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Annual ILGA European Conference in Paris, 26-30 October 2005

Preparations for the ILGA European Annual Conference are well under way. Taking place in Paris this year, the city of lights shall be host to one of the hottest events on LGBT activists' calendars. This year's Annual Conference is already breaking from tradition, for the better. Hosting a large conference in Paris is quite a challenge, but already the local organising team in Paris is ensuring that the challenge will be met.

We wish to take this time to highlight the existence of the Paris 2005 Conference mini-site. The site has expanded to include everything from everyday tourist information on Paris, registration forms of all kind, as well as a concise briefing on the themes of this year's conference. The Conference mini-site is *the* destination to grab information about the Conference. Located at <http://www.ilga-europe.org/conference/Paris>, the Conference mini-site is updated regularly with new information.

We're looking forward to seeing you in Paris, where together we will live "*la vie en rose*" quite literally!

2005 Reports on Equality and Non-discrimination

The [2005 Annual Report on Equality and Discrimination](#) is now available for download in English (with all other languages to follow). Published by the anti-discrimination Unit of the European Commission, this report looks at the progress which has been made over the last year in anti-discrimination legislation and policy both at EU and Member State level. It particularly looks at some of the actions supported by the EU to tackle the widespread exclusion and discrimination Roma communities face throughout Europe.

[Equal Rights in Practice: Key Voices 2005](#): The Commission has also recently published a brochure focusing on the theme of 'Access to Justice'. It includes articles from different actors, including practicing lawyers, NGO activists, representatives from national equality bodies and trade unions. The brochure is available in all 20 official EU languages.

See http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/public/pubst_en.htm for both reports in other languages.

Latvia is the only EU country which does not ban sexual orientation discrimination in employment

On 7 July 2005, the anti-discrimination Unit of the European Commission published its 2005 Annual Report on Equality and Discrimination: http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/public/pubst_en.htm.

The report examines how the EU member states implemented the requirement of the two EU directive agreed in 2000 - the Racial Equality Directive (2000/43/EC), banning discrimination in most areas of everyday life on grounds of race or ethnic origin, and the Employment Equality Directive (2000/78/EC), banning discrimination in respect of employment and training on grounds of religious belief, disability, age and sexual orientation.

According to the Report, Latvia is the only country which has not fully transposed the requirement of the Employment Equality Directive and did not explicitly ban sexual orientation discrimination. Sexual orientation discrimination in employment was banned in all other 24 EU member states and in Romania and Bulgaria, which are still EU candidate countries.

All previous proposals by the Latvian government to ban sexual orientation discrimination in employment were rejected by the Human Rights and Public

Affairs Commission at the Latvian Parliament.

On 19 July 2005, the Latvian government approved yet another amendment to the Labour Law to include sexual orientation in the anti-discrimination provisions of the Labour Law but the amendment has to be approved by the parliament. It is expected that the Human Rights and Public Affairs Commission of the Latvian Parliament will discuss this amendment in September 2005.

On 29 April 2005, the Latvian court ruled that denying employment to a gay man because of his sexual orientation was illegal (case of Maris Sants pret Rigas Kulturu viduskolu, Nr. C32242904047505, C-475/3). However, the EU law requires Latvia to explicitly mention sexual orientation among prohibited grounds of discrimination.

In case Latvia fails again to comply with the EU directive, the European Commission might take a legal action against Latvia at the European Court of Justice in Luxembourg for not fully transposing the directive and Latvia might face significant financial penalties.

Foreign gay couples can marry in Spain

by Rex Wockner

Spain's Justice Ministry ruled on 8 August that foreign same-sex couples who live there can get married there.

"A marriage celebrated between a Spaniard and a foreigner, or between foreigners of the same sex resident in Spain, will be valid as a result of applying Spanish material law, even if the foreigner's national legislation does not permit or recognise the validity of such marriages," the government declared.

The law is similar in two of the other three nations that allow same-sex

marriage: the Netherlands and Belgium. In the fourth, Canada, even visitors can get married, buying a license and tying the knot the same day -- except in Quebec, which has a brief waiting period.

Czech Registered partnership bill moves forward

Prague Daily Monitor

On 27 June the Chamber of Deputies passed a bill on registered partnership in the first reading, sending it on to committee.

In the past two years, deputies rejected two similar bills and returned one for completion.

The laws on homosexual partnership are in effect in several EU member states. In April, the Spanish parliament passed a bill enabling same-sex couples to get married and adopt children, which the Czech bill does not allow.

The government parties, the senior government Social Democrats (CSSD) and two junior parties, the Christian Democrats (KDU-CSL) and the Freedom Union (US-DEU), are not united in their opinion on the legalisation of same-sex partnerships

The Christian Democrats are traditional opponents of same-sex partnerships. They feel the bill weakens the traditional family.

This debate on the bill did not differ from the previous parliamentary debates on the topic.

"Let's not touch the foundations of the structure of human society irresponsibly," KDU-CSL deputy Vilem Holan said.

Foreign Minister Cyril Svoboda (KDU-CSL) said that "the only thing that will contribute to our society is to stick to the conservative values."

