Workplace Pride | THE INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM FOR LGBTIQ+ INCLUSION AT WORK

REPORT

PERSONAL SAFETY DURING BUSINESS TRIPS

Good Practice document at the initiative of
the Trans+@Workplace Pride Community

By Koos Kegel and co-written by Marjolein Verkouter, Sophie Jeckmans, Kailin Simonoff Oenomel and Christine Holtkamp



Trans Community

Published by Workplace Pride Foundation
Amsterdam, November 2026

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Koos Kegel (they/them)



Lifelong questioning gender and gender-roles. Approx 10 years ago started with investigating gender in general and searching for my personal answers. Current working title is non-binary.
Professional background in electronics design with focus on radio frequency research and development. Started in 1986 with mobile telecommunication product development (Netherlands and Sweden) in both telephone- and infrastructure design. After the telecom bubble (2002), moved into the radio astronomy domain involved with instrument design for radio astronomers in European- and global projects. Became an experienced traveller noticing the issues for gender nonconforming persons. For two years now working with satellite navigation systems engineering with focus on the satellite (space) domain with mainly Dutch and European consortia. In parallel, present the findings at international conferences and publish in research papers.



Marjolein Verkouter (she/her)

Transgender, trained as an astronomer but found out tinkering with computers was just that bit more aligned with personal interests. As Head of Department of a European Research Infrastructure Consortium that collaborates worldwide I travel for work inside- as well as outside of Europe.



Sophie Jeckmans (she/her)

As community lead for Trans+@workplace pride as well as people manager in a financial institution, I'm always looking to create spaces where everyone can be themselves. Combining this with product management to create highly effective, mature, international delivery teams.



Kailin Simonoff Oenomel (they/them)

Kailin (they/them) found Workplace Pride just after immigrating to The Netherlands five years ago. They are passionate about all things data, and social justice for minority groups, and enjoy doing both in a professional setting.



Christine Holtkamp (she/her)

As Director of the Workplace Pride Communities, she works directly with member organisations to strengthen inclusion across LGBTIQ+ networks and ensure that community knowledge and lived experience inform organisational policies and practices. She focuses in particular on advancing equity for Queer People of Colour and the Trans+ communities.

ABOUT WORKPLACE PRIDE

Workplace Pride has spent two decades championing LGBTIQ+ inclusion in workplaces across the Netherlands and around the globe. Our story is one of passion, expertise, and action: empowering organisations, teams, and individuals to create inclusive environments where everyone can thrive.
We combine knowledge, research, and practical tools with personalised support, ensuring that inclusion is not just a policy — it is a culture of inclusion.



ABOUT THE TRANS+ COMMUNITY

The Workplace Pride Trans+ Community is a dedicated international network driving systemic inclusion, safety, and equity for trans, non-binary, and gender-diverse professionals. Operating as a core pillar of the Workplace Pride Foundation, the community connects individuals, Employee Resource Groups (ERGs), and organisational leaders to build workplaces where gender identity and expression are fully respected and celebrated.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction P 4

Background P 5-6

Attention points P 7-8

- Non-binary gender identity in the passport
- Physical presentation
- Visa
- Luggage
- Digital activities
- Summary

Proposal P 9-10

- Contact person within the HR department
- Not travelling
- Reasonable travel
- Visa
- Digital activities

Conclusion P 11

Bibliography P 12-13

INTRODUCTION

After years of increasing freedom and safety for people within the LGBTIQ+ community, there are growing concerns that this progress is under pressure. In particular, since the inauguration of the current (47th) US president, political sentiment towards LGBTIQ+ individuals has deteriorated, and in some European countries openly discriminatory policies are also being pursued. As a result, destinations that may be classified as “safe” under national policy frameworks can, in practice, be unsafe for LGBTIQ+ people. In this context, existing corporate security policies are often insufficient to adequately protect affected employees.

At the initiative of the Trans+@Workplace Pride Community, this document proposes that employers strengthen their approach by explicitly including personal safety considerations for employees during business travel.

A key aspect of this proposal is the distinction between organisational responsibility and individual responsibility for personal safety. While employers in some countries – for example, The Netherlands - have a duty of care to provide a safe working environment, individuals must also be supported in making informed decisions about their own safety when travelling.

Trust and confidentiality are central to this approach, particularly in relation to the HR staff member. Employees should not be required to disclose to their line manager the personal reasons for not wishing to travel to or via certain countries to reach the destination. At the same time, it is important that the organisation is aware of any concerns to provide proper support.

