating show that Poland, which shed light insight into the everyday lives of LGBTQ+ people in Poland, with a particular focus on their universal quest to find a life partner. Additionally, TVN's „Control” series and „Life in Drag” documentary have provided the company with important content for internal meetings and training sessions, emphasizing the importance of diversity and inclusivity both within the workplace and in society as a whole.

TVN WBD actively supports non-governmental organizations by offering free air time to broadcast important social campaigns, including numerous initiatives dedicated to advocating for LGBTQ+ rights. TVN WBD's collaboration with various companies and non-governmental organizations last year – such as Divercity+, Kancelaria Knut Mazurczak Adwokaci, mesem.pl, CD Projekt RED, AstraZeneca, Benefit Systems, Accenture, Generali, and State Street – played a pivotal role in co-creating Transformacja, the first practical guide for companies and institutions in Poland on creating safe and inclusive work environments for transgender and non-binary individuals.

TVN WBD recognizes the importance of measuring the impact and reach of its initiatives. Since 2019, the news department of the company has utilized its own Diversity Tracker tool, recognized for its innovativeness by the Responsible Business Forum, to meticulously monitor and ensure diversity in TVN24 programs and shows featuring external experts, regularly measuring on-air participation of female, male, non-binary or transgender guests.

## **Awarding inclusion - NatWest Group Poland**

NatWest Poland started the LGBTQ+ Diamond Awards program in 2018. The company's interest in greater LGBTQ+ inclusion were based on concerns voiced about the insufficient exchange of experiences and dialogue to support LGBTQ+ employees working in Polish companies. NatWest's goal was to boost the conversation on LGBTQ+ inclusion especially outside of more liberal communities in Poland such as Warsaw. They also wanted to raise employers' awareness about the economic case for LGBTQ+ inclusion made by Open for Business.

NatWest Poland organized a country-wide competition to award business initiatives that stood out in the fight for inclusion. The "LGBT+ Diamonds Awards" were made possible thanks to huge support from business and civil society partners. The initiative has received support from organizations such as Trans-Fuzja Foundation, Love Does Not Exclude and Campaign Against Homophobia as well as from activists and diplomatic missions in Poland. The "LGBT+ Diamonds Awards" allowed NatWest Poland to build a major network of allies and bring together a community of companies, institutions and individuals around the topic of LGBTQ+ inclusion.

NatWest Poland realized that some business activities may be seen as cases of "pink-washing" and that there was some distrust and skepticism of companies by the LGBTQ+ community. To address that, the company made sure to be in constant touch with civil society organizations to fully develop the concept of the Diamonds Awards before launching the project. This has allowed NatWest to earn the trust of the LGBTQ+ community and succeed in its efforts to call for greater corporate LGBTQ+ inclusion.

## Training for inclusion - Skanska office development unit in CEE

Recognizing the challenging socio-political situation affecting LGBTQ+ people in Poland, Hungary and other countries of the CEE region, in 2021 Skanska office development unit introduced a comprehensive training program to further its work on LGBTQ+ inclusion. The decision to develop more than simple educational activities such as one-off webinars was made in the context of hardships of work during the COVID-19 pandemic, an employee satisfaction survey indicating the need to support diversity, and the concerning political situation for LGBTQ+ people in the geographies where the company operates.

43% of Skanska office development unit staff - including those shaping the company's organizational culture (the ethics committee, HR, marketing and communication departments, as well as all team managers) were selected to participate in the first, obligatory training series, consisting of seven modules. With feedback collected to improve the training, the second wave of training was made available to all employees and participation was voluntary, except for the module on legal issues of discrimination, compensatory measures and national and European legislation directions.

Over the course of seven months, each participant took part in roughly 13 hours of training in the comprehensive program. Three modules covered topics that included microaggressions, implicit bias, racial and ethnic diversity, sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as visible and invisible disabilities. LGBTQ+ topics were addressed at the same level as other topics in the program.

Skanska office development unit measured the satisfaction of more than 91% of employees who ultimately participated in the program and gathered their feedback, which has been overwhelmingly positive. One key learning has been that training essential employees in the first wave allowed them to become ambassadors of the initiative and encourage other colleagues to participate in the program. One additional positive outcome was recently captured during a job interview at the company with a prospective employee who said, "I want to work here because I know it is a safe place for LGBT+ people."

