

EURO-LETTER

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ILGA-EUROPE:

Annual conference – celebrating families and 10 years of ILGA-Europe!

ILGA-Europe media release, 13 October 2006

Between 26 and 29 October 2006, over 200 delegates from all over Europe will gather in the Bulgarian capital of Sofia for the ILGA-Europe's 10th annual conference (ILGA's 28th annual European conference). The conference theme is **"We are Family – Our families in Europe and the European family."** The main focus of this conference is twofold – celebrating the diversity of families and celebrating the 10th anniversary of ILGA-Europe.

Europe and some of its countries has made significant progress in terms of acknowledging, legally recognising and accepting various family models. But there is still significant work to be done in order to achieve full social acceptance and legal equality for all families across the continent. ILGA-Europe is firmly placing diversity of family models and their acceptance and recognition back to its priority list by organising a special panel and various workshops on families.

Traditionally our conference is a unique opportunity for activists from all over Europe to discuss challenges, celebrate achievements, and brainstorm further strategies and projects. We will continue our efforts of strengthening the capacity of the member organisations by organising various practical workshops on improving our skills and techniques in implementing diversity practises, lobbying, fundraising and working with media.

As this is our 10th anniversary conference, we will reflect on our achievements and pay tribute to ILGA-Europe's fathers and mothers. We will also sketch out our next 10 years, identify the main challenges and discuss the best ways of achieving further and fuller equality and human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Europeans.

It is significant and symbolic that the conference takes place in Bulgaria which joins the European Union next year. We hope this will be a great opportunity not only for the Bulgarian LGBT activists and organisations to meet their colleagues from across Europe. And also that this will be a great chance for the Bulgarian officials to better understand LGBT issues and learn from other European experiences how to address these issues and build Bulgaria as an equal and inclusive society for all its citizens.

The Bulgarian Gay Organisation GEMINI, which co-hosts the conference has provided tremendous contribution toward the organisation of the event. Not only does the conference working programme promise to be exciting, diverse and stimulating, the same is expected from the social programme!

ILGA-Europe Pilot Human Rights Violations Documentation Fund

by Maxim Anmeghichean

ILGA-Europe announces second call for proposals within its Small Pilot Human Rights Violations Documentation Fund with support of the Sigrid Rausing Trust. The goal of the fund is to promote documentation of cases of discrimination, hate crimes and other human rights violations against LGBT people according to the international human rights standards.

Second call for proposals. Deadline: 31 October 2006

The small pilot fund will support small-scale projects (up to 2,000 euros) intended to document (cases of) discrimination, hate crimes and other human rights violations committed on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression.

Priority areas:

- hate crimes and hate speech (including in media)
- brutalities of law-enforcement authorities
- legal position of LGBT people in an eligible country
- freedom of assembly and association

The information contained in the documentation reports will subsequently be used by ILGA-Europe in its lobbying activities with the European institutions: European Union, Council of Europe and the OSCE.

For more information and application form please visit our website: www.ilga-europe.org

ILGA-Europe publishes a Toolkit on organising Pride events in hostile environments

ILGA-Europe media release, 6 October 2006

This Toolkit is a response to hostile and violent opposition to the first lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) Pride events in some Eastern and Central European countries during last few years.

The Toolkit is intended to provide ideas, information and resources for those wanting to organise Pride events in a hostile environment. In drawing heavily on the experiences and successes of Pride organisers, and matching this input with information on support available from the European institutions and the LGBT community internationally, it aims to underpin the consolidation of progress made so far, and provide the initial know-how for those wishing to arrange events in countries and towns where no Pride events have yet been held.

The Toolkit was prepared in close cooperation with Pride organisers in various countries. At the Pride against Prejudice conference during EuroPride 2006 in London last July, over 100 activists from 28 countries provided valuable input and suggestions for the Toolkit. The Toolkit will be presented at the end of October at the ILGA-Europe 10th Annual Conference in Sofia.

