



Using family as a frame in social justice activism

A guide for activists and funders in Europe

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Compiled by Bruno Selun





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www.reclaimingfamilyvalues.eu

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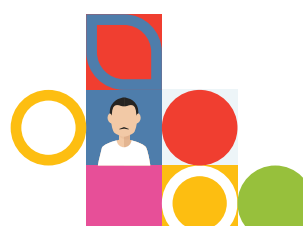
1. Acknowledgments

The authors wish to acknowledge over two hundred individuals who took the time to share their thoughtful perspectives. These conversations have immeasurably enriched our reflections, and therefore this guide. We attempted to do justice to numerous perspectives and concerns contributed by effective and committed social justice experts. Any failings in this regard are our sole responsibility.

In particular, the authors wish to thank the leaders and employees in organisations we consulted for sharing their experience, in and beyond Europe: Child Rights International Network (CRIN), Eurochild, the European Anti-Poverty Network (EAPN), the European Network Against Racism (ENAR), the European Women's Lobby, International Planned Parenthood European Network (IPPF EN), the EU-funded FamiliesAndSocieties research project, the Network of European LGBTIQ* Families Associations (NELFA), and Robert Wintemute at King's College London. They do not necessarily endorse this publication.

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2. Authors' foreword



In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future.

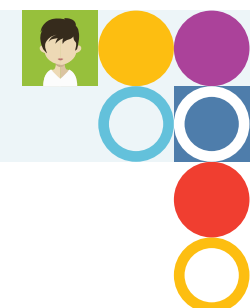
Alex Haley



As with virtually everything else in the world, ideas about what a family is and should be have become increasingly complex in recent decades. Married, civil partners, unmarried, gay, straight, trans, with or without biological children, single-parent, adopted, step, half, artificial insemination, IVF, surrogacy... The diversity of families and how they can be formed have multiplied, as have differences in how those families are recognised. The choices governments make about what types of families are recognised and protected signify who is deemed worthy of love and belonging in that society. The evidence is overwhelming that more equal and open societies are better on most measures, from economic performance to wellbeing, and this is obviously reflected in how these societies support families.

Human rights and social justice activism have traditionally been framed around the relationships between individuals and governments. Missing from the equation has been families, one of the fundamental building blocks of all societies.

Human rights and social justice activism have traditionally been framed around the relationships between individuals and governments. Missing from the equation has been families, one of the fundamental building blocks of all societies. The debate on family has been filled by conservative culture warriors, trying to turn back the clock to a time when life was simpler and a family was understood as a male head of household, a mother and children. It is time for human

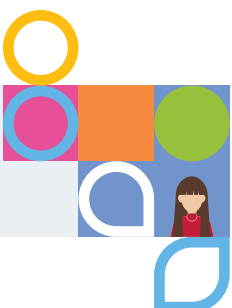


rights and social justice activists to develop a 21st-century vision of how families can help societies become more equal, open, compassionate, resilient and inclusive.

When we began our work together over a year ago to explore if and how the idea of family values could be reclaimed from conservatives to promote inclusion rather than exclusion, not all of us were convinced. As we discussed and debated amongst ourselves – and consulted with many about the need and wisdom of taking such an approach – over one year, there was a palpable shift. We talked about our own widely diverse families, reflected on the traditional institution of family too often linked with power and oppression, and started to collectively reimagine how family could become a space defined by love and liberation.

We hope this document can provide a glimpse into that journey, and convey our enthusiasm about how a focus on family can create new opportunities for our movements to allow more individuals and families to enjoy rights. The possible paths to advancing family values based on equality and justice are limitless and will differ from place to place. The key strategies presented here are not meant to be exhaustive, nor to offer a roadmap, but are intended to help stimulate and inspire your own thinking, visioning, planning and doing. Better, more equal, just, and open societies can only come about if we ensure families, the bridge to our future, model those same values.

The authors





3. Executive summary

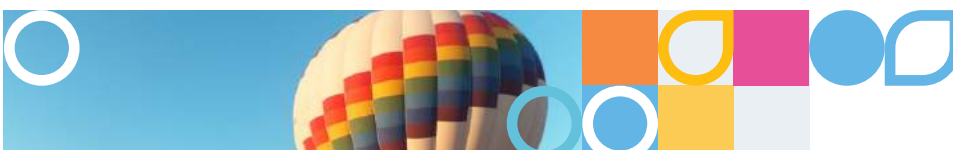
Based on a year of consultations and research, this guide invites social justice activists in Europe and their funders to consider placing family equality at the centre of progressive strategies, discourse and actions.

Family equality is the recognition and protection of diverse forms of family by the state and society – and open societies should recognise and protect all forms of families where individuals experience love, care, support, home, protection, affection, support each other, are respected, and belong. Family equality is a pre-condition to achieve social justice and inclusion for all.

Instead of countering anti-equality arguments about a model or ideal family – heterosexual, white, religious, married, with children –, we argue it is time for social justice activists to talk about *their* families and *their* vision of family. This, we continue to argue, will be more effective than talking about rights alone. In the public mind, rights are for minority groups; family is for everyone.

This guide also acknowledges that, first, family equality doesn't solve everything, and families may be the place of oppression and discrimination. Second, that our perspectives are mostly European, and only claim to be useful in this context. Third, that effective change requires genuine commitment from both funders and activists.

Bearing these caveats in mind, this guide presents ten ways family equality has featured in progressive work in Europe: through mainstreaming family issues into equality work; through funding; through research and preparatory work; through strategic communication; through lobbying and advocacy; through building alliances between and across progressive movements; through media work; and through litigation.



