

EURO-LETTER

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Editor: Juris Lavrikovs

Contact us: euroletter@ilga-europe.org

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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:

Project on Social Exclusion of LGBT Youth

by Evelyne Paradis

ILGA-Europe & IGLYO's joint project on social exclusion of LGBT youth in Europe is going well! More than 200 young people and organisations have already responded to the questionnaire we sent out to gather information about discrimination from young people themselves.

Because we received lot of valuable responses we have decided to continue collecting questionnaires until we have reached a semi-representative number from each country. We are striving to have 40-50 individual questionnaires per country, preferably **by the end of April**. This would enable us to make a representative analysis, which would help ILGA-Europe, IGLYO and your organisations in their lobbying work. This is simply because the analysis could be used of evidence for the need of our work!

A little reminder: ILGA-Europe and IGLYO want to produce a comprehensive report on the Social Exclusion of LGBT Youth in Europe that will include an overview of existing research material and case studies collected from European countries, reflecting real life experiences of European LGBT youth in relation to social exclusion. This will hopefully support our and your lobbying activities, and help us to raise awareness among policy-makers.

For more information about the project, please visit ILGA-Europe's website

http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/news/questionnaire_for_young_lgbt_europeans

Putting South Caucasus on the LGBT map of Europe

by Maxim Anmeghichean

European borders extend way beyond the borders of the European Union, and include South Caucasian nations such as Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. While they may not be always in the spotlight of Euronews or BBC, they definitely present an interest from all points of view, from beautiful landscape and culture to diverse LGBT communities existing within the Caucasian culture, and human rights situation.

On January 13-30 ILGA-Europe and COC Netherlands have organised a joint fact-finding mission to the Southern Caucasus (Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan). The purposes were to identify and document human rights violations against LGBT people in the region, map civil society and existing initiative groups, identify current state of play in the field of health and HIV/AIDS prevention policies. During the mission meetings were held with numerous human rights defenders, HIV/AIDS prevention workers, policy makers, and, not the least, members of the LGBT community itself, including those who suffered from human rights violations. Based on the information collected a report will be written and published by the end of spring 2006, which will be used for advocacy purposes with European institutions.

While it is premature to talk about findings prior to the report publication, one can notice that life of LGBT people in the Southern Caucasus is far from being easy. Systematic blackmailing on behalf of law enforcement authorities, use of homosexual orientation against your political opponents, strong influence of the Orthodox or Islamic churches, homo-, bi- and transphobia strongly embedded into the South Caucasian societies are just some of the existing traits. Follow updates on ILGA-Europe web-site for a full report this spring!

Fight for equality gets new face!

ILGA-Europe media release, 12 February 2006

Today ILGA-Europe launches new visual identity. This is yet another step to further strengthen ILGA-Europe's position, improve our communication strategy and to provide better lobbying, networking and information support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) organisations in Europe in their fight for equality and justice.

During the last year ILGA-Europe made significant progress improving its communications. One of the major steps was a launch of a new website last October. Not only the new website now provides a better presentation and overview of ILGA-Europe's works, but also creates new opportunities and possibilities for ILGA-Europe and its members to exchange information and knowledge, more effectively coordinate campaigning and lobbying efforts.

New visual identity is a further step to update and modernise ILGA-Europe's image and position as one of the main players in the field of equality and human rights in Europe. It is also a chance to better represent such values of the organisation as growing professionalism, dynamism as well as the nature and main constituency of the organisation – LGBT people in Europe.

Riccardo Gottardi, Co-chair of the ILGA-Europe Executive Board, said:

"We are pleased to launch our new visual identity as a next step in improving our position and communications. Our new website has already significantly improved our presentation and communications and there are more plans and ideas for further development and improvements. In a few months time we are planning to launch a new database which will revolutionise the way we communicate with our members and the way our members can network among themselves.

We hope that our effort to fully employ wonders of the contemporary communications technologies alongside with a fresher, more stylish and dynamic design will empower LGBT organisations to achieve greater equality and justice in Europe."

ILGA-Europe welcomes European Parliament's resolution on homophobia

by ILGA-Europe

On 18 January 2005, the European Parliament adopted a resolution on homophobia in Europe with significant majority - 468 in favour, 149 against and 41 abstentions. This constitutes a larger majority in years on similar projects in the European Parliament.