It is equally important that these safeguards do not become a barrier for employees who do wish to travel to countries that are considered safe.

Finally, thorough preparation is essential. IT departments must also be properly equipped to support safe travel practices, including helping employees minimise their digital footprint and reduce the risk of exposure while travelling. Please note that while most information in this document reflects The Netherlands as home country, this document can equally apply to other (home) countries with similar laws.

BACKGROUND

There is a growing concern within various LGBTIQ+ advocacy groups about the personal safety of LGBTIQ+ people travelling internationally. An overview of acceptance is maintained on LGBT Rights by Country & Travel Guide | Equaldex

The formal guidelines of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kan ik veilig reizen als lhbtiq+ persoon? | NederlandWereldwijd) are not always complete in this respect. When the country can be safe for the general public, it may be different for people from the LHBTIQ+ community.

For example, the travel advisory for the United States reads "safe" while the visa application states: Reisadvies Verenigde Staten van Amerika | Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken | NederlandWereldwijd

"Let op: De Amerikaanse autoriteiten accepteren als geslachtsvermelding alleen een M (man/male) of V (vrouw, female). Dit heeft de Amerikaanse overheid op 20 januari 2025 bepaald. Op basis hiervan moet U bij Uw aanvraag van een ESTA of visum aangeven wat uw geslacht bij geboorte is."

(Translated: Note: The US authorities only accept M (male/male) or V (female/female) as gender. This is what the U.S. government has set for January 20, 2025. On this basis, you must indicate your gender at birth when applying for an ESTA or a visa).




U.S. EMBASSY AND CONSULATE IN THE NETHERLANDS

Trying to Enter or Remain Illegally Will Get You Caught

Some people believe they can sneak into the United States and avoid being caught. This is not true. The Trump Administration has strengthened border security and greatly increased the number of illegal aliens being arrested and deported. In February 2025, illegal border crossings dropped 94% compared to February 2024, while arrests of illegal border crossers inside the United States increased by 627%. If you try to cross a U.S. border or remain in the United States illegally, you will be caught, detained, and sent back. You may also be banned from ever returning or face fines and criminal charges.

U.S. Visa Fraud Has Serious Consequences

The U.S. visa process is the most secure in the world. Yet, some people unwisely still try to cheat the system by using fake documents, lying on applications, or staying after their visa expires. These are examples of visa fraud, and it is a serious crime. If you break the law in this way, you will be punished, and you may never be allowed to enter the United States again.

This example shows that simply following the Dutch Foreign Ministry's judgement on safety can lead to the exclusion of transgender people.

From the perspective of non-binary persons (with an X in their passport), the situation is also difficult; when applying for a visa, they have to choose a gender (M/F) that is different from the X indication in their passport. In this example, the Transgender Network provides the following advice (Reisadvies voor trans mensen die naar de Verenigde Staten gaan - Transgender Netwerk):

"Wij raden aan om alleen op reis naar de VS te gaan als het niet anders kan. Probeer om contact op te nemen met de Amerikaanse ambassade voordat je vertrekt. Bestaande ESTA's blijven geldig. Maar voor mensen met een X in hun paspoort raden wij op dit moment af om de VS te bezoeken."

(Translated: "We recommend travelling to the US only if absolutely necessary. Try to contact the US Embassy before you leave. Existing ESTAs remain valid. However, for people with an X in their passport we currently advise against visiting the US.")

Furthermore, the use of gender affirming medications can lead to issues with the body scanner (millimetre-wave detector) ports where atypical body shapes can be identified. They are thus left to the arbitrariness of immigration officials. See the Nederland waarschuwt lhbtq's die naar VS reizen | Het Parool.

The risks faced by people belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community range from having to explain their gender identity, to being denied entry to the country, to detention. The chance of problems is not substantial, but if a problem occurs the effect can be significant. Therefore, personal safety for people from the LGBTIQ+ community deserves special attention from the employer.

An overview of countries with restrictions on LGBTIQ+ persons is kept in **Home | ILGA World Database**



ATTENTION POINTS

To prevent unsolicited attention from border authorities are:

Non-binary gender identity in the passport



For persons with a non-binary gender identity, it is possible as a Dutch resident to formally record this in the Basic Persons Registry (BRP). A Non-Binary gender marker ("X") leads to correct pronouns in communication with the government and all bodies that use this database. In addition, only if registered correctly in this database, the communication related to medical calls are correctly implemented. Internationally, however, it may lead to restrictions.