PDF version of the Toolkit is available at ILGA-Europe website: www.ilga-europe.org/europe/publications/non_periodical/prides_against_prejudice_a_toolkit_for_pride_organising_in_a_hostile_environment_september_2006

E-mail us if you want to order a printed version of the Toolkit: juris@ilga-europe.org

ILGA-Europe Starts a Three-Year Advocacy Project in South-East Europe

by Maxim Anmeghichean

A five-day intensive training on documenting human rights violations, monitoring pride parades, lobbying European institutions and planning advocacy was held by ILGA-Europe in Macedonia on 2-6 October. The participants were 9 LGBT activists from organisations “Kontra” (Croatia), “GenderDoc-M” (Moldova) and “MASSO” (Macedonia). These three organisations are also ILGA-Europe partners in the three-year advocacy project, which started in May 2006 and is funded by the Open Society Institute and co-funded by the Sigrid Rausing Trust.

The goal of the project is to advocate for improvement of the legal and social position of LGBT people in the Balkans and Western Newly Independent States (NIS). It will focus in particular on:

- building the capacity of the project partners in the fields of advocacy and documentation of human rights violations against LGBT people by means of training, coaching and consultancy
- collecting the evidence of legal and social discrimination against LGBT people in the project countries by documenting social attitudes, experiences of discrimination and breaches of international human rights standards
- advocating at national and European level for action by the respective governments to address discrimination against LGBT people

The partners will also implement national advocacy strategies and will receive financial support for these purposes. For more information you can contact ILGA-Europe’s Programmes Director Maxim Anmeghichean at: maxim@ilga-europe.org

Job opportunity with ILGA-Europe

by ILGA-Europe

ILGA-Europe is currently recruiting a **Financial and Administrative Manager**. Details and applications for are on our website: www.ilga-europe.org

EUROPE:

European Commissions funds project on supporting families of LGBT youth

by Friends and Families of Gays and Lesbians

The European Commission has funded a two year project **“Family Matters. Supporting families to prevent violence against gay and lesbian youth”** the aim of which is to prevent violence against lesbian and gay youth by supporting their families.

The project will be run by four partners: the Università del Piemonte Orientale “Amedeo Avogadro” (Dipartimento di Ricerca Sociale), families’ organisations in Italy (Agedo - Associazione Genitori di Omosessuali), U.K. (Fflag - Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gay men) and Spain (Ampgil - Asociación de padres y madres de gays y lesbianas).

Why study and support families of lesbian and gay young people? Lesbian and gay youth are frequently deprived of support and role models within their families, therefore they are more vulnerable, less likely to accept themselves, and more exposed to forms of violence like bullying or sexual harassment as well as self-harming. At the same time, families are left alone to face their own difficulties in accepting the homosexuality of one of their members, and in supporting her/him against the discrimination and violence she/he will meet outside.

While there has been research and support for gays and lesbians in Europe there is a lack both of direct knowledge of families’ attitudes and suitable strategies of intervention designed for them. That is the gap that the project “Family Matters” wishes to bridge.

In Italy a national survey (with self-administered questionnaires and in-depth interviews) will be conducted by the Department of Social Research of the University of East Piedmont with the support of Agedo. In Spain, Ampgil will collect public sector good practice for families of homosexual young people while in the UK. Fflag will similarly survey the voluntary sector.

Education and information material (a documentary-video, a manual, a web-site) will be produced with the aim of supporting families to become themselves a source of support for youth facing the difficulties of self-acceptance, social stigmatisation and homophobic violence. Together, young people and their families can make an important contribution to building a society free from violence and prejudice.

Austria: Worldwide first honouring of an LGBT organisation in a national parliament

by Helmut Graupner

On 2nd October 2006 a most amazing event took place at the Austrian Parliament. Rechtskomitee LAMBDA (RKL), Austria's LGBT civil rights organisation, celebrated its 15th anniversary with a unique ceremonial act in the Federal Parliament of the Republic of Austria. It was the first time in history worldwide that an LGBT-organisation was honoured in a national parliament.

