

# EURO-LETTER

Euro-Letter is published by **ILGA-Europe** - the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association with support from the European Community - The European Union against Discrimination.

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all previous Euro-Letters in English as well as the German and Portuguese translations from No.76, January 2000 and Greek translation from No 127, January 2006 are available in pdf format on our website: [www.ilga-europe.org/europe/publications/euro\\_letter](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/publications/euro_letter)

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The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.



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## ILGA-EUROPE:

### **Developing next ILGA-Europe's Strategic Plan 2008-2011: next step**

*by Patricia Prendiville*

Following our previous announcements in Euroletter, Newsletter and on our website, we are inviting our members to take part in a meeting regarding ILGA-Europe's next Strategic Plan 2008-2011, which will take place on 7 July 2007 in Budapest.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions regarding this meeting or the Strategic Plan, please contact me: [patricia@ilga-europe.org](mailto:patricia@ilga-europe.org)

Further information on our website: [www.ilga-europe.org](http://www.ilga-europe.org)

### **ILGA-Europe's campaign on freedom of assembly and expression for LGBT people in Europe**

*By Juris Lavrikovs*

On 17 May 2007 ILGA-Europe distributed our media release with the names of first signatories to our appeal. Now you can view the list of all who signed the appeal so far and individual messages of support from some of them on our website:

[http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns\\_projects/freedom\\_of\\_assembly\\_and\\_expression/who\\_already\\_signed\\_ilga\\_europe\\_s\\_appeal](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns_projects/freedom_of_assembly_and_expression/who_already_signed_ilga_europe_s_appeal)

We are very grateful to those of you who contacted your town/city mayor office already, your involvement is very important and we also encourage others to help the campaign. You will find a section which provides some ideas/suggestions on what you can do to help on our website:

[http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns\\_projects/freedom\\_of\\_assembly\\_and\\_expression/various\\_suggestions\\_on\\_what\\_you\\_can\\_do\\_to\\_help\\_the\\_campaign](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns_projects/freedom_of_assembly_and_expression/various_suggestions_on_what_you_can_do_to_help_the_campaign)

Please remember that the campaign is not over and we will be collecting signatures and messages of support **throughout summer 2007.**

Once again – thanks a lot for all your support and we look forward to work with all of you to make this campaign supported by as many European City Mayors as possible!

## **Job opportunity with ILGA-Europe – Policy Programmes Officer**

*by ILGA-Europe*

The post holder will be responsible for providing policy, lobbying and capacity building services to support ILGA-Europe's advocacy of LGBT rights at the European level. In particular the post holder will work with our member organisations to implement and influence European level policies in the areas of employment, social inclusion and equality.

Candidates should be strongly committed to working for this cause, and have competencies and experience in developing, presenting and implementing policy proposals, in lobbying, and in working with members and external partners.

Deadline for application: 31 May 2007

Further details and application pack on our website:

[http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/about\\_us/job\\_opportunity](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/about_us/job_opportunity)

## **Two ILGA-Europe's documents on Prides – in Russian**

*by ILGA-Europe*

Two ILGA-Europe documents, "Handbook on Observations of Pride Marches" and "Prides against Prejudice: A toolkit on organizing pride in a hostile environment" are now available on our website in Russian:

[http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/publications/non\\_periodical](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/publications/non_periodical)

## EUROPE:

### Parliament Declaration on Homophobic Bullying falls short of signatures

*by Evelyne Paradis*

The Written Declaration on Combating Homophobic Bullying lapsed on 30 April, falling 154 signatures short of becoming an official written declaration of the European Parliament. The declaration presented by the European Parliament's LGBT Intergroup and MEP John Bowis received the support of 239 parliamentarians between February and April, which is a very respectable score; indeed, very few written declarations end up being adopted. Unlike Parliament resolutions that are adopted by vote during plenary sessions, declarations are open for signature at a specific time and in a particular venue, making it less convenient and practical for a lot of MEPs to sign such documents.

The list of MEPs who signed the declaration is available on ILGA-Europe's Website.