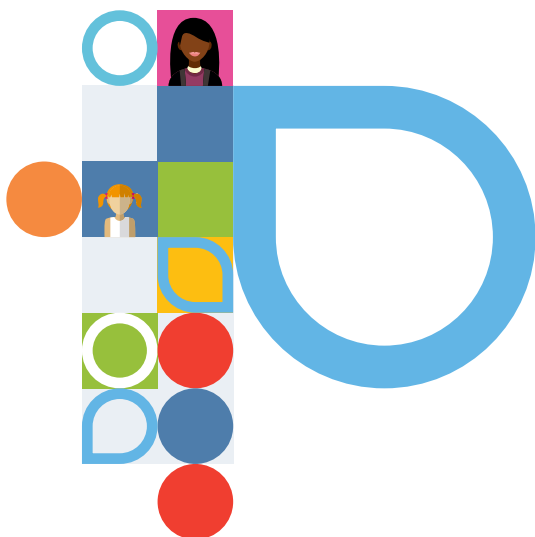


It also examines the importance of responding to opponents of equality, and working with faith-based groups – two essential avenues to success.

Throughout this guide, we offer real examples and guiding suggestions to help progressive activists and funders place family equality at the heart of their work. Across Europe, this approach is continuously proving its merits.

Ultimately, our hope is that progressive actors will see family and family values not as a conservative concept to avoid, but as society's common good.

Ultimately, our hope is that progressive actors will see family and family values not as a conservative concept to avoid, but as society's common good. We must own it from our diverse perspectives as women, queer people, migrants, people of colour, progressive believers and non-believers to build more open and caring societies.





4. Introduction

What's this guide about?

This guide invites social justice activists in Europe¹ to consider placing family equality at the centre of their strategies, discourse and actions. This way family can include rather than exclude, expand rights rather than limit them, and help foster societies that are open and respectful of all.

Based on a year of consultations and research, it explains why this is an effective approach and explores ten reality-tested strategies with real-life examples of how **family equality** can enable social justice in Europe.

This is no manual or rigid strategy. This guide simply observes recent developments, and suggests that family could become more central to European progressive work. It doesn't seek to replace current social justice activism, but rather to upgrade it by including family equality into the work of our progressive movements.

Who is this guide for?

First and foremost, **social justice activists**: activists, organisers, leaders in civil society, non-governmental organisations and movements working for human rights, equality and the rule of law.

It may be of particular interest to those working on LGBTI equality, women's rights, sexual and reproductive justice, and those working to promote progressive views within or of their faith.

We argue that we must build bridges within and beyond these groups. This guide will also interest activists and organisations focusing on social justice in welfare, labour, domestic violence, economic justice, against racism and xenophobia, for migrant justice, and that have family as a core concern – especially

1: This guide draws on the experience and perspectives of individuals and organisations mainly living in the European Union. It offers advice to activists and funders in this region, although it may be useful in other contexts too.





those working for children and young people's rights, older people, and migrant families.

Secondly, the donors, funders and other **grant makers** funding those organisations and movements. They should step up and support these bridge-building actions to include family equality in their work. The numerous discussions that led to this guide closely involved grant makers. Our intention is to show what family-centred social justice activism could look like, in the hope that grant makers will share this vision.

Who wrote this guide?

The individuals listed on page 1.

We are ten movement leaders and experts from the LGBTI, women's rights and progressive faith movements. In 2016, we charted the use of family in recent years of progressive activism. We consulted closely with over two hundred stakeholders. We heeded the views of leading activists, scholars and grant makers through a survey (see box on page 13), a conference of 60 movement leaders entitled "Reclaiming Family Values" (Nicosia, October 2016) and consultations with key organisations.

We make these recommendations to our peers and communities.

We make these recommendations to our peers and communities. We invited responses to enrich this guide's perspectives; together with this guide, they are available at www.reclaimingfamilyvalues.eu

This guide was compiled for the authors by Bruno Selun, who also steered the year-long process. The Open Society Initiative for Europe hosted this process.





5. What is family equality?

What's this guide about?

Family equality is the recognition and protection of diverse forms of family by the state and society. It is the promotion of a common good for society, and a pre-condition to achieve social justice and inclusion.

What's the problem? Families have always existed in diverse and different forms. Yet today in Europe, only some families benefit from rights, from the state's protection, from social recognition and from access to resources. Some families are explicitly denied recognition, and families that challenge gender norms and expectations are less recognised and poorly protected. Individuals in these families experience stigma and discrimination – ironically, often at the hands of people and movements who *claim* to defend “family values”.

What families suffer from family *inequality*? For example, families headed by a lone parent; families that include lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans or intersex (LGBTI) parents and/or children; childless or unmarried couples; families headed by grandparents or non-kin; or families with male primary caregivers. Individuals in those families are denied access to rights other families enjoy. When it comes to children, diverse families enjoy fewer rights and protections, in violation of their universal human rights. These families can suffer from additional discrimination due to their ethnicity, their class, or their disability or migrant status for example.

What would family equality look like? Open societies should recognise and protect all forms of families where individuals

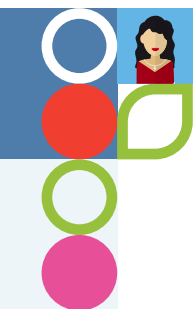
Open societies should recognise and protect all forms of families where individuals experience love, care, support, home, protection, affection, support each other, are respected, and belong.

experience love, care, support, home, protection, affection, support each other, are respected, and belong. Recognising diverse families benefits everyone, and takes no one's existing entitlements away. All families would be recognised and treated fairly in housing, education, social protection, health and other policies. All children would see their family acknowledged and validated in law, education, health and social protection. Family equality protects everyone's choices, including the choice not to form a family.



Family equality doesn't solve everything

Not all families are ideal. Some can be sites of alienation, oppression and violence, especially for their most vulnerable members: women, children, people with disabilities or the elderly. Efforts to counter violence inside and outside family - whatever its form - are essential. Far from replacing this crucial work, working on family equality can and should connect to it.





6. Social justice activism through the frame of family

It's already happening. Whether at the local, national or international levels, legal, policy and opinion battles unfold under the banner of family. Whether this is a good strategy for social justice activism is irrelevant: this is how European societies are debating family diversity today.