Over 400 people registered, so the event was even moved to the actual chamber (the session hall) of the lower house of federal Parliament (the Nationalrat). The Federal President (head of state) of Austria sent video greetings as did the head of Austrian police forces. The Minister of Justice and the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture spoke as well as the president of Austria's Judges Association, Austria's Secretary General of Amnesty International, MPs and representatives of the Bar Association. So this was the equivalent of celebrating the 25th anniversary of Stonewall in the chamber of the House of Commons, with the Lord Chancellor as one of the speakers, and video greetings from Queen Elizabeth 2d.

Lectures pleading for same-sex marriage have been held by RKL-president Helmut Graupner, who received standing ovations by the over 500 people audience in the chamber, by Hans Ytterberg, Swedish Government's Ombudsman against Discrimination on the Ground of Sexual Orientation, and Robert Wintemute, the world's foremost expert on sexual orientation law.

The Ceremonial Act finally culminated in the outstanding key-note lecture of Hon. Justice Edwin Cameron from the Supreme Court of Appeals of the Republic of South Africa. Hon. Justice Michael Kirby of the High Court of Australia regretted not having been able to come personally and sent a greeting message which has been read out.

The reception was held in the stunning Parthenon-like main hall of the Parliament.

Several Austrian MPs and Supreme Court as well as Administrative High Court judges and other high ranking representatives from the judiciary were in the audience. The event has been moderated by The Hon. Justice Lilian Hofmeister of the Constitutional Court.

The Ceremonial Act was sponsored and opened by Barbara Prammer, vice-president (and upcoming president) of the Nationalrat, who is also a member of RKL's board of advisors. As is (after the elections of 1st October) the likely next Prime Minister of Austria (Mr. Alfred Gusenbauer).

Pictures and reports about this historic event of international dimension can be found at www.gayboy.at/news/10377, www.gay.or.at/article/1159944342 and www.gaynet.at/eventpics/110.

A DVD (with German and English soundtracks) and a Ceremonial Act website will be available soon at RKL's website www.RKLambda.at.

Council of Europe

by Patricia Prendiville

The Council of Europe is having a special meeting to discuss the issues in relation to Protecting and Supporting Human Rights Defenders in Europe in November, 2006. If you wish to attend please contact the Office of Human Rights Commissioner. julien.atteuil@coe.int or sirpa.rautio@coe.int or lauri.sivonen@coe.int

Further information see:

www.coe.int/t/F/Droits_de_l'homme/HRDefenders_e.asp

EMPLOYMENT:

Latvia finally bans sexual orientation discrimination in employment

Source: ILGA-Europe media release, 21 September 2006

Yesterday the Latvian Parliament voted to support an amendment to the country's Labour Law to explicitly ban sexual orientation discrimination in employment. Until yesterday, Latvia was the only member state of the European Union which failed to comply with provisions of the 2000 EU employment equality directive requiring EU member states to protect employees from discrimination based on their sexual orientation.

ILGA-Europe welcomes this long-awaited decision and thanks the Latvian politicians who supported this amendment and stood against prejudice and discrimination. However, ILGA-Europe remains concerned that it took Latvia such a long and bitter battle to implement this legislation despite the country's obligation as EU member state to implement EU directives. During the parliamentary debate, some Latvian parliamentarians once again expressed open hatred and prejudice towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. ILGA-Europe is also concerned that the decision to implement the EU directive was taken with a relatively marginal majority (46 parliamentarians in favour, 35 against, 3 abstained and 9 did not vote). In addition, this vote only comes after the President of Latvia returned this amended legislation back to the Parliament for reconsideration after a first rejection by Latvian parliamentarians.

Patricia Prendiville, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe, said: "We welcome this decision of the Latvian Parliament to ban sexual orientation discrimination in employment. Latvia finally cemented in its legislation one of the key EU principles which is that no one in the European Union should be discriminated against in the labour market because of their sexuality. We are glad that enough Latvian parliamentarians had the courage to adopt this legislation as part of Latvia's commitment to values of equality and non-discrimination and prevent unnecessary, costly and embarrassing infringement procedures. We can finally conclude that six years after its adoption, the Directive's requirement to ban sexual orientation discrimination in employment will soon be transposed in all EU member states".