Tatana Fischerova (US-DEU), one of the authors of the bill, said that the fear of the law was unsubstantiated. "Are we really threatened to have to change en masse our cultural and family ties due to the law?" she asked and answered "no."

The bill was signed by representatives of all deputies groups but the KDU-CSL's. The authors submitted it even though the previous version was rejected by the Chamber of Deputies only recently.

It is generally expected that the bill will receive more votes from left-orientated deputies. But according to recent public opinion polls, the senior opposition right-wing Civic Democrats (ODS), the opponents of the bill, will considerably strengthen their position in the Chamber of Deputies following next parliamentary elections in mid-2006.

That is why supporters of registered partnership share fears that chances to pass the bill on registered partnership would decline after the elections with regards to a higher number of conservative MPs in the Chamber.

The bill allows same-sex couples to officially close and terminate relationships at the birth registry, and guarantees the right to information on the partner's health condition. The bill would also introduce a mutual obligation to pay maintenance.

Prime Minister Jiri Paroubek (CSSD) said recently that he would ask members of the CSSD deputies' group before the forthcoming Chamber of Deputies session that they vote for the bill on registered partnership.

He was reacting to an open letter in which the Gay and Lesbian League asked him to support the bill shortly after he took office as prime minister in April.

Latvian PM replies to criticism over the Gay Pride March in Riga

Following the anti-gay campaign around the first Latvian Gay Pride March, Oscar Swartz, a Swedish internet entrepreneur, economist and writer, wrote an open letter to the Latvian Prime Minister to express his regrets regarding the PM's statement which significantly contributed to the March ban by the Riga City Council. Today, Swedish website www.qx.se published an answer from the Latvian PM to Oscar Swartz:

<http://www.qx.se/nyheter/artikel.php?artikelid=3857>

"Dear Oscar Swartz!

Thank you for your opinion concerning the parade of sexual minorities that took place on July 23, 2005 in Riga. I must express my regret about the unhealthy stir that was created following my interview with the LNT TV programme "900 seconds". There were attempts to link my statements with expressions of homophobic views and hate in the society. This is not true.

The concerns I expressed in the interview on possible increase of friction within the society and attempts of some extremist elements to use this parade for stirring conflicts were largely grounded. The information I had about planned illegal activities was alarming enough. At the same time, I must admit that the Executive Director of Riga City Council acted hastily, when he withdrew the previously granted permit. This can be seen from the court ruling, which allowed the parade to take place. This can also be seen from the highly professional and successful operation of the police, who ensured security of participants of the parade and public order, and prevented physical clashes and disorder. Individuals who acted as hooligans were arrested, and appropriate sanctions were taken against them. I think that the events that took place during the parade were a result of misunderstandings and unnecessary confrontation of views. I hope that in the

future in such situations the necessary compromise will be found by choosing appropriate time and place beforehand.

I would like to say that Latvia is a democratic country that wishes and is able to ensure human rights of every person living here. In a democratic country, the most diverse views are listened to, and the Government of Latvia is clearly against discrimination of any kind. It is worth noting that not long before the parade the Cabinet of Ministers adopted decisions preventing discrimination of sexual minorities in labour market.

I would like to repeat that the Government of Latvia has never retreated from the principles of democracy, and that its whole operation is aimed at protecting every citizen of Latvia, fighting race intolerance and persons fuelling hate on national or any other grounds.

Yours sincerely,

Aigars Kalvitis
Prime Minister of the Republic of Latvia"

The Right to Be Different: International Conference on LGBT Rights

presented by the 1st World Outgames, Montréal 2006
26-29 July 2006, Palais des Congrès [Convention Centre], Montréal [2000 participants!!!]

This not-to-be-missed conference starts 11 months and 22 days from today! It will feature 7 plenary sessions with prominent keynote speakers from around the world, and 5 workshop sessions, with up to 75 workshops per session or up to 375 workshops in all. Joke Swiebel (openly lesbian Member of the European Parliament, 1999-2004) and I are Co-Presidents of the International Scientific Committee that is organising the content of the Conference.

(1) If you would like to speak in a workshop at the conference, please see the

Call for Proposals (http://www.montreal2006.org/Call_for_Proposals_Montreal2006.pdf). Please follow the instructions in the Call and send your proposal (preferably for a panel of 3 or 4 speakers) to conference@montreal2006.org (cc robert.wintemute@kcl.ac.uk) **by 29 August 2005 if possible** (so that they can be considered at the meeting of the Scientific Committee of the Conference in Montréal on 1-3 Sept. 2005), **and by no later than 31 October 2005**. The Conference is completely interdisciplinary and is by no means limited to lawyers or academics or activists.

(2) After sending your proposal, you and any other speakers in your workshop should register for the Conference using the same system as for the Outgames (http://www.montreal2006.org/en_register_now.html), and pay the Conference registration fee (http://www.montreal2006.org/en_registration_fee.html). Unfortunately, participants who are not eligible for the Outreach Programme (more information about this later; it is intended mainly for participants from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America) will have to seek an alternative source of funding for their registration fee and travel and accommodation expenses (e.g. a governmental or non-governmental organisation, private foundation, trade union, or university).