Instead of countering anti-equality arguments about a model or ideal family – heterosexual, white, religious, married, with children –, **it's time for social justice activists to talk about their families and their vision of family.**

France: Building a progressive movement around family values

When the marriage equality debate emerged in France in late 2012, the LGBT community didn't immediately know how to respond to the massive anti-equality movement "La Manif Pour Tous".

Political and cultural activists created the Ouiouioui ("Yesyesyes") movement so as not to leave the field of LGBT rights to marriage opponents alone. Ouiouioui reframed family issues through a queer lens and shaped its core messages around irony.

"Oui" refers as much to the "yes" of a wedding day as the cry of pleasure during sex. The campaign also made clear that marriage and family wasn't all rosy through messages such as: "We support lesbian divorce" / "We want unnatural children" / "Give us adoption rights – but not the kids!"

In sum, there was no need to abandon transgressive and disruptive messages on family: these also fit into the family frame and can provoke useful debates.

Learn more at www.ouiouioui.org






Powerful voices on family. Many voices aren't usually heard on family: those of feminist, LGBTI or progressive faith activists, or those of migrants or people of colour, for example. And yet they are legitimate: our families are as real and legitimate as any other. This is an incredible opportunity. Talking about

Talking about family in our social justice activism will be more effective than talking about rights alone.

family in our social justice activism will be more effective than talking about rights alone. In the public mind, rights are for minority groups; family is for everyone.

Disrupting patriarchy. For many, family is a patriarchal structure that can oppress; doing social justice activism under this banner can seem counter-intuitive. Yet by doing so, we can redefine the narrow historical definition of family which insists so much on gendered roles, heteronormative sexual identity, and the maintenance of misogyny and dominant notions of masculinity. By bringing the concept of family equality into the picture, we can crack open that traditional, patriarchal and oppressive mould. Arguing for family equality also reinforces bodily autonomy and reproductive justice for all. In sum, diverse families disrupt patriarchy.

Connecting struggles. Family equality is a powerful way to link human rights struggles that are usually separate, and advance them together. Family equality is for everyone's good: it allows connections across genders, generations and social groups. Working on family equality allows us to connect to concerns about gender equality and women's roles in society; economic justice; care for, and by, the young and the elderly; social welfare for families; domestic violence; family beyond parenting; diversity; and labour rights, to cite but a few.



A powerful frame. If we can understand the relevance of family equality to our work; if we can collaborate across social justice movements; if we can help progressive political parties support family equality; if we can infuse societal debates with a progressive vision of family, **then we can defeat the fear-mongers and hate-peddlers who currently hold “family” hostage.** If we can encourage our societies to embrace diverse forms of families, we can make love, justice and fairness a reality for more of us.



Family equality work in Europe in 2016: Survey highlights

In August and September 2016, we asked 148 equality activists and 18 social justice funders how important “family” was in their work. The key learned lessons include:

- Family equality has a prominent place in the work of activists and their organisations: More than three quarters say they work on it. For half of this group, it’s a priority.
- Two thirds of activists report their organisation’s top priority for family equality is lobbying and advocacy. The second top priority is to build alliances and networks with other movements, and the third, communication. Public education, campaigning and community organising also feature as priorities.
- More than half of activists feel their current work isn’t enough to make a positive difference. Their main challenge is the lack of available funding.
- For funders, perceived low community interest and strong political opposition to family equality tend to be the top challenges keeping them from funding family equality work.



7. Effective strategies

This section presents ten ways social justice activists have integrated family in their work, and how it helped them. This isn't a programme or a manual with linear steps leading to a certain outcome. It's a set of connected, flexible, non-linear approaches to help readers integrate family equality into their work.

1. Mainstreaming family equality into social justice activism


The concept of family and arguments around it – what it is, what it should be – are at the core of legal, policy and opinion debates. Social justice activists increasingly respond to this trend by bringing their experience and vision of diverse families into these debates, helping societies understand that families are as diverse and complex as they always have been.

To continue winning over hearts and minds, social justice activists must complement their traditional approach based on rights, laws and standards (“We have the right to marriage”, “We have the right to free movement”) with a values-based approach (“We love each other and want to commit to spending our lives together”, “We all belong to a family”). This requires a fundamental shift in the conception, organisation and running of social justice campaigns.

Progressive campaigns and discourses should include family equality or family values from their conception.

Key lessons:

- Family equality or family values are powerful drivers for social justice. Progressive campaigns and discourses should include family equality or family values from their conception.

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- To an extent, campaigning on family equality can help heal existing divides. Anti-equality campaigns claiming “family” for themselves shut out individuals from diverse families, sometimes with a negative psychological impact.² Progressive campaigning for family equality will reclaim “family” for all, and include previously excluded individuals.
 - Campaigning publicly about family appeals to people – law-makers, the public, specific audiences and their fundamental sense of what a family *truly* is about: love, care, belonging, and deeply shared values. Appealing to these shared values is essential to effective social justice activism.

2. Family in social justice funding


Funders of social justice movements must realise that every recent anti-equality effort had an exclusionary, singular “traditional” understanding of family at its core. In Croatia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia and Switzerland, anti-equality campaigns argued that allowing same-sex couples to marry or become parents would “denature family”.

Countering this trend requires supporting long-term, multi-year efforts that successfully demonstrate families are diverse, and deserve equal recognition and protection. This includes offering steady, flexible investment for research and preparatory work; norm change; infrastructure-building; campaigning; and lobbying and advocacy – all with long-term policy changes in our spyglass.

Key lessons:

- Grant makers should better understand how movement-building strategies centred on family equality can fit in and enable their mission.