[http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/news/call\\_for\\_action\\_let\\_s\\_stump\\_out\\_homophobic\\_bullying\\_in\\_europe](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/news/call_for_action_let_s_stump_out_homophobic_bullying_in_europe)

### 17 May – International Day against Homophobia

*by ILGA-Europe*

On 17 May 2007, for the third time the world marked the International Day against Homophobia. Patricia Prendiville Executive Director of ILGA-Europe, said: "The International Day against Homophobia is a good occasion to once again raise the issue of homophobia still existing in Europe. Unfortunately LGBT people in Europe still face unfair treatment, prejudice and discrimination in all spheres of their lives. European, national and local politicians and authorities across Europe have done a lot to tackle homophobia already, but there are much more efforts, commitments and actions needed to completely eliminate this disgraceful phenomenon from Europe."

This day was marked by various events in a variety of countries. On our website you will find

- article by Terry Davis, Secretary General of Council of Europe
- viewpoint by Thomas Hammarberg, Commissioner for Human Rights, Council of Europe
- media statements by IGLYO, the Gay and Lesbian Rights Intergroup of the European Parliament, the European Women's Lobby
- presentation on LGBT rights in the European Unions delivered by Christine Le Doaré, member of ILGA-Europe Executive Board, in Paris during lesbian colloquia

[http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/news/today\\_is\\_international\\_day\\_against\\_homophobia](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/news/today_is_international_day_against_homophobia)

## Mayor of Vilnius does not allow EU anti-discrimination truck into the city

*ILGA-Europe's media release, 21 May 2007*

**Juozas Imbrasas**, Mayor of Vilnius, today refused to give permission for the anti-discrimination truck tour [currently touring 19 Member States as part of the 'For Diversity. Against Discrimination' information campaign] to make its planned stop in Vilnius this Friday. The objective of the Truck Tour 2007 is to raise awareness and disseminate information about the "For Diversity. Against Discrimination" campaign, as well as the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

Among other activities planned for the Equality Day around the truck, the Lithuanian LGBT organisation was planning to host an action "We Are for All Colours of Life" as part of the first Lithuanian LGBT Pride and display a 30 meter rainbow flag at the square next to the truck.

The Mayor's grounds for refusal were security risks and that events around the truck might cause riots. Just days ago the Mayor of Vilnius also supported a refusal to display advertisements on Vilnius' trolleybuses promoting sexual orientation equality in employment developed for an EU-funded project. He stated: "We disapprove of the public display of homosexuals (sic)' ideas in the city of Vilnius". After a Swedish ambassador made a speech at the Lithuanian Parliament defending the rights of LGBT people, a protest demonstration took place outside the Swedish embassy in Vilnius claiming that "the virtues possibly acceptable for Swedish are not acceptable for Lithuanians".

Reacting to the ban of the EU anti-discrimination truck into Vilnius, the European Commission stated "it highly regrets the decision to cancel the planned event. This is the first time in the 4 years the truck has been on tour that a stop has been cancelled by local authorities."

"The anti-discrimination truck brings a message of tolerance, respect and the need to combat discrimination on the grounds of racial and ethnic origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief"

"The activities on board the truck also aim to raise awareness of anti-discrimination laws, which all Member States have signed up to."

The decision by the city authorities shows how much still needs to be done to change behaviour and attitudes towards discriminated groups and to promote awareness of diversity, This is all the more crucial in this, the "European Year of Equal Opportunities for All."

Patricia Prendiville, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe, said:

"This is an appalling act of disrespect not only towards the right of Lithuanian LGBT people to peaceful assembly and expression; this is act of disrespect toward the entire European Union and its basic principles.

For the first time ever the EU anti-discrimination truck, which carries a message that discrimination on a

number of grounds, including sexual orientation, is illegal in the European Union, has been banned by a city.

We call upon the Vilnius authorities to immediately overturn this ban and ensure that all planned activities are taking place. Moreover as already confirmed on a number of occasions by the European Court of Human Rights, security risks cannot be used as a justification for not allowing public activities and it is a positive duty of local authorities to ensure security of the event“.