# A call to action from our Poland Campaign Lead

The basic human rights of the estimated two million LGBTQ+ people living in Poland must be recognized. This simple fact is now backed not just by the moral compass, but also by an economic rationale greater than ever before. The argument for common and equal protection of human rights in our Polish society and the ever-stronger economic case for LGBTQ+ inclusion must be a vital part of the public discussion ahead of the 2023 parliamentary elections this fall.

Today, 34 years after Poles achieved their longed-for freedom from communist Soviet rule, Polish society is polarized more than ever before. Public discourse based on hate speech, discrimination and prejudice has become the object of a brutal political game, particularly as we approach the Parliamentary elections season. The entire LGBTQ+ community, as well as activists working for their rights, have become its victims. It is our duty to defend the basic human rights of LGBTQ+ people and to protect them from unequal treatment, prejudice, aggression and violence.

Policy-makers, businesses, local governments, state institutions and NGOs will all play a role in this process. Our course of action follows the guidance of the Council of Europe, stating that “international human rights standards are constantly evolving to include new generations of human rights. It is important for all decision-makers to keep up with this pace, rather than retreating into a policy of denial and exclusion.”<sup>35</sup>



**Lukasz Antkiewicz**  
Poland Campaign Lead

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35. Council of Europe report „Report on the fact-finding mission on the role of local authorities with regard to the situation and rights of LGBT+ people in Poland”  
- 27.01.2021



Open For Business' Channels<sup>36</sup> of Influence report highlights five key ways that businesses can support greater LGBTQ+ inclusion.



### Value Chain Channel

The Value Chain Channel includes a company's supply chain and distribution networks, as well as the end-buyers of its products and services – customers, clients and consumers.



### Financial Channel

The Financial Channel includes banking partners that provide financing, lending and services (such as payroll), as well as investors (asset owners and managers) and direct investment.



### Public Policy Channel

The Public Policy Channel includes relationships with public officials, governments, politicians and policymakers, as well as relevant industry regulators and national human rights institutions.



### Civil Society Channel

The Civil Society Channel includes the civil society groups and NGOs that a company interacts with, the various communities that surround the business, and the media.



### Industry Channel

The Industry Channel includes any professional bodies or industry associations that a company or its employees may participate in, as well as Chambers of Commerce and Trade Unions.

In the context of the upcoming Polish parliamentary elections, it is therefore necessary to:

- Identify and strengthen formal and informal business leaders who support and prevent discrimination against LGBTQ+ people - especially those in smaller cities and local businesses
- Engage in substantive, calm social discussion in business forums and in the media based on concrete facts and stories of LGBTQ+ people
- Support NGOs initiating public opposition to homophobic resolutions adopted by national and local authorities
- Create platforms for the exchange of best practices implemented in diversity management, both in business and in local government
- Continue to examine the real costs to the economy from discriminatory attitudes towards LGBTQ+ people,
- Use the potential in city governments and companies to educate widely on diversity and the effects of discrimination

36. Open For Business (2018) "Channels of Influence: How Companies Can Promote LGBT+ Inclusive Societies", available here: <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1xD9W1nDskYMYPF2DVNTH6CccVz5WRLjK/view>

# Open For Business in Poland

Since the launch of the report, “The Economic Case for LGBT+ Inclusion in Central and Eastern Europe: Hungary, Poland, Romania and Ukraine” in 2021, Open For Business has been running a Local Influencer Program in Poland. The program has raised awareness about the economic case for LGBTQ+ inclusion and continues to build support among Polish and multinational companies. We have hosted and presented at numerous conferences, business roundtable meetings, panel discussions and other events, including the first Poland: Open For Business Summit, held in Warsaw in June 2022.



The team and presenters at the Open For Business Warsaw Summit, June 2022



Open For Business panel at the Karpacz Economic Forum, September 2022



UK Ambassador to Poland Anne Clunes, CMG, OBE, with participants at our British Embassy roundtable event, October 2022

The events and activities have attracted much attention from leading Polish media and activists.

**BADANIE**

## Polskie miasta niżej w rankingu LGBT

**Warszawa i Wrocław spadły w globalnej klasyfikacji miast otwartych na mniejszości seksualne. To kolejne badanie, które pokazuje problemy Polski związane z LGBT.**

WIKTOR FERFECKI

Raport, który opisujemy jako pierwszy, publikowany jest co dwa lata przez Open For Business. Jest to globalna koalicja firm przeciw dyskryminacji LGBT, w której w skład chodzą tak znane przedsiębiorstwa, jak Lego, IBM, Microsoft, Ikea, Google czy Meta. Ich zdaniem miasta otwarte na osoby LGBT przyciągają wykwalifikowanych pracowników, co wpływa na innowacje i jakość życia.