2: Dane, S., Short, L., & Healy, G. (2016) Swimming with sharks: The negative social and psychological impacts of Ireland’s marriage equality referendum ‘NO’ campaign. School of Psychology Publications. The University of Queensland, Australia.
Available from: <http://espace.library.uq.edu.au/view/UQ:408120>

- 
- Grant makers should explore complementary funding efforts, new donor leadership and new funding priorities or mechanisms for family equality.
 - Grant makers should offer practical and pragmatic support to build alliances between groups working on various aspects of family equality: those working on LGBTI, feminist, faith, racial justice and children's rights issues, for example.

Also see **"9. I'm a funder, what can I do next?"**

3. Family in research and preparatory work

Highly successful campaigns for family equality have grounded their work in research. This research allowed them to determine what audiences to address, what they value and fear, what messages would convince them most, who are the best messengers, and what messages not to use. Research can inform campaign strategies, timing, messaging, branding, advocacy and response strategies.

Civil society leaders and their organisations should spend more time and resources on gathering evidence first.

Civil society leaders and their organisations should spend more time and resources on gathering evidence first. Concretely, this means taking the time to understand what research is needed to enable future effective campaigns; raising funds for these efforts; running projects to understand public opinion or community priorities; and drawing conclusions from this research.

Key lessons:

- Research can happen with varying means and time available. With low budgets and limited time, it can consist of loose group discussions in community settings. With higher budgets and more time, it can include interviews,



Ireland: Effective funding tactics for social change

Over several years, Atlantic Philanthropies funded the groups who helped win the 2015 equal marriage referendum. Brian Kearney Grieve, Programme Executive for the Reconciliation & Human Rights Programme in Ireland, shares his learned lessons.

"To think strategically, organisations and movements need the *resources* and *time* to act strategically. This requires core funding, secured for several years. Short-term one-year or project grants don't enable organisations to build and implement strong strategies or hire the best people to do so.

Organisations come in complementary profiles: some work within the established political system to build trust (the principled pragmatists), and others vocally and visibly challenge the status quo, highlighting the ultimate goal from outside the system (the torch-bearers). They may not always agree, but they're invaluable to each other and become an incredible force when combining their efforts. Funding well means leaving grantees the freedom to choose when and how to cooperate.

Funding for research is crucial: if grantees don't know what their target audiences think, or what language and values will resonate with them, they need support to build this knowledge. They'll also need support to bring on board and train unusual allies, from all age groups and walks of life, to become spokespersons for the cause.

Finally, grantees will need support to research, deeply understand and address the fears of those opposing change.

Social change can and is achieved, but it is achieved incrementally. This means funders need to actively listen and enable advocates to change tactics as circumstances change and unexpected opportunities arise. But never waiver on the goal, and be prepared to stay the course... just like a marriage!"

Learn more at www.atlanticphilanthropies.org

focus groups by professional polling companies, and population-level polling.

- If there is no reform or policy change on which to campaign immediately, using this time for research can support future campaigns.

Also see **"8. I'm an activist, what can I do next?"**

4. Family in strategic communication and messaging

Family and family values resonate powerfully across society, including with audiences who don't usually support equality arguments. Where rights-based messaging ("Equal marriage is our right") fails, value-based messaging ("Marriage is about love, care and commitment") can succeed. Campaigners in several countries have successfully increased support for their cause by focusing on shared values and lived experiences, rather than ideology or identity.

Campaigners in several countries have successfully increased support for their cause by focusing on shared values and lived experiences, rather than ideology or identity.

Although we keep striving to secure and promote human rights, family and family values can usefully complement human rights in our messaging. Readers should consider how their work connects to family (see **"6. Social justice activism through the frame of family"**), and articulate their claims around family.

Key lessons:

- Not using family in social justice campaigns means anti-equality campaigns can hijack family for their own purpose in public debates. Using this concept has a double advantage: it makes social justice campaigns more powerful, and encourages audiences to decide for

Ireland: Using research to prepare the “Yes Equality” campaign

Research and preparation were vital to the success of the “Yes Equality” campaign, which played a central role in Ireland’s 62-percent nationwide support to equal marriage in the May 2015 referendum.



Yes Equality leaders realised a referendum was a very specific democratic exercise. From the start, they sought advice from seasoned political experts and key players from previous Irish referendums (notably on divorce in the 1980s and 1990s). They sought inspiration from other recent referendums, including the Scottish referendum on their membership of the UK which inspired the phrase

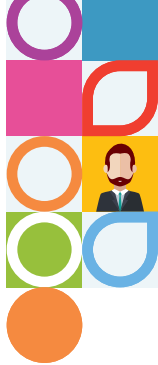
“I’m voting yes, ask me why”: one of the most visible messages in the Yes Equality campaign.

The campaign also used national opinion polls to identify potential target audiences, and later test how different messages resonated with different groups.

Yes Equality also consulted voters with many profiles to identify their worries and fears. They organised focus group discussions through an independent research company, exploring the views of potential supporters among voters of all genders and ages. For example, discussions revealed that younger generations could only be reached effectively through social media, and that men aged 40-60 held a “live and let live” attitude friendly to a passive “yes” vote which could be moved to a “no” vote when the issue of children was raised. Since it was clear the opposition would argue against marriage equality by focusing on children, Yes Equality gathered research, children’s rights champions, and parents and grandparents to counteract that focus. This research and preparatory work helped build a campaign to which a clear majority of the electorate could relate.

Learn more at www.yesequality.ie





themselves what family and family values are, drawing support from the “moveable middle”.

- Social justice movements are legitimate in talking about family: our families are as real as any other. Merely speaking about diverse families helps set the terms of the debate. On the contrary, *responding* to anti-equality campaigns on family means using their frame, always to our disadvantage.
- Good strategic communication and messaging can only be grounded in good prior research into what messaging will best appeal to voters’ and politicians’ values.
- Strategic messaging on family also helps progressive political parties and other allies argue for family equality.