Patricia Prendiville, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe said:

"ILGA-Europe is delighted about yesterday's vote at the European Parliament adopting a resolution condemning homophobia in Europe with a significant majority of MEPs.

This is a firm signal from the European Parliament, the only institution of the European Union directly elected by its citizens, that the majority of Europeans condemn and reject discrimination and intolerance based on sexual orientation.

We are also pleased that separate amendments referring to the rights of same-sex partners in the EU also gained significant support.

We believe it is now up to the European Commission to seriously consider this powerful mandate by the European citizens and politicians and to respond with concrete proposals to ensure sexual orientation discrimination is banned not only in employment. We urge the Commission to broaden non-discrimination protections in the areas of the provision of and access to goods and services (already provided by the Race Equality Directive but not given on the grounds of age, disability and sexual orientation) and to ensure same-sex partners enjoy their rights across the entire Union.

We acknowledge and support the fact that the Commission is taking legal actions against those member states which failed to fully transpose or implement the Employment Equality Directive. We also acknowledge that the Commission is currently conducting a feasibility study on the subject of extending protections provided by the Race Equality Directive to the other grounds.

This Resolution and the significant majority for it is a clear indication of the consensus for equality and is a mandate for the Commission to propose enhanced non-discrimination legislation."

Full text of the resolution as well as all background information (all original proposals for the resolution, voting results, debates' transcripts) available on our website:

www.ilga-europe.org/europe/news/ilga_europe_welcomes_european_parliament_s_resolution_on_homophobia_in_europe

ILGA-Europe's media statement released before the debate at the European Parliament is also available on our website:

http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/media/ilga_europe_welcomes_european_parliament_s_debate_on_homophobia_in_europe

Vatican official dismisses EU concerns on "homophobia"

Source: *Catholic World News*, 23 January 2006,
www.cwnews.com/news/viewstory.cfm?recnum=41987

Rome, Jan. 23 (CWNews.com) - The president of the Pontifical Council for the Family has reacted strongly against a statement by the European Parliament demanding that member-states ensure equal rights for homosexuals.

Cardinal Alfonso Lopez Trujillo argued that it is absurd and dangerous to suggest that a government is "homophobic" if it declines to give homosexual couples the same rights as heterosexual married couples. The approach taken by the European Parliament, he said, "does not take into account the way man is naturally made."

In today's political battles, the cardinal said, what is at stake is "respect for the truth about man before God: his psychological structure, his sexuality, the complementarity that naturally exists between man and woman." These realities, he continued, are being attacked on the basis of "an ideology that seeks to impose sexual identity as a fact that is not natural, but as something that one can choose."

Services Directive: Keep social services out!

by *Evelyne Paradis*

On 16 February, the European Parliament will vote on the controversial 'Services Directive' on 16 February. This much-debated directive that is aimed at liberalising the market in services in Europe, could have huge implications for a huge range of services which are provided for the general interest of EU societies and citizens, such as social and health services. Two parliamentary committees have issued contradicting reports on the issue of inclusion of social services in the directive; the Employment and Social Affairs Committee voted to exclude social services while Internal Market Committee voted to include them.

The Social Platform has launched a Europe-wide campaign to lobby for the exclusion of social services of general economic interest from the scope of this Directive. The Platform prepared a letter demanding that they support the exemption of social services. We invite you to send this letter (available on their website: www.socialplatform.org/code/en/camp.asp?Page=309) to your MEPs. There is still time to act!

Condemnation of death penalty against gay men in Iran

by *Christine Loudes*

On the 12th of December, Michael Cashman, Emine Bozkurt and Thijs Berman issued a Declaration on recent executions of gay men by the Iranian Authorities which calls on the European Commission to suspend the conclusion of a Trade and Cooperation Agreement until Iran guarantees it will not prosecute, condemn or execute people because they engage in, or have engaged in homosexual acts.

The declaration is open for signatures by MEPs until the 12th March. You are encouraged to contact your MEPs and invite them to add their signatures to the list as soon as possible and **before the 12th March 2006**.

If this declaration is passed it will be sent to the Commission for them to take some action.

Thank you very much for your showing your support to LGBT people in Iran.