Koalicja ocenia miasta na podstawie 27 wskaźników ekonomicznych i społecznych, a finalny wynik pozwala uplasować je w kilku kategoriach od „w pełni inkluzywnych i konkurencyjnych”, do takich, gdzie podejście do LGBT utrudnia działalność biznesową i nie sprzyja życiu obywateli. W sumie ranking obejmuje 145 miast z sześciu kontynentów, spośród których najwyższy wynik na świecie uzyskał Amsterdam, w naszym regionie zaś stolica Estonii, Tallinn. Z polskich miast raport obejmuje dwa: Warszawę i Wrocław.

Jeszcze dwa lata temu były one sklasyfikowane odpowiednio na pozycjach BB i CCC wśród „miast częściowo otwartych na biznes”. O Warszawie można było wówczas przeczytać w raporcie, że „jest latarnią morską integracji LGBT+ w Polsce”, a „prezydent Warszawy Rafał Trzaskowski przez jasne działania, jak przystąpienie po raz pierwszy do Parady Równości i podpisanie deklaracji LGBT+, wyraźnie pokazał, że Warszawa jest otwarta na osoby LGBT+”.

W tym roku oba miasta spadły o jedną pozycję – Warszawa na poziom B, a Wrocław – CC, pozostając w grupie „częściowo otwartych na biznes”. Powód? – Spadek Warszawy i Wrocławia wynika z dynamiki sytuacji społeczności LGBTQ+ w całym kraju, która przekłada się również na poziom lokalny.

Wpływ na wskaźniki społeczne mają m.in. decyzje polityczne, jak wyznaczenie tzw. stref wolnych od LGBT oraz szeroko komentowane medialnie incydenty i ataki na tle dyskryminacyjnym. Ambitne działania na rzecz społeczności LGBTQ+ lokalnych władz w Warszawie i Wrocławiu, co należy docenić, niestety nie mają równie silnego odzwierciedlenia w indeksach – wyjaśnia George Perlov, p.o. dyrektora wykonawczego w Open For Business. I dodaje, że wpływ na przyznaną ocenę mają też wskaźniki gospodarcze.

To nie pierwszy raz, gdy Polska słabo wypada w rankingu otwartości na LGBT. W maju wyniki swojego badania, oceniającego prawo wobec LGBTI oraz praktykę jego stosowania opublikowała ILGA-Europe. Polska zajęła ostatnie miejsce wśród krajów UE i 43. pozycję ex aequo z Monako na 49 państw w

Zdaniem Open For Business otwartość na LGBT sprzyja wzrostowi gospodarczemu

Europie. Gorsze noty od nas dostały tylko Białoruś, Rosja, Armenia, Turcja i Azerbejdżan. Już trzeci raz z rzędu ILGA uznała, że Polska traktuje osoby LGBT najgorzej w całej Unii Europejskiej.

Wyniki wywołały lawinę komentarzy. Posłowie KO i Lewicy przekonywali w Sejmie, że „homofobia, dyskryminacja i pogarda stały się elementem polityki rządowej”. Politycy PiS zaś raczej stronili od komentarzy.

Tymczasem, jak twierdzi Open For Business, brak tolerancji dla LGBT może mieć nie tylko skutki społeczne, ale też ekonomiczne. Z innego raportu tej organizacji wynika, że w związku z dyskryminacją osób LGBT Polska rocznie traci nawet 9,5 mld złotych, bo różnorodne społeczeństwa sprzyjają wzrostowi gospodarczemu. /@o

Polskie miasta niżej w rankingu LGBT” article in daily Rzeczpospolita covering the Open For Business’ 2022 Cities Ratings and the performance of Warsaw and Wrocław in the rating

**MY COMPANY POLSKA**

Dyskryminujesz? Tracisz pieniądze



Robert Mienicki © 16.09.2022 Aktualizacja: 16.09.2022

Dyskryminacja w biznesie wiąże się z realnymi stratami dla gospodarki. Dlatego warto zadbać o zmianę podejścia firm – wynika z debaty „Różnorodność w biznesie. Korzyści i najlepsze praktyki biznesowe” zorganizowanej podczas Forum Ekonomicznego w Karpaczu.