Physical presentation



The immigration officer will ask questions if discrepancies are noted in the physical presentation with respect to the gender as stated in the passport. But also, modern equipment can lead to unwelcome situations.
The widely accepted millimetre-wave body scans detect body shapes. See also Millimeter wave scanner - Wikipedia and What Do Airport Body Scanners See? Can They See You Naked? A pet-down screening often follows when the security scanner detects an object close to the body, or unusual body shape.

Visa



It is common for a person to be asked for their sex at birth before obtaining a visa. For transgender persons, this differs from the formal gender as stated in the passport. Furthermore, a non-binary gender identity X is not always recognised. Applying for a visa can therefore be complicated for persons identifying as transgender or non-binary gender.

ATTENTION POINTS

Luggage

If luggage cannot be labelled to the final destination, it must be collected in the transit country and checked in for the next flight. If this border-crossing is into an unsafe country, the traveller faces a personal risk by passing through border control for the luggage collection. It is also possible that the luggage labelled to the final destination is identified as unwanted during a routine check in the transit country. For example, gender-confirming medication is not always allowed; if found, it can lead to unwanted questions.



Digital activities

The digital history is nowadays part of the traveller's belongings. These digital activities on, for example professionally in DEI groups or personal in social media groups, pose a risk if the immigration officers find support for the LGBTIQ+ community. After all, this virtual information is linked to the person and forms a whole with the physical traveller.



Summary

A business trip requires meticulous travel planning for persons from the LGBTIQ+ community. Aspects of this include unrecognised (gender) identity in relation to the countries visited, obtaining a VISA, whether luggage/medication is allowed, and finally personal and professional public digital history.



PROPOSAL

As can be seen from the above, travel and visits to some countries may involve personal risks for LGBTIQ+ people. The employer has a duty of care towards the employee and thus plays a significant role. By providing clarity from the employer to the traveller, these risks can be properly identified. Ultimately, it is up to the traveller to arrive at an acceptable level of risk. So what is acceptable is largely determined by the traveller.
In addition, it is important that this choice should not have any consequences for the traveller's future and career prospects, but also that the reasoning for the travel choice does not lead to undesirable openness in reporting the employee's gender and/or gender identity. This requires a socially and psychologically safe working environment. The following are some suggestions that can make travelling safer for the person concerned.

Contact person within the HR department

Travellers should be able to consult confidentially with an HR staff member on questions relating to personal travel security.

In this context, it is necessary for the HR department to have a broader responsibility for personal travel safety than just LGBTIQ+ aspects. For example, there is also responsibility in terms of physical disability, skin colour, religion, or mental challenges such as anxiety disorder, etc. The reason for this broad responsibility of the HR worker is that it is undesirable to reveal the LGBTIQ+ involvement of the traveller through repeated contact with the dedicated HR staff member.

Summary: A safe travel policy requires a visible HR person whose job it is to speak confidentially with travellers about personal safety.

Not travelling

Accept that employees may find it unsafe to travel to some countries, or places. Even if the official foreign affair policy defines that these places are safe. Accept that employees ultimately want to assess the risk themselves and that this choice has no career consequences. If this acceptance is difficult, it is recommended that the HR staff member supports the traveller, especially if the traveller feels unsafe to share the reasoning with the superior.

Summary: the organisation must accept that an employee for personal safety reasons chooses not to visit a country without any further consequences.

Reasonable travel

Sometimes the cheapest way to travel is to have a transfer in countries with high personal risks. In that situation, propose an alternative itinerary that allows for the transfer to be made in safer countries.

Summary: the organisation must allow an employee to plan a business trip in a way that does not compromise personal safety.

Visa

Accept that visa cannot always be granted to people from the LGBTIQ+ community. The reason for this should not necessarily be made known to the immediate superior. The HR staff member however needs to be aware of this argument to support the traveller and give, when needed, an explanation to the superior.

Summary: the organisation must accept that staff may choose not to apply for a visa if their personal safety is at stake.

Digital activities

Immigration officers see the traveller and their connected digital history as one. In destinations where social media posts or activities may be risky for the traveller, it should be possible to make use of employer-provided facilities primarily intended for national security purposes, such as a "burner" telephone (i.e. empty, without a personal social media history), and similar laptop without any personal history. Removing personal social history from a personal / non-empty device provides insufficient protection for the traveller because of the possible, forced, (re)installation of software by local authorities.