UK: Stonewall launches guide to help small businesses protect gay staff and access the £70bn 'pink pound'

Source: Stonewall media release, 11 October 2006

Stonewall has launched its first guide advising Britain's four million small businesses how to become more gay-friendly. **Gay People, Your Business** is written in plain English and designed to be read in 15 minutes. It provides key advice and information on supporting lesbian and gay staff and gaining access to the 'pink pound', the spending power of gay people in Britain currently valued at £70bn a year.

Gay People, Your Business is endorsed by the Federation of Small Businesses and has been funded by the Department for Communities & Local Government.

"Contrary to the picture sometimes painted, we know there are many small businesses wanting to do the right thing around equality," said Ben Summerskill, Stonewall chief executive. "However, much guidance about equality is extremely lengthy and it's all too often written in jargon. I'm delighted that we've succeeded in producing a guide that will be accessible to millions of small business owners."

Stephen Alambritis, of the Federation of Small Business, said: "This guide is a 'must-read' for small businesses wanting to get their diversity policy on track and keen to take advantage of the pink pound. It's an invaluable resource."

Meg Munn MP, Minister for Women and Equality at the Department for Communities & Local Government, said: "Because 97 per cent of all businesses employ fewer than 20 people, the need to make them aware of the employment protections relating to sexual orientation is vital. We're delighted to have had the opportunity to work with Stonewall on this vital initiative."

Fifty thousand copies of **Gay People, Your Business** have been produced; half will be distributed through the Federation of Small Businesses. Copies can also be downloaded from Stonewall's website at

www.stonewall.org.uk

Britain's 1.7 million lesbian and gay workers have enjoyed legal protection against discrimination since December 2003. However, not all employers know this and some consequently risk employment tribunal claims. Small and medium-sized enterprises (of up to 250 staff) account for almost 60 per cent of UK employment.

Copies of **Gay People, Your Business** can be obtained from the Federation of Small Businesses

www.fsb.org.uk Further information about being gay at work is available at

www.stonewall.org.uk/workplace

SAME-SEX UNIONS:

Ireland: Landmark Case for Same Sex Marriage

by ILGA-Europe

There is a high profile case going on right now in Ireland challenging current marriage law. In this article you will find a link to the website of the campaigners who are challenging the Irish law and where you can find all the latest updates on this important development.

The case being brought by Katherine Zappone and Ann Louise Gilligan is about fairness and equality for all members of society - its fundamental emphasis is the respect of the rights and obligations of both married and non-married people to share their lives in an atmosphere of social and economic stability. Although their case calls for the State's recognition of their valid Canadian marriage, the implications of such recognition are far-reaching for partnership legislation in Ireland.

Read more at: www.kalcase.org

TRANSGENDER:

Austria: Constitutional Court strikes down government pressure on trans same-sex spouses to divorce

by Helmut Graupner

Rechtskomitee LAMBDA (RKL) highly welcomed Austrian Constitutional Court's judgment to struck down Interior Ministry's Decree on Transsexuals which pressured same-sex spouses to dissolve their marriage (VfGH 08.06.2006, V 4/06).

The applicant is a male-to-female transsexual living a happy family life with her wife and their two children. Last year she underwent sex-change-operation. Since then she has been living as a woman in same-sex marriage with her wife, whom she had already married when being a man.

According to the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights post-operative transsexuals have a fundamental right under the European Convention of Human Rights that their sex-entry in the birth register be changed to their new sex; and by that also to get documents representing this new sex.

The Decree on Transsexuals issued by the Minister of Interior in the year 1996 however made the fulfilment of this human right for married transsexuals, whose marriage turns same-sex after the operation, dependent upon dissolution of their marriage.

That way ordered by the Ministry of Interior the registry office refused to correct the sex entry in the birth register. So she, as a woman, still had to operate with male documents and thereby had to lay open her transsexuality to anyone who saw these documents. Her case is especially precarious as – under Austrian legislation – her conjugal community not being disrupted she is unable to dissolve her marriage, to fulfil the condition set by the authorities.