Written declaration on recent executions of gay men by the Iranian Authorities

The European Parliament,

– having regard to Rule 116 of its Rules of Procedure,

- A.** whereas recently several young gay men, at least one of them being a minor, have been executed in Iran,
 - B.** whereas reportedly the men had been charged with and convicted for the crime of rape; however, such charges are often said to be fabricated by the government to facilitate executions,
 - C.** whereas engaging in homosexual acts is punishable by death in Iran,
 - D.** whereas these executions are in total defiance of the European Parliament's position against the death penalty,
 - E.** whereas the execution of a minor is in direct contravention of Iran's obligation under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
 - F.** whereas the development of nuclear capabilities, the situation of women's rights and human rights in general in Iran are also cause for concern,
 - G.** whereas EU-Iran negotiations on a Trade and Cooperation Agreement were restarted on 12 January 2005,
- 1.** Calls on the European Commission to suspend the conclusion of a Trade and Cooperation Agreement until Iran guarantees it will not prosecute, condemn or execute people because they engage in, or have engaged in homosexual acts;
 - 2.** Instructs its President to forward this declaration, together with the names of the signatories, to the Council, the Commission, the Member States and the Government of Iran.

Spidla launches probe into work-equality measures

by David Cronin, 9 February 2006,
www.europeanvoice.com

The European Commission has launched an investigation into whether anti discrimination laws are being correctly implemented in the EU's 25 member states.

Letters seeking details of what measures have been taken to implement a 2000 EU directive on equality in employment have recently been sent to all of the Union's governments, sources close to Vladimir Spidla, the commissioner for employment and social affairs, have confirmed.

The law forbids discrimination in the workplace on grounds of race, ethnic origin, religion, sexual orientation or disability.

Spidla has said that the Commission will start legal proceedings against any government which is not implementing the directive correctly. The deadline for transcribing the directive onto the national statute books was December 2003 for the 15 'old' member states, while the ten newer entrants had to have it transposed by the time they joined the EU in May 2004.

Homosexuality in the workplace was a controversial topic during elections in Poland last year. The right-wing Law and Justice Party, which won the biggest single bloc of seats in the Sejm, the national parliament, advocated that gay men should be banned from teaching. The party leader Lech Kaczynski, the victor in a run-off for Poland's presidency in late October, had banned a gay pride parade while mayor of Warsaw just a few months earlier.

Last month Spidla said that any moves to dismiss teachers "purely on the grounds of their sexual orientation would in principle be considered discriminatory under the directive". He was replying to a query from Jonas Sjöstedt, an MEP for Sweden's Left Party.

Sjöstedt said that he was perturbed by efforts to ban gay and lesbian marches in Poland and Latvia. Although a ban on the first Gay Pride celebration in Riga was overturned following a court ruling in July, the Latvian Prime Minister Aigars Kalvitis said that it was unacceptable for "sexual minorities to parade in the very heart of Riga, next to the Doma church".

"I would consider gay rights to be among the most fundamental of rights," Sjöstedt added. "If some member states don't accept fundamental rights, then the Commission should intervene."

In Poland a gay teacher in Plock, a city 100 kilometres north-west of Warsaw, is currently challenging his dismissal.

Robert Bietro, a spokesman for Poland's Campaign Against Homophobia, said: "We have only one case like this. The reality is that homosexuality is a taboo and that gay people don't want to come out because they are afraid they will lose their jobs. The government claims that there is no homophobia in the workplace but that is completely absurd."

But a Polish diplomat insisted that school authorities were not allowed under national law to inquire into the religious belief or sexual orientation of any teacher.

"Some opinions were expressed on these matters during the election campaign," the diplomat added. "But, frankly speaking, nobody took them seriously."

Future resolution on discrimination in the Committee of Region

by Christine Loudes

The EU Committee of Region is preparing a resolution following last year's report by the European Parliament on minority rights and anti-discrimination policies in an enlarged Europe. The document has been examined on first reading on the 12th December 2005. The rapporteurs are Mr Boris Sovic from Slovenia (PES) and Mr Eberhard Sinner from Germany (EPP).

The Committee of Region is looking for best practices and bad example in relation to discrimination including on grounds of sexual orientation.

People or NGOs who have been discriminated against by authorities in their city or region are invited to send information to christine@ilga-europe.org.

A report will be presented to support future amendments to the Resolution.