It is also important that the employer's phone service provider allows enough data to set up a VPN to prevent unwanted monitoring by a local service provider or government. When entering a country that applies digital censorship without a VPN service, it is entirely unclear which services may still be accessible. As such, an employer-provided VPN service is the only sure way to provide continued access to necessary services.

A practical challenge is that accessing cloud-based email often requires authentication via a personal device. This can create a security risk, as the identifier is sent to the user's own phone, potentially exposing sensitive information. The downside of using a VPN is that services and/or resources in the destination country are typically unavailable.

This raises difficult trade-offs: should employees avoid checking email altogether in such contexts if it is not secure enough? Organisations should investigate what other steps could be taken to ensure a safe and compliant way to work.

Other complications include making changes to travel plans or completing check-in procedures, all of which depend heavily on digital infrastructure and can be affected by local restrictions and surveillance environments.

For this, thorough preparation is essential. IT departments must also be properly equipped to support safe travel practices, including helping employees minimise their digital footprint and reduce the risk of exposure while travelling.

Summary: the organisation should support staff with means to enhance personal safety during business travel. IT departments must also be properly equipped to support safe travel practices, including helping employees minimise their digital footprint and reduce the risk of exposure while travelling.

CONCLUSION

Personal safety during business travel cannot be assessed solely through general country-level travel advice. Employers should recognise that individual risk may vary depending on personal circumstances, including but not limited to LGBTIQ+ identity, disability, neurodiversity, religion, ethnicity, or other factors that may affect how safe a traveller is in practice. Internal travel-, security-, HR-, and IT policies should therefore provide clear, confidential, and practical routes for employees to raise concerns, make informed choices and access proper support without negative consequences. When updating existing policies or creating new ones, organisations are encouraged to use the considerations in this document as a checklist to ensure that personal safety, confidentiality, and inclusion are built into business travel procedures from the outset.



REFERENCE LIST

Leveille, Dan. "LGBT Rights by Country & Travel Guide | Equaldex." Equaldex, 25 Feb. 2014

Is an open-source, collaborative knowledge base for the LGBTIQ+ movement that measures laws, public opinion, and progress related to LGBTIQ+ rights worldwide.

Dekkers, Lis. "Reisadvies Voor Trans Mensen Die Naar de Verenigde Staten Gaan - Transgender Netwerk." Transgender Network Nederland, 25 Mar. 2025

Het Parool a well established, Dutch tabloid newspaper providing local news, culture, and national/international affairs within the Amsterdam region.

ILGA World Database: Home

ILGA is a recognised source of LGBTIQ+ information worldwide based on laws and restrictions in 169 countries

Millimeter Wave Scanner - Wikipedia

Wikipedia is an open-source encyclopaedia website consisting of information stemming from reputable sources including various reference and research journals worldwide, governmental websites on transportation and transit authorities, and web news sources based in North America and Europe among others.

"Kan Ik Veilig Reizen Als Lhbtiq+ Persoon? Reisadvies Verenigde Staten van Amerika" Home | Nederlandwereldwijd

Nederlandwerldwijd (or Netherlands Worldwide) is a governmental website owned and operated by the Dutch Government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs) that provides information, including for LGBTIQ+ travellers, about international travel.

Stathis, Jamie. "What Do Airport Body Scanners See? Can They See You Naked?" Reader's Digest, 4 Nov. 2024

Reader's Digest Article on airport millimetre scanners pulls information from TSA, CNN, US Immigrations and Customs Enforcement as well as interviews from news and educational sources.

REFERENCE LIST

Dekkers, Lis. “Reisadvies Voor Trans Mensen Die Naar de Verenigde Staten Gaan - Transgender Netwerk.” Transgender Network Nederland, 25 Mar. 2025

Transgender Network Nederland is a recognisable Dutch website as by and for transgender individuals that primarily provides news information and advocacy

“Don’t Risk Your Future: The United States Cracks Down on Illegal Immigration.” U.S Embassy And Consulate General in The Netherlands.

U.S. Embassy and Consulate General in The Netherlands is a governmental website owned and operated by the U.S. Government that provides information, including that about obtaining a US visa and the associated requirements.

