



RUTH BALDACCHINO

Born: December 1979, Malta

Organisation: Astraea

Malta has been ranked by ILGA-Europe as the continent's leading country for LGBTIQ+ rights for seven consecutive years, in large part due to the hard work of activists such as Ruth Baldacchino.

A trans genderqueer feminist, Baldacchino's activism began in earnest with the Malta Gay Rights Movement and led to their appointment as ILGA World Co-Secretary General in 2014, a position they held for five years.

Among their achievements in their homeland was the development and successful enactment of the Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act.

"The new Maltese law recognizes that "gender identity" is a person's "internal and individual experience of gender" and consequently establishes the right to gender identity. It also recognizes the "free development of the person according to their gender identity". The importance of this is that it provides freedom to an individual to develop, establish and express their gender, rather than having the State or the medical professionals deciding that. In other words, I am allowed to determine what identity fits me best and how I want to embody that identity." (KaosGL.org, April 2015)

In June 2015, Baldacchino was appointed to the advisory board for the Intersex Human Rights Fund, a first-of-its-kind initiative set up by the Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice, an international LGBTIQ+



philanthropic organisation. They are now an Associate Director for the Fund.

In recent years, Baldacchino has strongly advocated for the welfare of sex workers in Malta, arguing that decriminalisation will safeguard human rights, and citing the groundbreaking Prostitution Reform Act introduced in fellow Commonwealth country New Zealand in 2003.

"Many sex workers are lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and queer. We have seen significant changes in our laws when it comes to LGBTQ people in Malta. However, we cannot ignore the fact that for a very long time, workplace discrimination in "regular" jobs and poverty all meant that LGBTQ people were disproportionately over-represented in sex work - and this will take a while to change." (Malta Independent, March 2020)

Image credit

Astraea Lesbian Foundation for Justice

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