UN rejects consultative status to LGBT organisations

Source: ILGA Press Release, 25 January 2006

In an unprecedented move, the Economic and Social Council dismissed the applications of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA) and the Danish Association of Gays and Lesbians (LBL) for observer Status at the United Nations this Monday January 23 2006. For the first time in its history, the ECOSOC dismissed summarily the application of an NGO without the hearings accorded to other applicants.

“It is a clear violation of due process and an attempt to discriminate against LGBT NGOs on procedural grounds” says Rosanna Flamer Caldera, Co-secretary General of ILGA, a worldwide network of over 400 lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender groups.

Both ILGA and LBL were made to go through a stringent process in anticipation of a hearing with the NGO committee. However, in a move influenced by Egypt and the Organization of Islamic Conferences (OIC) the two organizations were arbitrarily dismissed in a joint motion put to the NGO committee by Iran, Sudan and their newest ally, the United States. The United States had, in the past, voted favourably for ILGA in 2002. In this instance the Bush Administration found fit to vote alongside countries they have considered international pariahs in all other contexts to deny LGBT people a voice at the UN - a right given to any other category of NGO.

Vote to summarily dismiss the applications of ILGA and LBL was as follows:

Yes: Cameroon, China, Cuba, Iran, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Senegal, Sudan, United States of America, Zimbabwe.

No: Chile, France, Germany, Peru, Romania; Abstention: Colombia, India, Turkey. Not present: Ivory Coast.

“This is again a clear attempt to silence the voices of gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgender people at the United Nations” says Kursad Kahramanoglu, Co-secretary General of ILGA. “The issue, we as people, will not go away: we will push for this unprecedented action to be reconsidered at the full ECOSOC”.

ILGA’s next world conference to be held in Geneva (March 27 – April 3 2006) simultaneously to the United Nations Commission on Human Rights will be an occasion to protest this injustice and ensure the stealth tactics of Egypt, Iran and Sudan and other countries known for their horrendous Human Rights records do not go unnoticed. ILGA will not allow this issue to be pushed off the agenda in order that countries can continue to persecute and discriminate against their LGBT citizens without answering to anyone.

ILGA will fight this latest setback. It will continue to defend the rights of LGBT persons worldwide and it will continue to ask the United Nations to consider the rights of all persons regardless of their sexual orientation and gender identity.

ILGA wishes to thank the German Foreign Office, the Danish Foreign Office, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International for their support in this issue and calls on Human Rights Defenders everywhere to fight for the non discriminatory treatment of all LGBT NGOs who have just as much right to be at the UN as others.

More information is available on our website:

- www.ilga-europe.org/europe/news/un_again_rejects_consultative_status_to_lgbt_organisations
- www.ilga-europe.org/europe/guide/country_by_country/denmark/u_s_votes_with_iran_cuba_sudan_and_zimbabwe_against_two_gay_groups_at_united_nations

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

Youth issues

Source: European Commission

EU-Funding: YOUTH programme Action 5 _ Supporting Measures: Call for submission of innovative co-operation, training and information projects The objectives of the Youth Programme are to allow young people to acquire knowledge, skills and competences and to exercise responsible citizenship so as to become an active part of society.

Deadline: 1 July 2006.

Further information: www.enar-eu.org/en/funding/calls/2006-07-01.shtml

Supporting NGOs in 10 newest EU member states

Source: European Commission

Second year of the preparatory action to support civil society in the ten Member States which acceded to the European Union on 1st May 2004, in the areas of the rule of law, democracy, fundamental rights, media pluralism and the fight against corruption.

Deadline: 3 March 2006.

Further information in English, French and German on the type of activities concerned, the areas covered, the exclusion, eligibility, selection and award criteria:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/justice_home/funding/support_ngo/funding_support_en.htm

Gender equality

Source: European Commission

The priority theme for 2006 is the promotion of gender equality in local development. Each proposal must be presented by a promoter. The promoter must have partners in at least three countries. The promoters can be:

- NGOs at European level with member organisations in at least three EU Member States, EEA countries or candidate countries (NGOs organised at national level cannot apply).
- Social partners
- Regional or local authorities
- Trans-national networks of organisations, which aim to promote gender equality (made up of organisations from at least three European countries).

Deadline: 28 April 2006.

Further information:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/emplweb/tenders/tenders_en.cfm?id=105

SAME-SEX FAMILIES:

Estonia: Parliamentary Legal Committee does not support same-sex marriage

by Juris Lavrikovs, 10 January 2006

The Legal Committee of the Estonian Parliament decided not to support legalisation of same-sex marriage.