Same-sex marriage no ground for refusal

The Constitutional Court now agreed with the applicant and repealed the (main parts of the) Interior Ministry's Decree on Transsexuals. On the one hand the decree (considered by the Ministry to be a merely internal order to the registry offices) was unlawful on the basis that it had not been properly published in the federal law gazette ("Bundesgesetzblatt"). On the other hand the Court shares the concerns the applicant raised about substantive unlawfulness of the decree. Sex changes by the operation, also when a person is married. The birth registry therefore had to be corrected to reflect this change, and the Court could not find a law establishing a ban on such a correction on the basis that a person is married. The refusal to correct the birth register could not prevent that the spouses turn same-sex after the operation, the judges said.

"The Constitutional Court merits high respect for this judgment", says *Dr. Helmut Graupner*, president of the Austrian lesbian and gay rights organization *Rechtskomitee LAMBDA (RKL)* and counsel of the applicant, "The Federal Government on its side should promote marriage and families and not intend to destroy them just on the basis of them being same-sex."

YOUTH:

"The project is gay? Rejected"

by Lisette Kampus, Campaign Against Homophobia

European Commission has a very nice initiative which is meant for facilitating the cooperation between youth (18-25) in Europe, it is called the European Youth Programme. Youth Programme should be equally opened for all youth groups for various projects, but the Polish case shows that it is not always the case.

In the European Youth Programme, there are 5 different actions under which young people or youth-workers can come up with a nice variety of activities. One of the actions is the European Voluntary Service (EVS) that gives a young person to spend up to 12 months in another country working as a volunteer for the project she/he has chosen. The decisions over projects and national guidelines of the programme are made by National Agencies which are in every member state of EU and other programme countries. This means that decisions are made locally, although, they should be in accordance with the general programme guidelines.

Polish LGBT organisation Campaign Against Homophobia applied for the 1st of June deadline with the project of sending organisation EVS with the aim to send a volunteer to a hosting organisation in Sweden for one year. Not to mention the fact that the decision of our project was severely delayed (and in case of positive answer, the project should have started on September 1st), we got the answer on September 26-th, but also the content of the decision was rather surprising. Here's the decision of the Polish National Agency's selection committee:

"I would like to inform that today [26.09.06] the Selection Committee decided to reject the project nr PL-21-433-2006-R3 submitted by Campaign Against Homophobia under Action 2 Youth Programme: European Voluntary Service. Majority of members of the Selection Committee stated that project of Campaign is against the policy of raising children and youth, which is implemented by the Ministry. The policy of Ministry does not support actions that aim to propagate homosexual behaviour and such attitude among young people. Also, the role of Ministry is not to support cooperation of homosexuals organisations."

In other words, the project was... gay! Now, the rejection is surely no surprise (after all, the Youth Programme IS under the governance of Ministry of Education and the minister is a well-known homophobe Roman Giertych), but what is in fact surprising, is that for the first time the Ministry is making so secret of its homophobia and the fact that they in principle do not support LGBT organizations.

What next? We have already written several mails to the Commission asking what is their stand on the constant problems with the Youth Programme in Poland. Naturally, the Commission can only give careful, politically correct answers, but in this case, we are really hoping that there will be some measures taken as this decision of Polish Ministry of Education is, in fact, a clear violation of Youth Programme guidelines.

Media release by the International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation on this issue:

www.iglyo.com/content/article.php?id=QA000130

NOTICEBOARD:

Conference on Fundamental Rights of LGBT People at European Parliament

by Gauri Van Gulik

The Socialist Group in the European Parliament is organising a conference on the Fundamental Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transsexual People on 8 and 9 November 2006 in Brussels.