5. Family in lobbying and advocacy

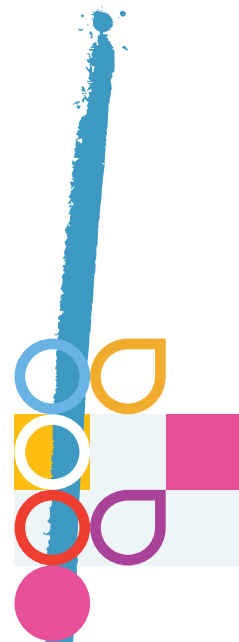
Historically, lobbying for equality has had *rights* at its core: women’s rights, LGBTI rights, religious minorities’ rights. Anti-equality campaigns have lobbied and argued through *frames* – traditional family, heterosexuality, national safety – that resonate with voters’ and law-makers’ *values*. Instead of rights, equality advocates increasingly think about frames and values to win over hearts and minds.

Instead of rights, equality advocates increasingly think about frames and values to win over hearts and minds.

Social justice activists should consider including frames and values linked to family in their lobbying and advocacy. These arguments are more powerful and have the potential to gather more support, as they’re not about the abstract rights of a few individuals, but genuinely about the wellbeing of existing families and communities.

Key lessons:

- Social justice activists and their organisations could critically examine their existing arguments, and



Croatia: Strategic messaging during a referendum on equal marriage

In 2013, neo-conservatives initiated a national referendum to outlaw same-sex marriage in Croatia's constitution. In response, over 90 diverse civil society groups created the coalition "Citizens voting against" [the ban]. The coalition included groups and activists normally working on human rights, LGBT rights, the environment, transparency, children's rights, family rights, as well as academics, whistle-blowers, and public figures from the media and entertainment industries.


The coalition made a strategic choice: famous whistle-blowers, pop stars, university professors and TV stars of various ages would publicise the coalition's core message in support of equality. Well-known LGBT and human rights activists weren't the main public messengers.

Running its campaign, the coalition avoided focusing primarily on LGBT rights. Instead it focused on family values in general, and worked to disclose neo-conservatives' unstated agenda: for example, a future ban on abortion.

The coalition also used humour. On its "Octopus Dei" website, it disclosed and explained neo-conservatives' religious and business connections to the public. Although based in the capital Zagreb, its messages resonated across the country.

Although equality opponents won the referendum, the Against coalition helped reduce support for the ban from 76% three weeks prior to the vote down to 66%. It also helped expose neo-conservatives' hidden connections, agendas and opaque funding.

Learn more at www.glasajprotiv.com

- 
- try using a frames-and-values approach instead (see “**10. Resources**”).
 - With the right messages, lobbying and advocacy are opportunities to set the tone and proactively tell law-makers what families exist and what their needs are.
 - Lobbying and advocacy on family is even more powerful when done with family experts and family-focused organisations. This may include children’s rights organisations, family rights organisations or anti-poverty organisations. They and their wider claims will also come out stronger, which is in everybody’s interest.

6. Family in cross-movement alliances

Social justice activists unite across movements when facing common threats. For example, organisations working on children’s rights, against poverty and for LGBTI equality have united to explain how equal marriage or civil partnerships would respect children’s rights and reduce risks of poverty and social exclusion. Focusing on single identities tends to polarise debate: a journalist listening to an LGBTI organisation’s claim might not even listen due to the organisation’s label. On the other hand, cross-movement alliances focus not on activists’ identities, but on the claims they make together.

Equality activists should consider focusing less on identity-based claims and more on horizontal social justice issues.

Equality activists should consider focusing less on identity-based claims and more on horizontal social justice issues. This allows building strong alliances, reinforcing other movements’ work, and working towards victories that benefit several groups.





Key lessons:

- By arguing for only one valid family model, anti-equality campaigns harm different groups: lone parents, children, families at risk of poverty or social exclusion, grandparents raising children... Organisations working on these issues are our strongest potential allies.
- A family equality approach positively impacts social justice efforts by and for many: minority ethnic and migrant families who may face racism and xenophobia; those facing economic difficulties; families from minority religious backgrounds who may face discrimination; older people cared for by their families... Working on family equality is an opportunity to also tackle racism, sexism, religious discrimination, economic justice (poverty) and other social justice issues.
- Build strong alliances with groups that may usually be seen opposing equality: older people or faith groups, for example.
- Building cross-movement alliances requires thoughtful preparation, patience and mutual understanding. This can take place over long periods. It's important to build genuine understanding and solidarity for one another's issues.



Unlikely family equality supporters

In Ireland, one of the most convincing supporters of marriage equality was an 89-year-old, daily mass-going Catholic grandmother of 23 grandchildren. Madeleine Connolly was a champion for marriage equality, and the short film she made outlining her reasons for supporting family equality was shared widely. What made it effective was her profile, which some consider unusual, with which many viewers and voters could identify.



Watch the video at <http://youtu.be/NkGPYuz2yHQ>

Malta: Religious parents speak out for equality

In Malta, LGBTI equality can count with a new strong voice: Catholic parents of LGBTI people.

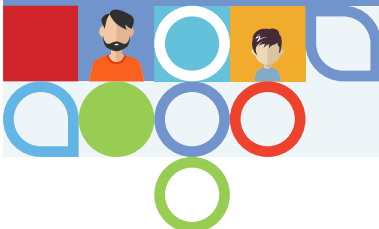
The group Drachma Parents started mobilising because, in their own words, “the Catholic Church had it wrong” about their children. These parents of LGBTI people started saying that their children should be true to their God-given identity and be allowed to live it out sincerely and publicly.

Many of them had been active in their parishes and religious communities for several years. Consequently, their voices were respected and heard. They spoke from within both the LGBTI and Catholic communities of how important family values – acceptance, love, solidarity – are. Their reputation and sincerity meant they were listened to.

The group continues to act as an influential bridge-builder and mediator. Parents regularly invite bishops to their meetings; liaise with the Catholic hierarchy, in confidence and in good faith, to encourage positive outcomes and dialogue; give talks and presentations to raise awareness in parishes; appear in local newspapers, on radio and TV shows (including religious programmes); and announce their monthly meetings in religious newsletters. They also hold dialogues with religious seminarians and theology students.