The Legal Committee discussed the issue of same-sex marriage on 9 January 2006 and decided that current Estonian legislation provides enough protection for lesbian and gay rights.

Veino Linde, chairman of the Legal Committee stated that there is no need for a legal regulation of homosexual partnerships. He added that the parliamentarians have to consider public attitudes and public opinion polls suggest the Estonians do not support same-sex marriage.

As reported previously the Estonian LGBT organisations distributed a public statement last week calling on the Ministries of Justice and Social Affairs as well as the Parliamentary Committees on Constitutional Affairs, Legal Affairs and Social Affairs to legalise same-sex partnerships in Estonia. These organisations also called on these institutions to delete a provision from a Family Law which does not recognise same-sex marriage registered outside Estonia.

Estonian news portal delfi.ee reports that Veino Linde said that he is sure the current Estonian parliament will not support this issue and thinks this subject will cause pre-election political debate.

Today in a unanimous decision the German constitutional Court considerably strengthened the rights of transgender people under German law, particularly the rights of non-operative transsexual people who live in same-gender relationships.

Czech parliament approves gay partnership

Source: *Associated Press*, 26 January 2006,
www.freewmexican.com/news/38509.html#

The upper chamber of Czech parliament voted on Thursday to grant some legal rights to same-sex partners.

Forty-five of the 65 lawmakers present in the 81-seat Senate voted in favor of the law, 14 were against. Six Senators abstained.

If approved also by President Vaclav Klaus, the legislation will allow couples who register their partnership with authorities to have inheritance and health care rights similar to those granted now to heterosexual married couples.

The law, however, does not allow marriage or adoption of children by same-sex partners.

"It's a great encouragement for us," said Jiri Hromada, a leading Czech gay activist, in response to the vote.

Hromada said he hoped the law will also be approved by the president, saying that "the law is not that controversial."

"I'm sure the president will consider all circumstances when deciding," he said.

Earlier this month, representatives of 10 Christian churches in the Czech Republic called on the Senate and the president to reject the legislation, warning that it would "weaken family life and cause chaos in values, mainly in the young generation."

Czech Republic: Klaus unlikely to sign homosexual partnership bill

Source: *Prague Daily Monitor*, 7 February 2006,
www.praguemonitor.com/ctk/?id=20060207F00137

President Vaclav Klaus will most probably veto a bill on registered partnership that would allow the same-sex couples to enter an official partnership union, the daily *Lidove noviny* writes today, referring to sources close to Klaus.

If Klaus vetoes the bill, it will probably be swept under the carpet since it will be very difficult to find 101 deputies in the 200-member Chamber of Deputies to override Klaus's veto, the paper says.

A source close to Klaus told *Lidove noviny* on Monday that it "was practically out of the question" for the president to sign the bill.

However, "it is also out of the question that Klaus will not express his opinion on such an important law," the same source said.

Some advocates of the law hope that Klaus will pay no attention to it and it will thus take effect without his explicit consent.

"I must say that I am amazed that the government's Legislative Council and the legislative councils of the parliament intend to present something like this to the public," Klaus said about the bill on Monday.

However, he did not specify his final stance on the legislation saying that he still has time until next Thursday.

"It would be a gross and maybe the largest Klaus's mistake that would testify to the lack of open-mindedness," Prime Minister Jiri Paroubek (senior governing Social Democrats, CSSD) told *Lidove noviny* yesterday, reacting to Klaus's position.

"I firmly believe that this will not happen," he said.

Klaus has repeatedly voiced reservations about the legislation giving the right to conclude official partnership unions to the people of the same sex.

Klaus presented his disagreement with the legislation last February when it was debated by the Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the Czech Parliament.

"I consider the marriage a traditional institution of one type. Let them arrange their relationship in any way. But I am absolutely against mixing this with family and marriage," Klaus said then.

If he signs it into law, the Czech Republic will be the first post-communist and 13th European country to embed homosexual partnership.

Supporters of the bill say the bill will make homosexual partners' life easier in contact with offices. The opponents say it threatens the maintenance of heterosexual family.

The bill defines the establishment and termination of a partnership union that will be entered in the identity card.

