

EURO-LETTER

No. 116

October 2004

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The Euro-Letter is published on behalf of ILGA-Europe - The European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association by The International Branch of The Danish National Association for Gays and Lesbians with support from the European Community - The European Union against Discrimination.

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In this issue

- **PARTNERSHIP LAW IN SPANISH PARLIAMENT**
- **ILGA-EUROPE CALLS ON BARROSO TO RE-THINK COMPOSITION OF NEW COMMISSION**
- **FRANCE RECOGNIZES LESBIAN FAMILY**
- **U.N. PARTNER BENEFITS TO CONTINUE**
- **GAY AMERICANS MARRY IN BELGIUM**

PARTNERSHIP LAW IN SPANISH PARLIAMENT

The Spanish government has proposed a bill on registered partnership for persons of the same sex to the Spanish parliament.

The partnership law was part of the governmental agreement after the Spanish election, and it is expected that the bill will be passed by the parliament.

A recent survey has shown that around 70 % of the Spanish population are in favour of the proposal.

ILGA-EUROPE CALLS ON BARROSO TO RE-THINK COMPOSITION OF NEW COMMISSION - EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT COMMITTEE REJECTS BUTTIGLIONE

“We call on incoming Commission President Barroso to recognise that Prof Buttiglione is not the right man to be in charge of human rights, civil liberties and the fight against discrimination in the EU.”

“The LIBE Committee’s unprecedented ‘vote of no confidence’ shows the Parliament’s continued commitment to fundamental rights” says Riccardo Gottardi, Co-Chair of ILGA-Europe.

In a vote on Monday, 11 October, MEPs in the Civil Liberties Committee rejected the appointment of Mr Buttiglione as Commissioner for Justice and Home Affairs. The vote followed the Committee hearing of Prof Buttiglione on 5 October, where he re-confirmed concerns raised by ILGA-Europe that his private beliefs will continue to influence the way he will handle this important and sensitive portfolio.

“It is legitimate to wonder how Signor Buttiglione could protect the treaties of the Union when he maintains in his work moral reserves on the very values enshrined in those treaties”, says Gottardi. As a Member of Parliament, Prof Buttiglione proved the difficulty he has in separating his private views from public office and religion from politics: Buttiglione submitted an amendment to the Convention on the Future of Europe proposing the deletion of ‘sexual orientation’ from the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The hearing on 5 October did little to dispel these doubts. When asked about how his religious convictions would affect his policies, he said that he was willing to engage

in dialogue but qualified this concession by explicitly stating that if a proposal were contrary to his moral principles, he would oppose it. In the context of his expressed views on homosexuality, the role of women and marriage, ILGA-Europe is concerned whether Prof Buttiglione as European Commissioner of Justice and Home Affairs would be able to act in the best interest of all Europeans.

FRANCE RECOGNIZES LESBIAN FAMILY

By Rex Wockner

France has recognized a gay family for the first time, granting legal status to a lesbian couple and their three daughters who were born via artificial insemination, the Paris daily Le Monde reported Sept. 22.

A Paris judge allowed "Carla" and "Marie-Laure" to establish a legal link between each parent and the children and granted them joint parental authority.

Prior to the ruling, Carla had won the right to adopt the children, who were born to Marie-Laure.

The women have been together 15 years. The kids are ages 10, 7 and 5.

State prosecutors chose not to appeal the ruling.

U.N. PARTNER BENEFITS TO CONTINUE

By Rex Wockner

The United Nations will continue to offer spousal benefits to employees whose home countries have recognized their same-sex unions.

The directive took effect last February but the General Assembly -- pressured by the Vatican and numerous Islamic and African nations -- insisted that Secretary-General Kofi Annan reconsider it.

A new, revised policy no longer mentions the apparently problematic phrase "domestic partnership" but reaffirms, "The practice of the organization when determining the personal status of staff members for the purpose of entitlements ... has been done, and will continue to be done, by reference to the law of nationality of the staff member concerned."

The U.N. previously recognized only marriages between one man and up to four women. Several U.N. member nations accept polygamy.

GAY AMERICANS MARRY IN BELGIUM

By Rex Wockner

Two American men who work in Belgium became the first U.S. same-sex couple to be married there Oct. 9, in the city of Enghien.

Phillip Sorensen, 46, and Christopher Staker, 49, both of whom work for NATO in Brussels, tied the knot in the City Hall civil-weddings room before local friends and 37 other friends and family members from around the world, including 25 who came from the U.S. for the event.

An Oct. 1 law change made it possible for any foreign same-sex couple to marry in Belgium if at least one of the spouses has lived there for at least three months. Previously, foreign same-sex couples could marry in Belgium only if their home country or countries also allowed same-sex marriage.

Sorensen and Staker are from New Hampshire. The only U.S. state that allows same-sex couples to marry is Massachusetts.

Staker is NATO's director of health promotion and preventive medicine. Sorensen is NATO's director of occupational health and epidemiology.