In sum, they offer a sincere message in favour of equality as parents and as believers: a fresh and sincere voice in favour of equality.

Learn more at drachmalgbt.blogspot.com



7. Family in media work

The media inform public debates and drive politics; working with the traditional press as well as online media has become mandatory. In times of public debates on new laws or referendums, social justice activists have used media to convey their claims and their “side” of the story. In quieter times they’ve used media to convey the normality of diverse families, or to support other struggles for social justice.

To effectively reach hearts and minds, any public change strategy must incorporate some degree of media work. The media crave *stories*, and social justice activists have a wealth of stories to portray their struggle for recognition, the challenges they face, or simply to see their families portrayed as just any other family.

Key lessons:

- While some media may seem to care very little about gender or LGBTI issues, they and their audiences care a lot about family. Traditional and online media will receive a lot of attention for stories about lesbian mums at school, transgender parents, gay grandparents... Stories carry the day.
- Show diverse families are made of the same relationships, love and challenges as any other family. Media appearances are an opportunity to highlight common ground and break down any perception of “us versus them”.
- Behind the scenes, media work is an opportunity to help journalists and other media professionals learn how to talk about LGBTI issues and persons (for example what terms or pronouns to use, or how not to carelessly convey equality opponents’ messages). This is equally important work.



France: Tips to work with the media

No one had expected the French law opening marriage and adoption rights to same-sex couples to meet such strong opposition. Equality opponents used modern, sharp and structured communication centred on “the family” to win massive nationwide attention online and in traditional media, which took France by storm.

LGBT activists had little time and resources to prepare their response. “Ouiouioui” followed a few simple principles to secure news coverage:

Be clear and visible. Ouiouioui garnered major attention with signs and banners showing very simple, well-crafted messages in flashy and arty colours.

Mobilise. The campaign organised short, easy happenings in iconic places throughout Paris twice weekly for months. This regularity helped journalists attend and create consistent media coverage.

Don’t only react: propose. The priorities of trans people and lesbians – communities usually brushed aside – featured prominently in messages. In addition to reacting to opponents, the campaign imposed its own priorities.

Get political. Calling out MPs and the government in public showed the LGBT community expected stronger support from politicians.

Go where the media are. Ouiouioui made a point to always be where journalists were: at the start of demonstrations, outside parliament, at opponents’ press conferences and their own events.

Feed images to the media. Journalists too lack time and resources. They constantly look for images and videos to illustrate their stories: provide them with LGBT-friendly materials, and they will use them.

You don’t have to be right, you have to be attractive. The media doesn’t take sides. Mostly, they go where lights shine the brightest: whichever story is the most colourful and interesting will get their attention.

Force the media to echo your message. Sadly, most journalists won’t call out equality opponents for their homo- or transphobia: they feel it would be taking sides. But if you provide pictures and videos of your signs and banners referring to opponents as homophobes, they will use those.

Learn more at www.ouiouioui.org

8. Family in litigation

Courts play a major role in protecting the rights of individuals in diverse families, especially the most vulnerable – and chiefly children’s, since their interest must prevail in cases involving them. Cases involving diverse families have given rise to national debates on family diversity and equality issues. Occasionally, the resulting jurisprudence has helped anchor rights into law. “Real-life” struggles for rights can help equality movements coalesce around a claim or a cause, making previously theoretical situations and their abstract consequences both tangible and real.

Social justice activists should consider how court cases can help strengthen or clarify the legal rights of individuals in diverse families, especially when those members may face multiple discrimination (for example binational couples, or family histories involving migration). Going to court can have lasting effects (positive but negative, too), and can help create a nationwide conversation.



Romania: Litigating for cross-border family recognition

The Romanian LGBT organisation ACCEPT lent its support to a court case, which received great media attention and helped shape the national conversation on equal marriage.



Under EU law, non-EU nationals married to European citizens can enter and reside in any Member State. After 9 years together, Adrian – a Romanian national – married Clai in Belgium, where Adrian lived at the time. Adrian asked Romania’s national immigration authority to recognise Clai – a

U.S. national – as a member of his family. The authority refused, explaining their marriage had “no value” in Romania. They lodged a legal complaint

in 2012, and the Romanian Constitutional Court heard their case in 2016. ACCEPT and the couple claimed Romania violated their constitutional right to private and family life.

ACCEPT supported Adrian and Clai because their case represented a wider problem: same-sex couples and their families aren't recognised or protected under Romanian law. Romania's constitution protects private and family life, and ACCEPT believed this case could help advance the national conversation on diverse families.

For the first time in its history, the Constitutional Court asked the Court of Justice of the EU how it should interpret European and national laws in the light of human rights and family protection standards. The Court of Justice's decision³ will clarify the interpretation of "spouses" in EU law. This may have far-reaching consequences, especially in Member States currently not recognising same-sex couples in similar situations.

ACCEPT and the couple worked intensely with the media, Adrian's parents and the wider community to present the reality of the couple's life: a rich family life underpinned by love and care for one another. This helped show Romanian audiences something they had never seen before: a same-sex couple, at home, being a happy family. This led to a more open national discussion on diverse families, and many started asking themselves why Romania – a European country – wouldn't after all recognise diverse families.

Key lessons:

- Court cases can vividly illustrate to a wide audience what it means to live under discrimination. Though they often relate to painful personal stories, careful media and communication work can help the public understand and identify with the case (for example, a trans parent unable to collect their child at school).
- Carefully select and put forward cases with potential for legal change. It's better for courts to examine several cases (involving different situations or contexts), rather than expecting one case to spark fundamental change. Many and diverse cases help highlight the genuine need for legal protection.

3: Unknown at the time of publication.