## **We are families!**

*Joint media release by ILGA-Europe, AGE – the European Older People’s Platform, European Disability Forum, European Network Against Racism, European Women’s Lobby, European Youth Forum, The Platform of European Social NGOs*

On the occasion of the International Day of Families, 15 May 2007, four social NGOs are reminding the EU that any definition of families should reflect the diversity of families which exist in European societies. Increasingly, the traditional concept of family is challenged by the evolution of society. The number of teenage pregnancies, single-parent families and families based on same-sex unions is on the rise in the EU. A failure to acknowledge their existence, and respond to the particular challenges they face, in policy and legislation amounts to discrimination on the grounds of sex, race, age, nationality, religion, disability and sexual orientation.

Today is also the occasion to remind the EU of the need to implement the principle of family reunification and freedom of movement of families within the EU without discrimination. Increasingly restrictive family reunification policies across the EU member states undermine the right to family life, and have a detrimental effect on the integration of migrants.

Definitions of families and family policies should extend to quality publicly funded care for dependents and state benefits which recognise families in their diversity. Caring duties and costs must not fall solely on families and in particular women. Member states must take responsibility for the well being and the full integration of dependents.

List of quotes:

Patricia Prendiville, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe said:

“We do not want our families to be constantly considered as second class. At the end of the day, the ones who pay the toll for such discriminatory measures are children in lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender (LGBT) families. Not recognising LGBT families in law and practice will only damage the right of children to the security and protection available to other children; it will not stop LGBT families from existing.”

Kirsti Kolthoff, President of the European Women’s Lobby stated:

"Care services are missing in the EU, which leads to a "double life burden", for women who more and more work outside the home and at the same time perform the majority of caring and household tasks. The way out of this "double life burden" of women, lies of course in changes in attitudes in the home, for an equal sharing of caring tasks between women and men, and it also depends on policies that allow women and men a real choice."

Pascale Charhon, Director of the European Network against Racism (ENAR), pointed out that "there is an inherent contradiction in the policies of member states which seek to increasingly restrict migration and family reunification, while at the same time promoting integration and family rights in Europe".

Anne-Sophie Parent, Director of AGE - the European Older People's Platform observed that "the family should be considered in all its dimensions including the ageing family and that family policy should recognise the wish and limitations of families to care for their elderly dependants".

## **Support Anti-Hate Crimes Legislation in Europe**

*by ILGA-Europe*

ILGA-Europe encourages its members, supporters and friends to sign a petition initiated by COALITION EUROPE supporting effective legislation on hate crime in Europe.

COALITION EUROPE is a Pan-European platform of human rights organisations collaborating to implement single-issue campaigns to pursue a common European human rights agenda.

Europe has in recent years experienced a steady rise in the number of hate-motivated crimes committed within its borders. Increasing Immigration, a fear of fading national identity, of terrorism and of difference have been integral to the swelling feelings of Islamophobia, Anti-semitism and xenophobia throughout Europe and have led to an openly hostile environment against minority communities in many European states.

These fears have all been used as excuses for the acceptance of intolerance and have contributed directly to the rise in hate crimes throughout Europe.

The Coalition Europe campaign - From Hate Crimes to Human Rights - urges European States to commit themselves to establishing and implementing concrete and effective measures for preventing and combating hate crimes.

Petition is available at: <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/CoalitionEurope>

## SAME-SEX FAMILIES:

### Switzerland: Geneva voters back gay equality

*Source: Tribune de Genève, 21 May 2007,*

[http://www.tdg.ch/pages/home/tribune\\_de\\_geneve/english\\_corner/news/news\\_detail/\(contenu\)/79686](http://www.tdg.ch/pages/home/tribune_de_geneve/english_corner/news/news_detail/(contenu)/79686)

A strong majority of citizens participating in Sunday's referendum support the law giving homosexual partners the same rights as married couples.

Geneva citizens have voted massively in favor of giving equal rights to gay couples who enter into a partnership as those enjoyed by married heterosexuals. The referendum on Sunday brings the canton's laws into line with those in the rest of the country. The change, backed by 83 per cent of voters, gives gay couples equal access to benefits and inheritance.

