

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:

Delegates of ILGA-Europe annual conference experience first-hand discrimination and resistance in Vilnius, but are united and determined to work together for Europe of equality and respect

ILGA-Europe media release, 30 October 2007

On 25-28 October 2007, almost 200 delegates from all over Europe gathered in the Lithuanian capital of Vilnius for the 11th ILGA-Europe's Annual Conference. While the public event to display rainbow flag during the conference was banned by the Mayor of Vilnius and there was a demonstration against the conference, the delegates are determined to fight prejudice, discrimination and injustice.

During 5 plenary sessions, 2 discussion panels, 21 workshops and a series of self-organised groups, the delegates had a chance to listen, have discussions and engage with prominent international, European and national experts on equality and human rights. This year's conference programme provided a diverse agenda and covered a whole range of issues from the work at the UN and European level to organisational development challenges in evolving LGBT groups. The programme was designed in a way to ensure that the delegate had not just an opportunity to listen but to actively engage and participate in all discussions. As usual the conference had two capacity building practical workshops, on developing advocacy strategies and using video in monitoring human rights abuses.

ILGA-Europe's annual conference is also its annual general meeting and the delegates approved Strategic Plan for 2008-2011 and elected a new Executive Board for 2007-2008:

1. Pierre Serne (France)
2. Renato Sabbadini (Italy)
3. Lisette Kampus (Estonia)
4. Ruth Baldacchino (Malta)
5. Chrsitine Le Doaré (France)
6. Martin Christensen (Denmark)
7. Deborah Lambillotte (Belgium)
8. Linda Freimane (Latvia)
9. Tomasz Szypuła (Poland)
10. Natasa Sukic (Slovenia)

The reserve members elected are:

- Paata Sabelashvili (Georgia)
- Irmeli Krans (Sweden)

Ruth Baldacchino (Malta) and Janfrans van der Eerden (Netherlands) were elected as European representatives on ILGA Executive Board.

The conference also voted on a venue for the ILGA-Europe's annual conference in 2009 which will be held in Malta.

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

"This was a very successful and positive conference. We had great speakers from various international, European and national institutions. The EU officials delivered great news that the European Commission included in its next year's legislative action plan a proposal for a directive which will address the hierarchy of EU anti-discrimination laws and will introduce a ban on discrimination because of sexual orientation in areas other than employment. We heard from various national officials about their work and commitments towards equality and human rights for LGBT issues. We also held a European launch of the Yogyakarta Principles, a groundbreaking international document, giving the human rights issues for LGBT people a new perspective and impetus at universal level.

At the same time we also learned that getting new EU protections will not be easy and cannot take the Commission promise for granted. We also first handed witnessed and experienced the ugly face of hatred and violence. The smoke bomb explosion at a club next to the conference venue and where many delegates socialised on the first night of the conference, the ban of public event by the Mayor of Vilnius and a demonstration protesting against the conference served as reminder that hatred, violence and prejudice is alive and well in Europe. These events also caused considerable media coverage in Lithuania and all Europe. Fortunately no delegate was hurt and we believe the smoke bomb attack was not targeted at the conference and its delegates. However such uncivilised and dangerous methods in parallel with an open disregard of the basic human right to expression and assembly by the Mayor of Vilnius make us only more determined to work even with greater determination towards Europe equality, respect and happiness for each person."

Please visit our conference page for all the news, daily updates, reports and images from the conference:

www.ilga-europe.org/conference

ILGA-Europe announces 4th call for proposals for Pilot Human Rights Violations Documentation Fund

by ILGA-Europe, 17 November 2007

ILGA-Europe announces fourth call for proposals within its Small Pilot Human Rights Violations Documentation Fund with support of the Sigrid Rausing Trust.

Deadline for applications: 19 December 2007.

The goals of the Fund are:

- to promote documentation of cases of discrimination, hate crimes and other human rights violations against LGBT people according to the international human rights documentation standards
- to build capacity of LGBT organisations in Europe to monitor and document human rights violations on the grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression
- to enable use of well-documented information for advocacy purposes at the national level
- to develop methodology and tools that can be replicated in other European countries for collection of quality information on human rights violations

The Fund will support small and medium-scale projects (up to 5,000 euros with no minimum amount requirement), intended to produce reports on the situation and cases of today and immediate past with a potential to be used for advocacy purposes. Historical projects are not eligible.