- When going to court, explore avenues for institutional support. This can come from national human rights institutions, ombudsmen or equality bodies.
- Consider all legal avenues and their potential, all the way up to the European Court of Human Rights and the United Nations. Assistance is likely to be available at various stages of the process: talk to other social justice or LGBTI organisations to find out where and how.

9. Responding to opponents

Anti-equality campaigns draw directly from the successful claims and work of women's and LGBTI movements in previous decades. They now frequently manage to call referendums, set the terms of national debates on family, and gather wide support. Governments and state authorities tend to respond to anti-equality campaigns weakly – when they don't support them. Equality supporters are starting to respond to this new opposition more effectively.

Smart response strategies by social justice activists are essential, because no one else will step up to defend family diversity unprompted. Anti-equality campaigns' strength comes partly from the absence of a strong pro-equality response, leaving them airtime and attention. Good responses require advance planning, and the best response isn't a response: it's starting the debate ourselves, on our terms.

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Key lessons:

- Deconstruct the battle of words: anti-equality campaigns tend to appropriate the vocabulary and imagery of family, presenting theirs as the only legitimate families. Always

Poland: Extending the sign of peace to opponents

In 2016, Poland's main LGBT organisation KPH teamed up with groups of Christian LGBT believers. Together, they encouraged LGBT people and religious believers to "extend the sign of peace" to one another in a campaign that received immense coverage and touched countless hearts and minds.

In a context of tension around women's and minority rights, KPH wanted to promote a peaceful message that would resonate with people in both the LGBT and Catholic communities. "Let us offer each other the sign of peace" refers to the Catholic liturgy, and echoes a historic letter Polish bishops sent to German bishops in 1965.

KPH produced a website with short videos of well-known Catholic allies and Catholic LGBT people addressing viewers. The website was advertised on bus stop posters in 10 Polish cities. The posters showed two people shaking hands and peacefully meeting one another, highlighting the connection between two human beings. The organisers never intended to address the Catholic hierarchy, but laypeople who would welcome a sincere message of love and peace.

The campaign received enormous coverage: 4,400 media reports within three weeks (internet, radio, television, social media), for an advertisement equivalent of 2.2 million euros. Numerous Catholic editorialists and readers saluted this campaign, which they recognised was based on Christian values and respected Christian beliefs.

The Catholic hierarchy reacted very negatively. The board of the Polish Catholic Bishops' Conference condemned the campaign, and called on believers not to take part – i.e. not to extend or accept peaceful signs from LGBT people. While the right-wing press was triumphant, even more editorialists, the general public and laypeople expressed indignation. One priest broke ranks and said in an interview that "Jesus wouldn't have acted this way".

Overall, the campaign did move the national conversation in the right direction. KPH learned a lot by teaming up with faith groups, and believe the campaign was a success because it focused on the personal, human stories.

Learn more at www.znakpokoju.com



show diverse families, explain that diverse families *are* families, and explain various individuals – LGBTI people, women, migrants – belong to “traditional” families too: they have been around forever, just not visible or recognised in law.


- Equality opponents use words such as “family-phobia” or “gender ideology” to create distance and an “us versus them” debate. Always refocus the debate on its true subject: love, care, protection of the vulnerable, and the values you will have found important in your research and preparatory work.
- Directly confronting opponents, especially if they are extreme, can give attention and legitimacy to groups that wouldn’t otherwise get those, or help them claim they are the victims. It’s always possible to use airtime to ignore the opposition and focus on pro-equality messages instead. So is focusing efforts on finding common ground with other progressives when possible.
- Used right, humour can help connect to supporters of equality, create a sense of community among them, and take distance from opponents and their arguments (without ridiculing anyone).

10. Working with faith

Religious institutions frequently oppose family diversity. They publicly portray themselves as defenders of one unique form of family, sometimes despite large numbers of believers supporting family diversity. Social justice activists have variously ignored, engaged with, or opposed religious hierarchies.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach. Family diversity campaigners should remain open to constructive dialogue with religious hierarchies and laypeople. Faith groups are diverse, and believers may well identify with their faith without sharing the homophobic or misogynistic views their





religious hierarchy may promote. Do not pit “believers” against “equality activists”: countless individuals belong to both groups. Finally, many progressive faith groups exist and should be engaged with.

Key lessons:

- Lead by example and make sure social justice – including LGBTI – activists and their organisations welcome and

Croatia: Two NGOs cross traditional divides to help refugees

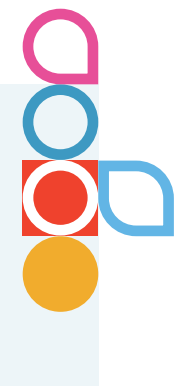
In 2015 and 2016, over 600,000 war refugees fled the Middle East and travelled to Europe via the “Balkans route”. In Croatia, the Centre for Peace Studies (a human rights and peace organisation) coordinated the citizens’ initiative “Refugees Welcome” to help those travelling westwards.

Alongside them, religious organisations and parishes were also active in helping refugees. Although the Centre and religious groups have traditionally opposed one another on LGBT and women’s rights, helping refugees brought them closer together. They started collaborating despite their different views.

Working together on a common topic effectively brought them closer, and gave them both a better understanding of one other’s position on human rights. They started issuing joint public statements on the status of refugees in Croatia, and working closely together as part of the national coordination for refugees’ integration. Going over long-held prejudice was a huge step forward for both groups. Cooperation was almost unthinkable prior to the refugee crisis, yet they’re now building mutual trust. As of early 2017, they planned to tackle issues of common interest together, including economic inequalities.

Very distant groups can build common paths of cooperation. Although they still hold different views on LGBT rights, they’re no longer hostile to one another.





openly support believers, migrants, minority ethnic groups and other minorities.

- Find common ground: support and work with more progressive or pragmatic faith groups to better understand the context and reasons for their struggle, and find out how you can mutually assist one another. Work with groups and theologians who read scriptures more openly and progressively than mainstream religious hierarchies.
- It's hard for progressive believers or religious leaders to go against the dominant message in their faith. Social justice activists should foster understanding and protect those ready to expose themselves.





