

# EURO-LETTER

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Portuguese translations are available at <http://www.steff.suite.dk/eurolet.htm>

German translations are available at <http://www.lglf.de/ilga-europa/euro-letter/index.htm>

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?? **THE FUTURE OF THE EUROLETTER**

## THE STORY OF THE EUROLETTER

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### The early years

In the 80's ILGA had established among others a working party dealing with European issues: the CoE/CSCE working party. It was dealing with issues around the Council of Europe and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (later the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe – OSCE).

The working party had its mandate from ILGA world conference and the European conferences that were held every year. And from the 1991 conference in Berlin an EC working party was also established, dealing with issues around the European Community (later the European Union).

The working parties consisted each of around 10-15 people from European countries and quite many were members of both working parties. So all in all we were less than 20 people involved in the work.

In June 1990 a CSCE meeting on human rights was held in Copenhagen and in parallel with this meeting a small study conference for the CoE/CSCE working party was held – also in Copenhagen. The theme of this study conference was to prepare a draft protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights on discrimination based on sexual orientation and to discuss ILGA's work in order to get such a protocol on the agenda of the Council of Europe.

At the meeting it was decided that LBL Denmark should act as coordinator for the working party in the sense that we should collect and spread information from and to the members of the working party – and the task was expanded to the EC working party when it was established the following year.

This was before the common use of the Internet and certainly before the World Wide Web, so the collection and spreading of information was through mail and sometimes telephones.

The information was sent out to the very limited number of receivers through newsletter – normally with copies of the information, we have got from members of the working party,

From July to November 1990 4 such newsletters were

sent out, and from 1991 the newsletters were named "Letter no .." and in 1991 Letter no. 1 through 10 were issued. In January 1992 the first – and only EC – Letter was sent to the newly established EC working party.

From February 1992 we combined the (CoE/CSCE) Letter and the EC-Letter under the name **EuroLetter** and sent it to both working parties.

So from June 1990 to January 1992 there were 15 "Letters" before the EuroLetter.

### EuroLetter and the Internet

From January 1992 till June 2005 we have produced and distributed 122 EuroLetters to a still wider audience.

It was only from no. 29 (November 1994) that I as editor could receive information through e-mail, and from no. 31 (February 1995) EuroLetter was also distributed through e-mail to the (few) members of the working parties that had access to e-mail – and the letters were saved on a gopher-server at SETA in Finland.

Later the EuroLetter has been available at several websites – but all EuroLetters from no. 1 are now available at [www.SteffenJensen.dk/eurolet.htm](http://www.SteffenJensen.dk/eurolet.htm)

The first 29 issues of the EuroLetter were summaries of annexed copies of information received from members of the working parties, but from no. 30 onwards all information was written in the newsletter in one file.

As it became possible to receive the EuroLetter through e-mail the number of (free) subscribers rapidly increased and today the EuroLetter is distributed through a Yahoo-group and the basic e-mail list of subscribers to the EuroLetter consists of around 700 addresses all around the world including other e-mail lists, so many gay/lesbians activists get the EuroLetter.

### The content of the EuroLetter

We have tried to keep the content of the EuroLetter to be in accordance with its aim: to give factual reliable and up-to-date information about the political, legislative and legal situation in European countries of relevance for LGBT-people.

The sources to the information in the EuroLetter is basically a network of people around Europe who give me relevant information about new developments, but also newspaper articles (found on the Internet), information from LGBT mailing lists (i.e. Euroqueer), Rex Wockners

compiled information etc. etc.

The EuroLetter has reported about a fantastic development in European countries:

In 1990 only one country in the world had a partnership law: Denmark got its partnership in October 1989, but now a long list of countries have partnership laws or even full marriage for two persons of the same sex. See the list at <http://www.ilga-europe.org/m3/partnership%20rights%20Europe.htm>.

Only a few countries had anti discrimination legislation in 1990, but now all the 25 members of the European Union have at least anti discrimination legislation for the labour market, but many also with more general coverage.

In 1990 some countries even had a ban on homosexuality – while now no country within the European region has that – first of all thanks to the Council of Europe and the European Court of Human Rights.

Within the European Union (or Community at that time) institutions only the European Parliament had a positive approach to lesbians and gay men in 1990, but after the introduction of article 13 in the Amsterdam Treaty it has changed dramatically, so that now the EU as such has a general positive attitude to LGBT people.

Article 13 was truly a huge development and a turning point in the European fight for equality for lesbians and gay men – for the first time ever sexual orientation was mentioned in an international treaty – and even a binding one!

Also many decisions from the European Court of Human Rights (Coe) and a few from the European Court of Justice (EU) has been reported in the EuroLetter. These court decisions have also shown a gradually more positive attitude from the courts.

In spite of these developments we still need further development:

The attempt to have the European Convention on Human Rights amended to include a specific mentioning of sexual orientation has not been fulfilled, but with the growing influence of the EU also on human rights issues, the necessity does seem so strong as in 1990.

A common anti discrimination directive covering all areas of competence of the European Union is needed.

And so is full recognition of same sex marriages on an

equal footing with heterosexuals.

Not to mention the rest of the world!

### Quotations

Through the years EuroLetter has been quoted in quiet many thesis and other academic papers from student and academics around the world and I have regularly got requests for further information based on articles in the EuroLetter.

### Translations

Many attempts have been made to secure a stable French translation of the EuroLetter, but they have all failed. Thanks to *René Lalement* a French summary was made for a long time and from 2000 – 2003 EuroLetters could be found on the [france.qrd.org](http://france.qrd.org) – website.

Also Italian, Hungarian and Slovakian translations have been made – but only for a few issues.

But EuroLetter has benefited a lot from two stable translators, thanks to whom all EuroLetters from no. 76 (January 2000) are translated into German and Portuguese.

*Gerhard Grühn* has translated them into German and they are available on this web site: <http://www.lglf.de/ilga-europa/euro-letter/index.htm>

*Miguel Freitas* has translated them into Portuguese and they are available on this web site: <http://www.steff.suite.dk/eurolet.htm>.

### Editors

The editors of EuroLetter has been a very stable group:

Steffen Jensen (1990 – 2005)  
Peter Bryld (1990 – 2005)  
Torry Kjeldsen (1990 – 1992)  
Ken Thomassen (1992 – 2005)  
Lisbeth Andersen (1993 – 2005)  
Sanne Juhl (ex officio) (1993-2005)  
Søren Baatrup (1997 – 2005)  
Juris Lavrikos (2005)

## **THE FUTURE OF THE EUROLETTER**

The Danish National Association for Gays and Lesbians (LBL) has had the responsibility for the EuroLetter since 1990 – in the beginning on behalf of ILGA and from 1997 on behalf on ILGA-Europe.

ILGA-Europe has an office in Bruxelles with a paid staff who already edit ILGA -Europe's printyed quarterly news magazine, and we have decided to transfer the responsi-bility for EuroLetter to ILGA -Europe's staff in Bruxelles from no. 124 onwards.

The editor will be Juris Lavrikos.

I would like to use this opportunity to thank all the many people around the world who have contributed to the EuroLetter and to all the kind people who have commented to me about the usefulness of the EuroLetter.