The following are some of the documentation themes supported by the Fund in the previous calls:

- human rights violations by law-enforcement authorities
- discrimination of LGBT people in prisons
- discrimination and hate crimes on the grounds of gender identity and expression
- access of LGBT people to healthcare
- hate crimes and hate speech (including in media)
- quantitative studies (e.g. based on questionnaires) on human rights violations and discrimination
- publication of already collected information and its use for advocacy purposes in form of public debates, presentations, press-conferences, publication and distribution to decision makers and shapers, etc.

The above is just an indicative list of themes, the applicants are encouraged to work on any theme they believe is important in their context and has an advocacy potential at the national and European levels. The information contained in the documentation reports may subsequently be used by ILGA-Europe in its lobbying activities with the European institutions: European Union, Council of Europe and the OSCE. For example, the reports previously supported by the Fund have been used in submissions for country reports by the Council of Europe Human Rights Commissioner, universal periodic review by the UN Human Rights Council, OSCE annual hate crimes reports, etc.

Eligibility criteria:

- proposals will be accepted from officially registered with local authorities LGBT organisations or

initiative groups (in countries, where there are no registered LGBT NGOs);

- countries eligible are Western NIS (Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Belarus), Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia), the Western Balkans (Albania and former Yugoslavia), the 12 new EU member states and Turkey;
- **for projects on documentation of human rights violations on the grounds of gender identity and expression ALL European countries are eligible.**

More details as well as application form are available on our website: www.ilga-europe.org

Large gathering in Lisbon to close the European Year of Equal Opportunities

By Evelyne Paradis, ILGA-Europe Senior Policy Officer

On 19-20 October, over 700 people gathered in Lisbon for the Closing Conference of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All. Under the motto "Celebrating 2007!", ministers and government officials, NGOs, equality bodies, business and trades union representatives from all 30 countries involved with the European Year came together to evaluate the Year and assess its impact, and to discuss its legacy .

For ILGA-Europe, one of the very positive elements of the conference was the important LGBT representation at the event. In addition to participation of ILGA-Europe staff and board and of the Transgender Council of Europe, LGBT representatives from 24 different countries took part in the event, including twenty as part of the official national delegations.

On the occasion of the conference, Patricia Prendiville also delivered ILGA-Europe's three wishes for a lasting legacy of the European Year of Equal Opportunities:

- **We wish for our organisation, ILGA-Europe, to be inclusive and respectful of multiple identities** by challenging our own prejudices about other and by continuing to build alliances and coalitions with other equality NGOs at national and European levels among.
- **We wish for the European Commission and the European Union as a whole to fulfill President Barroso's commitment to make Europe truly a continent where equality** becomes a reality by bringing forward and adopting harmonised legislation providing equal protections against discrimination for all grounds, including sexual orientation and gender identity, in all areas of life.
- **We wish for the Member States to take the political leadership necessary to make equality a reality for all** by committing to national action plans for equality and by ensuring the continuity of the positive cooperation between civil society and government officials fostered through the national implementing bodies.

These three wishes are available on ILGA-Europe's website at

www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns_projects/2007_european_year_of_equal_opportunities

LGBT organisations advocate effectively for inclusion of LGBT rights in EU enlargement progress reports – monitoring continues

by Aija Salo, ILGA-Europe Programmes Officer

- **ILGA-Europe appreciates the European Commission's increased focus on LGBT human rights, especially in the Turkish and Serbian reports**
- **Lack of explicit references to the human rights of LGBT people in the progress report on Macedonia a matter of concern**

ILGA-Europe expresses its appreciation of the way in which the human rights of LGBT people are explicitly raised in the European Commission's 2007 progress reports on Turkey and Serbia. It is especially positive that the Commission raises the human rights violations encountered by transsexuals and transvestites in Turkey. There is also in general a clearly positive development in the progress reports as the human rights of LGBT people are explicitly mentioned in a larger number of reports than last year.

At the same time, ILGA-Europe is surprised as the Commission's 2007 progress report on Macedonia does not include explicit references to the situation of LGBT people despite information provided by the civil society to the Commission.