“Dyskryminujesz? Tracisz pieniądze” article covering the panel discussion by OpenFor Business during the Karpacz Economic Forum in 2022

**Wykluczanie się nie opłaca. Polska traci na tym grube miliardy każdego roku**

Patryk Dzikowski

Wykluczanie osób w środowisku pracy to miliardy złotych strat. Tylko w Polsce to nawet 9,5 mld zł rocznie. Otwarcie się na różnorodność to nie tylko kwestia wizerunku, ale też kluczowej finansowej przedsiębiorstwa, a za tym całej gospodarki. Co więcej, wymaga tego prawo.



Polska 9 lat rocznie traci 9,5 mld zł przez wykluczanie osób w pracy FAJ, Władysław Strajduka/REPORTER

“Wykluczanie się nie opłaca. Polska traci na tym grube miliardy każdego roku” article in INNPoland.pl covering the findings of the “The Economic Case for LGBT Inclusion in Central and Eastern Europe” report by Open For Business



“I am thrilled and amazed to see opposition politicians quote Open For Business’ economic case report and use the data and arguments in discussions at the local government level. The work by Open For Business is getting more and more attention at various levels of the policy-making arena. Some of the economically liberal policymakers are aware of the numbers shown in the report as well as consider them a valuable tool. These arguments were raised in regard to the LGBT-free zones issue in Poland.”

**Bart Staszewski**

Activist, Member of Love Does not Exclude association,  
Founder of Basta Foundation



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## How to talk about LGBTQ+ Inclusion in Poland

As we have seen in the evidence presented in this report, openness and LGBTQ+ inclusion are important strategic considerations for Poland to reach its economic goals, and for Polish companies to thrive and grow. However, there often remains hesitation among the business community, mainly due to a number of perceived risks for supporting LGBTQ+ inclusion. This is not just true in Poland; countries all over the world share similar concerns. Open For Business has encountered many myths and misconceptions in its work around the world, which are listed below, together with possible responses:

### Perceived risk

### Open For Business response

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**“Our consumers / customers / clients won’t like it.”**

Some customers won’t like it – but as the experience of featured companies in this report and Open For Business coalition partners all around the world show, most customers and clients will welcome a more progressive and global brand. Evidence presented in this report shows that LGBTQ+ inclusion can be a source of competitive advantage and brand preference. Inclusion can lead to improved “customer orientation” and better client service.

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**“We don’t have any gays.”**

Many LGBTQ+ people feel the need to hide their sexual orientation or gender identity, particularly in Poland, as data in this report demonstrates. Documented fear of bias and discrimination leads many in the community to not disclose personal details. This phenomenon is known as “covering,” and studies show that this still occurs even in highly LGBTQ+ inclusive countries. If there is nobody in an organization identifying as LGBTQ+, the most likely explanation is that people are concealing their identities.

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**“We don’t know our employees’ sexual orientations or gender identities, so it’s impossible for us to discriminate against LGBTQ+ people.”**

Similar to the above response, just because LGBTQ+ people are not open in the work-place does not mean that they do not exist. There are many documented cases of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people in the workplace in the region, and companies should proactively ensure that those cases do not occur in their offices and suffer hits to their brand or reputation.

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**“We don’t get involved in politics.”**

This isn’t a political issue; this is a business issue. Looking after the welfare of employees is a business issue; creating an inclusive culture that can foster performance and innovation is a business issue; operating in an open, globally connected economy is a business issue.

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**“We are too busy focusing on creating an inclusive workplace for women, different ethnicities, and people with disabilities to focus on LGBTQ+ people too.”**