The referendum was necessary because it requires a change in cantonal tax laws. All the political parties in Geneva supported the change, except for the right-wing Swiss People's Party (UDC). The UDC was strongly criticized for a poster campaign it ran, opposing the changes as a tax bonus to "infertile and well-off" gays. A spokesman for the UDC later acknowledged that the wrong wording had been used for the posters, which were eventually removed.

Geneva voters also approved a dozen technical changes to housing laws that generally make regulations less restrictive for property owners renting out apartments. Many of the rules are already in place. But following the passage of a referendum last fall, all changes to housing regulations in Geneva - including those introduced in the last two years - must be submitted to a vote.

## Estonia: same-sex civil unions legalised by 2008?

*Translated from Russian by Juris Lavrikovs, original source: [www.delfi.ee](http://www.delfi.ee), 10 May 2007,  
<http://rus.delfi.ee/archive/article.php?id=15876759&categoryID=309647&ndate=1178744400>*

Estonian internet news portal [www.delfi.ee](http://www.delfi.ee) reports that despite the fact that currently debated legislation on family does not provide legalisation of same-sex marriages, it is expected that a law legalising same-sex civil unions will be adopted in 2008.

Rein Lang, the Estonian Minister of Justice, said that the Estonian government thinks the Family Law needs to regulate family in its traditional understanding and pointed out that the same-sex civil unions should be regulated by a separate legislation.

## Finland: 191 same-sex partnerships were registered in 2006

*Source: [Helsingin Sanomat](http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Numbers+of+marriages+and+divorces+declined+in+2006/1135227016307), 4 May 2007,*  
<http://www.hs.fi/english/article/Numbers+of+marriages+and+divorces+declined+in+2006/1135227016307>

Last year saw a total of 28,236 marriages in Finland, or slightly more than a thousand fewer than in the previous 12 months. The figures come out in Statistics Finland's demographic change data, published today. The number of couples tying the knot during the first years of the 20th century has varied from year to year quite dramatically.

Last year, the average age of women marrying for the first time was 29.7 years, and for men it was 32.1 years. A total of 13,255 marriages came to the end of the road in divorce last year, just over 100 fewer than in 2005. There have been only marginal changes in the numbers of divorces in recent years.

In the realm of same-sex partnerships, 191 were registered in 2006. Of these, 84 were homosexual male couples, and 107 lesbian couples. In 2005, the combined total was 200. There were 30 divorces among same-sex partnerships in 2006.

According to the newspaper *Keskisuomalainen*, it also appears that marriages between partners of different nationalities are on the increase. The numbers have risen over the past decade by as much as 30 per cent. Two years ago the figure topped 3,000, while in 1996 it was 700 fewer.

## FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY:

### **European Court of Human Rights: ban on LGBT pride in Warsaw was illegal and discriminatory**

by *ILGA-Europe*

On 3 May 2007, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg delivered its judgement in a case of *Baczowski and Others v. Poland* and declared ban on LGBT pride march in Warsaw in 2005 illegal and discriminatory.

Patricia Prendiville, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe, said:

“We are pleased that the Court firmly and unanimously confirmed that the freedom of assembly and expression belongs to all. There is a significant case-law already established by the Court in regards to freedom of assembly and now we know that the same principles are equally applicable to LGBT citizens.

We hope that this decision of the European Court of Human Rights will put a final stop to the outrageous violations of the right to peaceful demonstration by LGBT people which we witnessed during the last few years in some European cities.

We hope that this decision will be yet another argument supporting European Mayors to sign ILGA-Europe’s appeal on freedom of assembly and expression for LGBT people and thus wipe out yet another ugly expression of homophobia from Europe.”

Further details, including the full judgement are on our website: [http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/guide/country\\_by\\_country/poland/european\\_court\\_of\\_human\\_rights\\_ban\\_on\\_lgbt\\_pride\\_in\\_warsaw\\_was\\_illegal\\_and\\_discriminatory](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/guide/country_by_country/poland/european_court_of_human_rights_ban_on_lgbt_pride_in_warsaw_was_illegal_and_discriminatory)