8. I'm an activist, what can I do next?

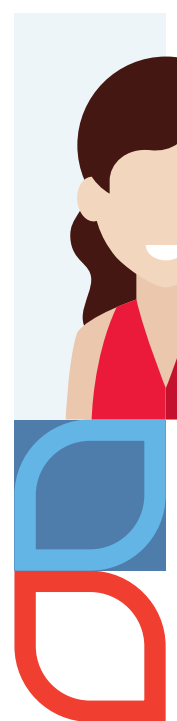
We suggest a few starting points for activists who wish to integrate family into their social justice efforts.

Although it may not seem urgent, this is the most important question: **what could your organisation achieve in several years if it successfully worked with a family equality perspective?** Would it be a change in law, in policy, in public opinion? What would it take to get there? To start thinking several years ahead, develop a theory of change to chart the steps separating the present from this ideal future.

With this long-term objective in mind, **start planning fundraising and research.** What research will you need to better understand your context, public opinion, or your constituency's views? What funds will you need to make this research – and the following steps – happen? Talk to your usual sources of funding, or seek new ones to support this new approach.

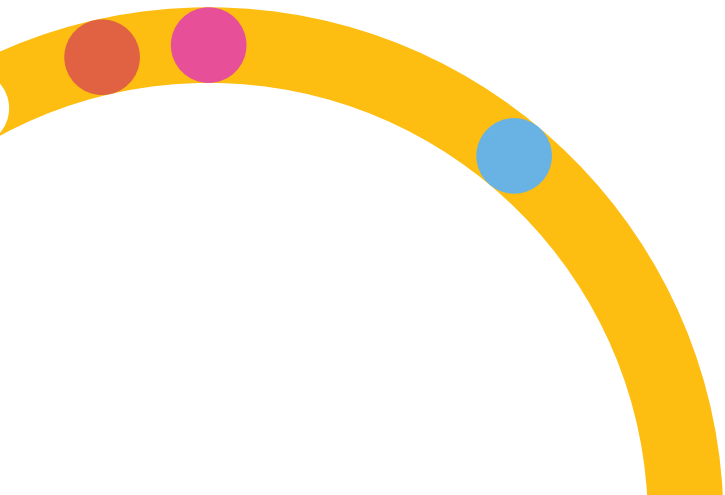
You can also **examine your current and forthcoming work:** are there opportunities to integrate a family angle in your communication, advocacy, media or litigation work? Are there societal debates that are bound to come up in the next weeks or months where your progressive work on family could make a difference? Is there enough time to pause and carefully think through how you would integrate family in your work?

Connect with other organisations. If family isn't your primary focus, connect with family-focused organisations, children's rights organisations or organisations working for the elderly. If family is your primary focus, connect with organisations working for women's rights, for the rights of LGBTI people, or for migrant and/or minority ethnic people (or organisations with a more specific focus, trans* persons or lesbian women for instance). In every case, connect with organisations





combating racism and xenophobia; progressive faith groups; and any unlikely allies. Ask yourself what family means to each of you, what you have in common, and how you could join efforts to make your vision a reality.



9. I'm a funder, what can I do next?

There are several starting points for grant makers interested to learn more or support the work described in this guide.

Most importantly, **be open to grantees or prospective grantees wishing to explore family-oriented work** (while ensuring that you don't inadvertently support work that curtails other aspects of social justice, including reproductive justice). Although this is a budding area of work, its importance is bound to increase proportionally to attacks against progressive family policies.

Consider **including family-oriented work in your funding priorities**. For example, if you currently fund advocacy or campaigning efforts for women's rights or LGBTI rights, could these priorities' ultimate goals also benefit from family-focused work?

Learn to navigate a complex field. Supporting work on family equality involves supporting new strategies, including alliance-building between areas of work and organisations that are not used to talking to one another. Funders should readily talk to one another and field experts to ensure they don't support work that undermines other aspects of social justice, for example reproductive justice.

Connect with like-minded funders. Several grant makers have current or recent experience in funding family-oriented social justice work. They can be reached through relevant grant maker-only forums and events. We will try to encourage discussion of family-oriented social justice work at such events in 2017.

Please contact us via www.reclaimingfamilyvalues.eu if you wish to find out more.





10. Resources

Readers interested in family equality will find inspiration and guidance in these resources:

LGBT families and poverty (2014) A report on poverty perfectly illustrates the core argument of this guide: it's crucial to talk about diverse families as part of wider social justice arguments. In [Paying an Unfair Price: The Financial Penalty for Being LGBT in America](#), the Movement Advancement Project shows how the absence of family recognition directly leads to increased poverty for LGBT families (see point 2, "Refusal to recognize LGBT families").

Yes Equality: The book (2016) The team behind the successful Irish referendum on marriage equality shares the lessons learned over several years of strategic activism. The book *Ireland Says Yes: The Inside Story of How the Vote for Marriage Equality Was Won* offers a behind-the-scene account of this progressive success story.

Freedom to Marry: How it happened (2015) The nationwide U.S. campaign to win marriage equality, which ended with a successful Supreme Court ruling in June 2015, shared their learned lessons on the [Freedom to Marry website](#). They touch upon the strategy, litigation, campaigning, public education, communication and fundraising behind their successful campaign.

Forthcoming resource on framing LGBTI issues (expected: first half of 2017) [The Public Interest Research Centre](#) and [ILGA-Europe](#) will soon publish a collection of tools and best practice on reframing LGBTI issues, as well as strategic communication and messaging. The resource will be available online, and cover recent developments across Europe.

Guidelines for creating a theory of change (2015) The handy guide [Suggested Guidelines for Creating a Theory of Change](#) by EffectiveOrgs offers a series of useful questions to help (re)think organisations' or projects' theories of change. These will be useful to help readers integrate family equality into their existing or future projects.





www.reclaimingfamilyvalues.eu