The bill ensures the partners' right to information on the health condition of their partners and a chance to inherit property as married couples.

The bill also counts with the obligation to pay maintenance and allows the homosexual partners to raise children, but it does not allow them to adopt them.

Czech Republic: Klaus rejects PM's call in support of homosexual partnership

Source: *Czech Happenings*, 12 February 2006,
www.ceskenoviny.cz/news/index_view.php?id=172480

President Vaclav Klaus rejects the appeal of PM Jiri Paroubek (Social Democrats CSSD), who asked Klaus to sign the bill on registered partnership of homosexuals into law, Klaus said in a statement released to CTK by his spokesman Petr Hajek today.

Klaus said that the bill has nothing to do with the freedom of minorities, which Paroubek mentioned. The bill is "an attempt to legalise the disintegration of traditional institutions on which the society is based," said Klaus.

At the same time, Klaus said that Paroubek should not patronise him in terms of freedom.

"The prime minister has no mandate to teach me and our country's citizens what freedom means. By his letter, Paroubek only wants to drag me into his election campaign, which I categorically reject," Klaus said in his statement.

According to Klaus, Paroubek is attempting to make an illusion that the debate about registered partnership is about freedom and its limitation.

"This bill has nothing to do with freedom," said Klaus, adding he would answer Paroubek's letter after he returns home from the Winter Olympics in Turin.

Paroubek said in his letter sent to Klaus on Friday that the aim of the homosexual partnership bill is not to create an institution similar to marriage, but to provide the necessary legal background for a permanent cohabitation of registered partners and for the settlement of their relations.

However, Klaus objected earlier that the bill would unfoundedly help homosexuals gain certain privileges.

Not only Paroubek, but also opposition Civic Democrat (ODS) deputy chairman and Prague Mayor Pavel Bem called on Klaus, ODS honorary chairman, to sign the bill on registered partnership. MEP and ODS shadow foreign minister Jan Zahradil, too, is opposed to Klaus's opinions about the bill.

After long disputes, the bill on registered partnership was passed by both houses of parliament. If Klaus returned it the Chamber of Deputies for reappraisal, it would need support from at least 101 of the house's 200 deputies to override Klaus's veto. It will not be easy to win such support.

In December, the bill was passed by 86 out of the 147 deputies present. Most of the ODS MPs and all junior ruling Christian Democrats (KDU-CSL) voted against the bill, while a crushing majority of the Social Democrats, the Freedom Union (US- DEU) deputies and most of the Communists (KSCM) supported the bill.

Ireland: Good Friday Agreement calls for legal recognition of gay relationships

Source: www.gcn.ie/content/templates/newsupdate.aspx?articleid=491&zoneid=9, 23 January 2006

The Equality Authority today launched a report which states that equal treatment of lesbian and gay couples comes within the equivalence provisions of the 'Good Friday Agreement.

The Good Friday Agreement, approved by a majority of the people on the island of Ireland includes provision for "equivalence of human rights" North and South.

The report concludes that the Good Friday Agreement requires the Irish Government to "level up" rights North and South by giving legal recognition to same sex relationships in the Republic equivalent to the provisions of the Civil Partnership Act for Same Sex Couples in the North.

"There is now a great opportunity for the Irish Government to go beyond simple equivalence with the North and to re-establish the lead in human rights it had established with the equality legislation. It can do this by becoming the sixth country in the world to enact equal access to civil marriage for same sex couples" says Eoin Collins, Director of Policy Change at GLEN.

Finland: Government would permit fertility treatment for single and lesbian women

Source: *Helsingin Sanomat*, 11 February 2006,

www.hs.fi/english/article/Government+would+permit+fertility+treatment+for+single+and+lesbian+women/1135218708964

The Finnish government on Thursday gave its endorsement to a bill for a law on fertility treatment, making no changes to the text, which had been put forward by Minister of Justice Leena Luhtanen (SDP). The government's approval came after a vote.

The bill does not take issue with the family situations of the women receiving treatment. This means that the treatments would be permitted for single women and women in lesbian relationships.

The issue has been a difficult one for the government. Two Centre Party ministers, Minister of Trade and Industry Mauri Pekkarinen, and Minister of Agriculture and Forestry Juha Korkeaoja left the meeting before the issue came up.