The progress reports include several general references to the human rights of minorities and vulnerable groups and to anti-discrimination legislation among others. However, as the accession countries' governments do not always understand sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression as forbidden grounds of discrimination it is very important to include explicit references to LGBT people in the reports.

Effective advocacy by ILGA-Europe and allies

The inclusion of LGBT rights in most of the progress reports is a result of active advocacy work, documentation of human rights violations and good cooperation between the LGBT organisations and the European Commission. ILGA-Europe and its member and partner organisations in the actual and potential EU candidate countries have provided the European Commission with detailed documentation on human rights violations against LGBT people repeatedly during 2007. In March, ILGA-Europe organised a meeting between the enlargement commissioner Olli Rehn and activists from Macedonia, Croatia and Turkey.

The Commission's progress reports are the most important tools at hand for the EU in influencing the human rights situation in the candidate countries and potential candidate countries. ILGA-Europe encourages the Commission to continue promoting LGBT human rights through raising the subject in political dialogue.

ILGA-Europe will continue an active dialogue with the commission. It frequently meets with relevant bodies of

the European Commission and the European Parliament. It cooperates with MEPs and with Commission units and facilitates meetings between its member organisations and the European institutions. ILGA-Europe provides its member organisations with capacity building tools and resources.

Some quotations from the European Commission's 2007 progress reports:

Turkey:

Transsexuals and transvestites are, on occasion, subjected to physical harassment. There is a need for the police to properly investigate such case.(p.20)

Serbia:

There have been incidents and attacks against organisations active in the promotion of peace, the fight against impunity or those defending the right to a different sexual orientation with insufficient follow-up by the law enforcement authorities. (p. 12)

Albania:

Cases of arbitrary arrest and mistreatment of homosexuals by the police still occur. (p. 11)

All Commission's 2007 progress reports are available at:

http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/key_documents/reports_nov_2007_en.htm

ILGA-Europe and COC Netherlands launch a web-based guide on international human rights references to sexual and reproductive health and rights

by Aija Salo, ILGA-Europe Programmes Officer

On 1 December 2007, the World AIDS Day, ILGA-Europe and COC Netherlands launch an electronic reference guide to international human rights references to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) in the context of LGBT people, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections.

The reference guide provides an explanation of how international human rights instruments relevant to LGBT people work, and the status of these instruments in international law. It outlines a number of crosscutting human rights instruments and texts in the context of HIV and AIDS. The guide also analyses how the term “sexual orientation” has developed in different United Nations forums.

ILGA-Europe has created the compilation of international human rights references to sexual and reproductive health and rights to assist activists and advocates to locate, interpret and utilise existing international instruments and standards in their own work. There is a particular focus on statements and progress made in relation to comprehensive prevention of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) among LGBT persons.

The reference guide will help advocates use international human rights instruments more effectively in their work domestically and regionally. At the same time it will increase their knowledge of the references and of their place within international human rights law and discourse.

The reference guide is a part of a joint project “Prevention and Empowerment in the Commonwealth of Independent States” (PRECIS), coordinated by COC Netherlands and financed by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The project aims at improving sexual and reproductive health and enhancing human rights of LGBT people in seven countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Moldova and Ukraine. Thus the primary target audiences of the guide are LGBT advocates in the countries belonging to the PRECIS partnership. However, the guide is applicable to, and can be used by, a wide international readership.

The guide is available at our website:

www.ilga-europe.org/europe/publications/non_periodical

SAME-SEX FAMILIES:

Hungary: No Marriage, only Registered Partnership for lesbian and gay couples

Source: media release by Patent – People Against Patriarchy, Hungary, 17 November 2007

Earlier this month the human rights committee of the Hungarian Parliament turned down the proposal of the liberal party to open marriage for lesbian and gay couples. This week, the government submitted a proposal to create registered partnership open for both LGBT and straight people.

Last Tuesday (6.11.2007), the Hungarian Parliament's Committee on Human Rights, Minorities and Religion turned down a bill submitted by SZDSZ (the Hungarian liberal party, the smaller of the two governing parties) that would have lifted the ban on lesbian and gay marriage. As a result, the bill was not discussed in plenary in Parliament.