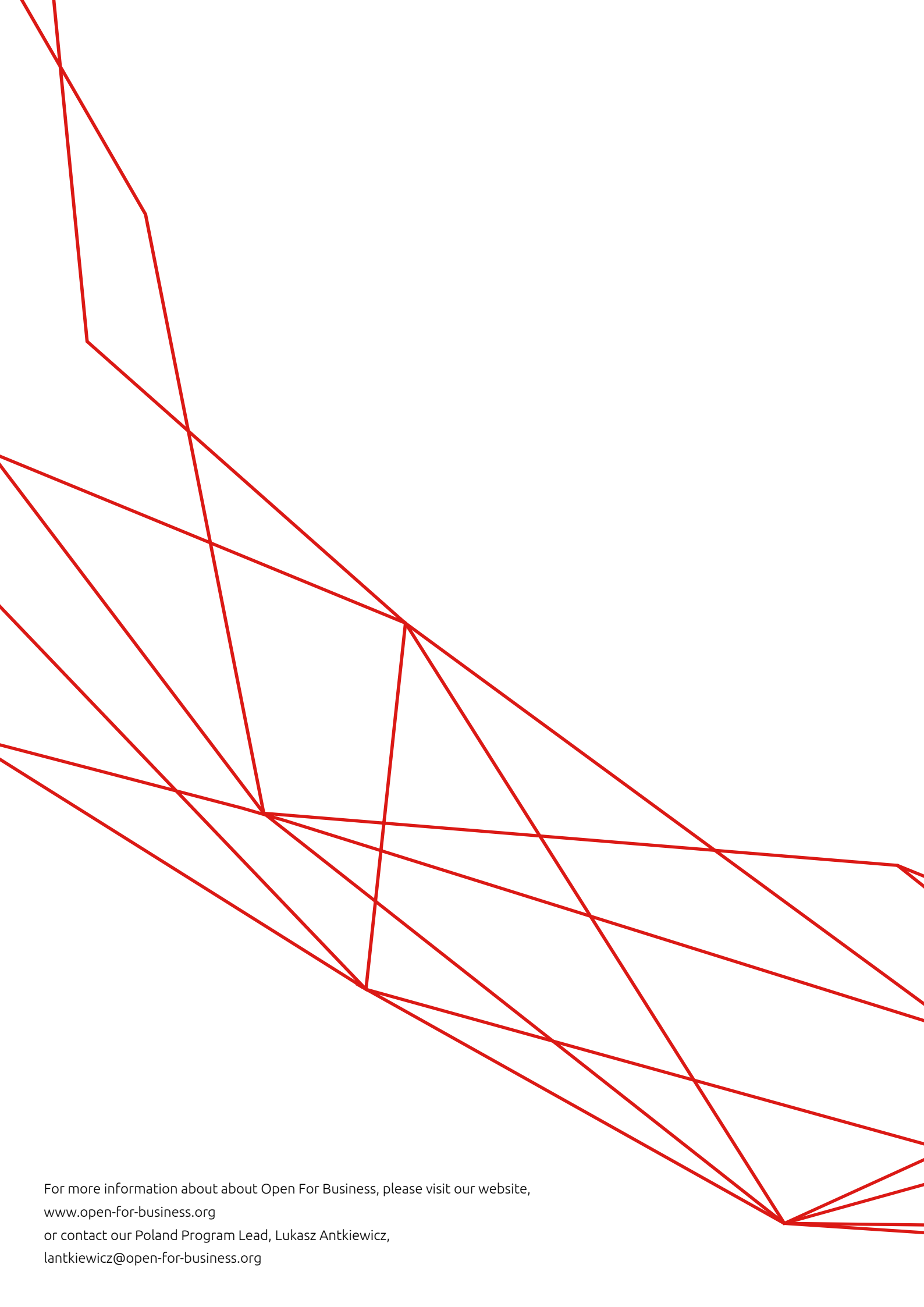
While time and resources are necessary for companies to become world-class at LGBTQ+ inclusion, the initial steps of signaling that your company is LGBTQ+ inclusive can be achieved by updating non-discrimination and other HR policies to include sexual orientation and gender identity. This does not take away from any of the other minority groups but reinforces that the workplace is truly inclusive of everyone, no matter who they are. Additionally, a focus on LGBTQ+ inclusion can differentiate companies in a market where many companies are focusing on gender, ethnic and disability inclusion.

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**“It’s not safe to encourage people to come out.”**

In Poland, coming out can be a risk. The question isn’t whether to encourage employees to come out or not, but how to provide a safe and supportive environment for LGBTQ+ people whether they have decided to come out or not. This begins with a clear statement that LGBTQ+ people are welcome in the workplace and fostering a culture of inclusion; it can also include measures such as giving people the ability to connect anonymously to online employee LGBTQ+ networks or working with local LGBTQ+ community groups. Finally, it can include working in the public sphere to promote the economic and business case for LGBTQ+ inclusive societies.





For more information about about Open For Business, please visit our website,  
[www.open-for-business.org](http://www.open-for-business.org)  
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