"I have served as minister for seven years, and never before have I been deliberately absent from a meeting or abstained from a vote. I can say that this is not an everyday event", Pekkarinen said later.

He added that he would have liked to have gone deeper into certain details of the proposed law. Pekkarinen and Korkeaoja will formulate their points of view on the matter when it comes before Parliament.

Regional and Municipal Affairs Minister Hannes Manninen proposed that fertility treatments for medical reasons should be restricted to "couples comprising a woman and a man".

Manninen's proposal was voted down 9-3. In addition to Manninen himself, Defence Minister Seppo Kääriäinen (Centre) and Minister of the Interior Kari Rajamäki (SDP) were in favour of the proposed restriction.

Under the proposal, a child originating from donated sperm or egg cells would be entitled to learn the identity of the donor at the age of 18.

Ulla-Maj Wideroos, the Second Minister of Finance proposed that the information should be made available already at age 15, but her proposal was voted down 11-1.

There have been attempts to draw up legislation to regulate fertility treatment since the 1980s. The greatest controversy concerns whether or not the treatment should be restricted to heterosexual couples, or if it should be available to all women.

The bill is to go before Parliament next week.

Most European countries have legislation on fertility treatment.

Legislation has been seen as necessary in Finland in order to secure the rights of the children, and of the donors of the sperm or egg cells.

NOTICE BOARD:

IGLYO seeks members for their steering teams on transgender, HIV/AIDS and communication issues

by IGLYO

In our work to strengthen the IGLYO network we have decided to start working with steering teams. As a result of the increasing amount of work and the expansion of the network, IGLYO recognises that in order to achieve its objectives there needs to be a change in the internal structure and strategic approach to its work. Steering Teams will be the initiators for the strategic expansion of the work in different policy areas. This construction will increase the involvement of young people in the decision making processes of IGLYO, as well as contributing to the greater visibility of young LGBT people in Europe. Initially five different Steering Teams will be created in order to focus on the following (policy) areas:

1. Transgender issues
2. HIV/Aids
3. Communication
4. Women's issues
5. Social Exclusion

Full call is available on our website:

www.ilga-europe.org/europe/news/iglyo_seeks_new_members_for_steering_teams

Invitation to Tender - Research Project

Source: www.equalityni.org

The Equality Authority and the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland are jointly issuing an RFT for a new research project "Enabling Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Individuals to Access their Rights under Equality Law". Details on the following website: www.equalityni.org/whatsnew/newslist.cfm?catid=1.

Call for Papers: Conference: "Heteronormativity and Homosexualities. Research Based on Michael Pollak"

by Rainer Bartel

Date: 9 - 11 November 2006.

Venue: Johannes Kepler University Linz, Altenbergerstrasse 69, A-4040 Linz, Austria.

Organisers: Homosexuelle Initiative Linz (HOSI Linz), Institute of Women's and Gender Research, Johannes Kepler University Linz, Institute of Sociology, Johannes Kepler University Linz.

Aims: Bringing forward several aspects of lesbian, gay and other non heterosexual forms of living within a framework apt for a critical scrutiny of the concept of heteronormativity as a principle of structuring society; Reflecting the work of Michael Pollak in terms of gay studies and sexual politics. He studied sociology at Linz, Austria; Discussing perspectives of developing a respective research network; Drawing conclusions from the conference results for the political and cultural agenda.

Organisation: The strict deadline for submitting abstracts or full papers exclusively via e-mail is March 14, 2006.

Mail to: rainer.bartel@jku.at

The decisions by the Scientific Board concerning the presentation of papers and the conference programme are both due on April 24, 2006.

Further information: www.hosilinz.at/pollak

First Eastern European and Central Asian AIDS Conference

by Bertil Lindblad

On 15-17 May 2006, the first Eastern European and Central Asian AIDS Conference will take place in Moscow. The conference, expected to gather 1500 participants, provides a unique opportunity for policy makers, researchers, civil society representatives and people living with HIV from Eastern Europe and Central Asia to share experiences and establish new partnerships to address the particular characteristics of the HIV/AIDS epidemic in the region.

It is crucial to ensure a strong and balanced participation of representatives of governments, science and civil society. Attached is information about the conference in English and in Russian. Please share this information among your colleagues and partners across the region. You may also wish to consider making conference information available on your websites by providing a link to the conference website www.eecaac2006.org (fully functional as of 15 February 2006).