This week (15.11.2007) the Justice and Police Minister (from the socialists, the larger of the two coalition parties) proposed a bill to create registered partnership open for lesbian and gay couples. The new partnership law would provide rights similar to marriage in the field of inheritance, use of common property, social benefits, but continues to deny the right to adoption. The bill is likely to pass in parliament as it could win the support of both socialist and liberal MPs, who have a majority of the votes.

Patent – People Against Patriarchy believes that the proposed registered partnership would solve some of the problems of lesbian and gay couples, and is therefore a step forward. However, the proposal is far from creating equality, as lesbian and gay couples are denied important rights and it maintains the segregation of lesbian and gay couples through the denial of marriage. The state continues to discriminate against LGBT people and through this encourages its citizens to discriminate and commit violence against them.

Sweden: Latest developments regarding access to marriage also for same-sex couples

by Hans Ytterberg, the Ombudsman against Discrimination on grounds of Sexual Orientation, 31 October 2007

On 27 October 2007, the Conservative Party ("Moderaterna") Congress overwhelmingly backed the proposal to repeal the Registered Partnership Act (Civil Unions) and instead amend the Swedish Marriage Code in order to make it gender neutral. The party is by far the largest of the four coalition parties presently forming the Swedish Government. This decision of the party congress leaves Parliament's smallest party, the Christian Democrats, as the only party in Parliament opposing the marriage reform. Consequently, there would be a majority among the members of Parliament of about 94 % in favour of opening up marriage also for same-sex couples, if votes were cast along official party lines.

The current public consultation around the report proposing the marriage reform closes on 15 January 2008. After that, the Government must come to a decision whether to table a bill in Parliament, or to leave the initiative to Parliament itself if the Christian Democrats succeed in blocking a Government bill. The three opposition party leaders have tabled a joint motion in Parliament to order the Government to table a bill at the latest by 18 March 2008, which is the latest day for tabling bills to be voted upon during the spring session of Parliament. Parliament has not yet voted on that motion.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY:

Latvia: Supreme Court rules ban on Riga Gay Pride 2006 by city was unlawful

Source: Mozaika, www.mozaika.lv, 15 November 2007

On 15 November 2007, the Senate of the Latvian Supreme Court upheld the April ruling of a lower court that the ban on Riga Gay Pride in 2006 by the city authorities was unlawful. On April 12 2007, the Regional Administrative Court ruled the ban unlawful, but Riga City Council appealed the decision. The Senate's decision is final and cannot be appealed against.

Spokesperson of "Mozaika", Latvian alliance of LGBT people and their friends, expressed the alliance gratitude and said that the Supreme Court's ruling brings Latvia in line with the European Convention on Human Rights on right to assembly and to "demonstrate" issues.

Mayor of Ljubljana joined ILGA-Europe's appeal on freedom of assembly

by ILGA-Europe

"As Mayor of Ljubljana I would like to confirm my support to your appeal supporting the right of expression and assembly for gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people in all European cities. The City of Ljubljana supports equality and human rights for everybody, irrespective of sexual orientation and or gender identity. This year I supported Ljubljana Pride Parade 2007 as a main speaker where I emphasised that Ljubljana is open and liberal city. Moreover I think Ljubljana is a wonderful city on account of tolerance of its inhabitants.

I wish you all the best in your work.

Yours Sincerely,
Zoran Janković
Mayor of Ljubljana"

More information about ILGA-Europe's campaign on our website:

www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns_projects/freedom_of_assembly_and_expression

NOTICE BOARD:

Journal of LGBT Youth seeking youth group collaborators

by Nigel Warner

We are seeking youth up to and including age 20 to be involved in all aspects of the journal. There are opportunities for youth including work on some of the art section within the journal or do some other visuals (photo essays, etc.), and develop some content for the journal such as book reviews and poetry, etc.

We are looking for non-US youth organisations to participate in this collaboration. Any collaborating group would be listed in the journal and would get free copies of the journal. In return, the group would be involved in ongoing conversations about the journal with a variety of options for involvement (based on individual interests/ideas of some of your group's members).

Please contact:

Dominique E. Johnson, Associate Editor, Journal of LGBT Youth

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