(3) If you would like to attend the Conference but do not wish to speak, you are most welcome! You do not need to respond to the Call for Proposals. You only need to register (see (2) above).

(4) Whether you plan to be a speaker or other participant in the Conference, or are unable to attend the conference, **PLEASE FORWARD THIS MESSAGE TO ANYONE YOU THINK MIGHT BE INTERESTED IN THE CONFERENCE**. If you have already done so, please do so again as a reminder, now that the opening of the Conference is less than one year away.

Mapping study on existing national legislative measures and their impact in tackling discrimination - outside the field of employment and occupation

The main purpose of this call for tenders will be to provide the Commission with independent and authoritative information on national measures to combat discrimination in fields where Community legislation has not been introduced such as: social protection (including social security), social services and advantages, education, and access to and supply of goods and services. The contractor will also look at the application and impact of existing anti-discrimination legislation.

Deadline for sending offers:
12 September 2005.

More info:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/callspt/calls_en.htm

European Parliament to discuss PROGRESS in plenary session

On 6 September in Strasbourg, the plenary session of the European Parliament will discuss the Karin Jöns' report (<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2005-0199+0+DOC+WORD+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=3&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y>) on the proposal establishing a Community Programme for Employment and Social Solidarity – PROGRESS. The report notably states that “the involvement of NGOs active at regional, national and EU levels is important for the successful implementation of the Programme’s general objectives, and they should therefore play a substantial part, through relevant EU networks, in devising, implementing and monitoring the Programme”. It also proposes the organisation of an annual forum for all interested parties on evaluating progress in achieving the social policy agenda and on implementation of the individual sections of the PROGRESS programme, including

presentation of results and dialogue on future priorities.

The report suggests that the indicative financial framework (the reference amount is indicative until a decision has been reached on the Financial Perspective) for implementing this Community programme is set at EUR 854.2 million (instead of EUR 628.8 million as proposed by the Commission) for the period of 7 years as from 1 January 2007.

The day after, the European Parliament could possibly discuss the report by Eva-Britt Svensson ([A6-0250/2005](http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2005-0250+0+DOC+WORD+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y)) (<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2005-0250+0+DOC+WORD+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y>) on Gender discrimination and health systems.

Revamped ‘stop-discrimination’ website now online

On 1 August - two years into the EU anti-discrimination campaign – the stop-discrimination website was re-launched with a new look. The menu structure has been optimised to ensure usability and ease of navigation despite the ever growing volume of information provided on the online portal. In addition, the new service navigation menu grants immediate access to the website in other EU languages as well as to country-specific information.

See <http://www.stop-discrimination.info/>

Taking Forward the EU Social Inclusion Process

The independent report on “Taking Forward the EU Social Inclusion Process” is now available. A pre-final version was presented and discussed at a [Conference in Luxembourg, on 13-14 June 2005](http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A6-2005-0199+0+DOC+WORD+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=3&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y). The authors have taken into account the valuable comments made by conference participants and the latest EU political developments.

The final report can be downloaded from two addresses:

- Luxembourg Ministry for Family and Integration (www.fm.etat.lu), which commissioned the project
- CEPS/INSTEAD Research Institute (www.ceps.lu/eu2005_lu/inclusion), to which the whole scientific coordination was entrusted.

A guide for NGOs to access EU funding

“*Accessing Europe’s largest donor*” is the 11th edition of the guide to EU funding for NGOs released by ECAS, the European Citizen Action Service. It is a handbook for organisations seeking to learn more about EU funding, foundations, Structural funds and Cohesion Funds, internal and external budget lines.

To order this publication (price: EUR 29), please contact us ECAS, rue du Prince Royal 83, B-1050 Brussels, fax: 00 32 2 548 04 99, e-mail: publication@ecas.org. ECAS is also committed to lending its expertise to organisations seeking EU financing. To learn more about what ECAS can do, please visit ECAS website at: <http://www.ecas.org>

Central and Eastern European Fundraising Workshop

Do you believe that there are all those people out there who would want to support your NGO but you are not sure how to find them?
You know who your supporters are but not sure how to approach them?
Are you proud of a successful campaign and would like to share your experiences?
Do you want to know the latest trends and innovations in fundraising around the world?
What about sharing with and learning from your colleagues in CEE as well as internationally acknowledged fundraising professionals?

What will you find there?

- Cutting edge European and International know-how that you can apply to your NGO immediately.
- Fundraising strategies and techniques to improve your fundraising efficiency.
- A glimpse into what is going on in the fundraising / philanthropic scene in the region and beyond.
- The essentials and more about fundraising as a profession.
- A forum for experience sharing and networking among NGO leaders, donors, fundraising professionals and suppliers.

What will you do there?

- Participate in hands-on, informative, participatory and inspirational plenary and workshop sessions.
- Try yourself in a new technique immediately.
- Hear for the first time research results and useful data from the CEE region.
- Get to know case studies and best practices from the region.
- Have a chance to receive awards and recognition.
- Receive personalized services from the professionals.

More information at:
www.csdf.hu/workshop2005