The year 2006 saw a rise in homophobic discourse and violence in many parts of Europe, including several EU Members States. The Year 2007 has been designated as the European Year of Equal Opportunities for all. As a follow-up to two EP resolutions (on Homophobia in Europe adopted in January 2006 and on the Rise of Racist and Homophobic Violence in Europe adopted in June 2006) both of which gathered parliamentary majority owing largely to the efforts of the Socialist Group played a key role in gathering a parliamentary majority, it is important to send a powerful political signal against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation on the eve of 2007. We would like this conference to be open to a large audience including Members of our Group, representatives of our respective parties, representatives of NGOs as well as experts.

For more information and to enroll as participant in the conference you can email us with your full name, function, place of residence, date of birth and email at pse-fundamentalrights@europarl.europa.eu.

IGLYO's 20th Annual Conference

by IGLYO

IGLYO's 20th Annual Conference which is to take place between *3rd December and 10th December 2006 in Riga (Latvia)*.

The conference, entitled "Beyond Coming Out: Discussing Mental Health Issues Among LGBT Youth and Communities", is being organised in co-operation with the local LGBT group Mozaika - Riga and is supported by the European Youth Foundation and Amsterdam City Council.

The application deadline is Sunday 22nd October 2006. Please have completed applications in as soon as possible.

We kindly ask you to distribute this invitation amongst your mailing and contact lists.

For application form and if you have any queries please contact the prep team at:

iglyoannualconference@gmail.com

Call for Applications: Justice Initiative Fellows Program at Central European University (2007 –2009 session)

by Central European University, Department of Legal Studies, CEU Budapest

The Open Society Justice Initiative, an operational program of the Open Society Institute (OSI), joins with Central European University (CEU) to announce the Justice Initiative Fellows Program for 2007-2009. The aim of the program is to support and expand a network of lawyers and activists working internationally on human rights-related issues. Established in 1996, the Justice Initiative Fellows Program has graduated 155 fellows from more than 20 countries.

The Justice Initiative Fellows Program is a two-year program of study and practical work experience. In 2007, a maximum of ten applicants will be selected to participate in the program. Applicants from the following regions are eligible: Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Africa, East- and Southeast Asia, the Middle East, and Central/South America.

Further information and details: www.ceu.hu/admissions.html

28th International Human Rights Training Programme (IHRTP)

Ste-Anne-de-Bellevue, Québec, Canada,

June 10 - June 29, 2007

by Ian Hamilton, Executive Director, Equitas

We invite your organization to submit an application for this program and/or forward the information to your network of human rights activists. In identifying who should apply, please bear in mind that the IHRTP is intended for human rights workers and educators. The goal of the IHRTP is to strengthen the capacity of human rights organisations to undertake human rights education aimed at building a global culture of human rights. The curriculum is based on principles of adult experiential learning, in which participants and facilitators engage in a process of mutual teaching and learning. The Application form provides a detailed description of the Programme.

The selection process and participant profile we are looking for are described in the attached document. The Equitas Selection Committee gives priority to the organizations best able to demonstrate their commitment and effectiveness in relation to human rights promotion and education. Consideration is also given to overall gender balance, geographic representation and the availability of bursaries.

Equitas is a non-profit, non-governmental organization established in 1967, as the Canadian Human Rights Foundation, and dedicated to the promotion of human rights through education in Canada and around the world. Through various programs, with the IHRTP being our core activity, we help organizations build their capacity to engage in human rights education, promotion and democratic development. For more information about our activities in Canada, as well as in Asia, Africa, Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia, please visit our website at www.equitas.org.

Deadline: 1 December, 2006 and only the 2007 Application Forms will be accepted.

Contact person: Chris Bradley, ihrtp-pifdh@equitas.org

"Heteronormativity and Homosexualities. Research Following Michael Pollak"

by Rainer Bartel

Public conference held at Johannes Kepler University of Linz, Austria, Nov. 9 - 11th, 2006 Conference
language: German

All the information: www.hosilinz.at/pollak Mail to: pollaktagung@jku.at

Phone: 0043.699.121.94.805 (Andreas Schwandner, coordinator)

The conference addresses researchers, students and all persons interested in the variety of non-heterosexual living.

Heteronormativity will be scrutinised as a coining social principle that impacts and structures society as a whole, even beyond (homo-)sexual living and loving.