PUBLISHER
Workplace Pride Foundation, Herengracht 575-577, 1017 CD Amsterdam
www.workplacepride.org

CONTACT
info@workplacepride.org

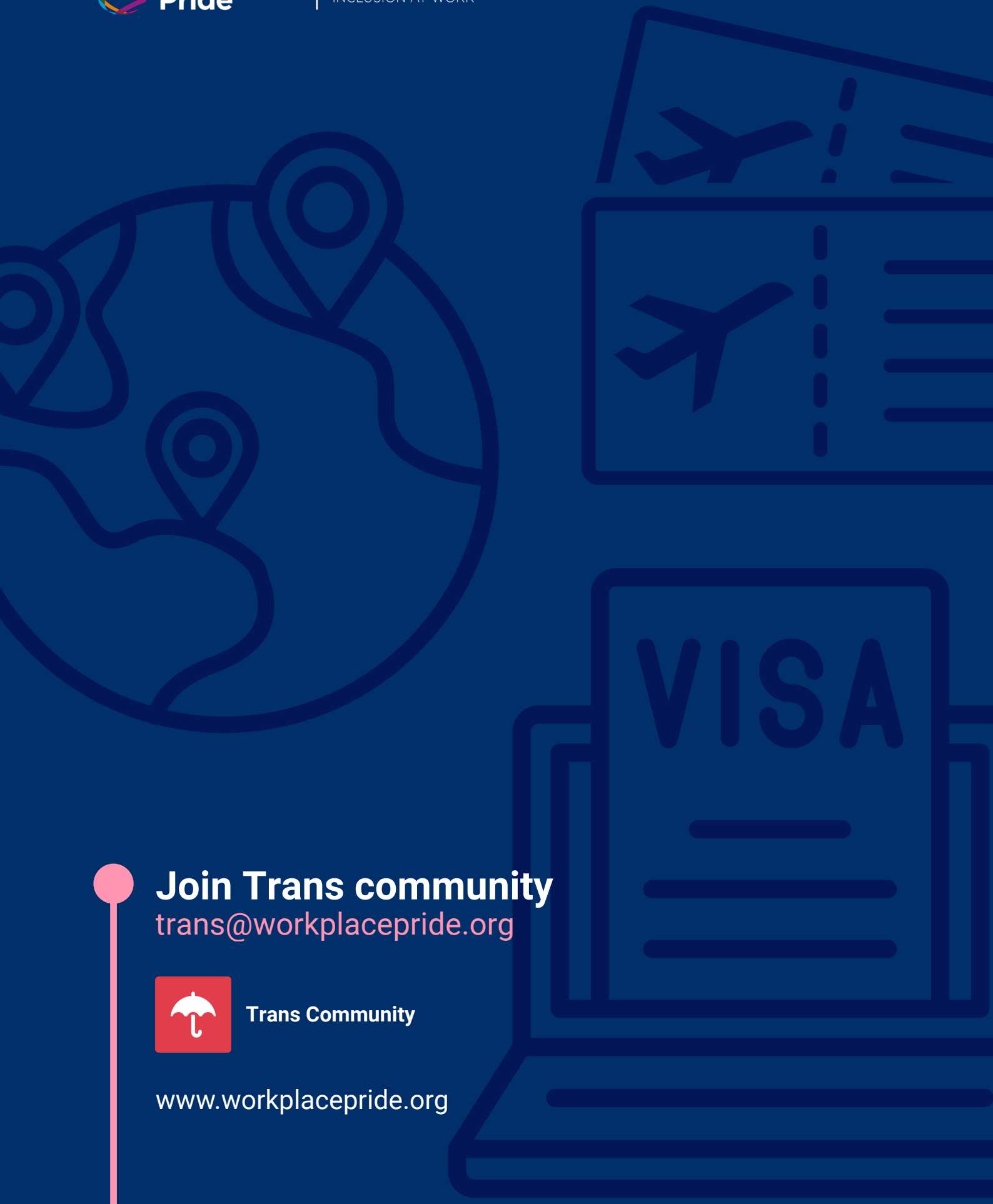
AUTHOR
Koos Kegel and co-written by Marjolein Verkouter, Sophie Jeckmans, Kailin Simonoff Oenomel and Christine Holtkamp

GRAPHIC DESIGN
Lisa-Marie Di Maggio and John Ryan

COPYRIGHT © 2026 Workplace Pride Foundation

Kegel.K, Verkouter.M, Jeckmans.S, Simonoff Oenomel.K, Holtkamp.C (2026), Personal safety during business trips. Amsterdam: Workplace Pride Foundation.

Workplace Pride | THE INTERNATIONAL PLATFORM FOR LGBTIQ+ INCLUSION AT WORK



Join Trans community

trans@workplacepride.org

Trans Community

www.workplacepride.org