

EURO-LETTER

Euro-Letter is published by **ILGA-Europe** - the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association with support from the European Community - The European Union against Discrimination.

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Previous issues: all previous Euro-Letters in English as well as the German and Portuguese translations from No.76, January 2000 and Greek translation from No 127, January 2006 are available in pdf format on our website: www.ilga-europe.org/europe/publications/euro_letter

ILGA-Europe is grateful to

- **the Lesbian and Gay Liberation Front** for the German translations of the Euro-Letter which are also available on their website: www.lglf.de;
- **Miguel Freitas** – for the Portuguese translations;
- **Pantelis Ravidas** – for the Greek translations.

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position or opinion of the European Commission.

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ILGA-EUROPE:

10th ILGA-Europe annual conference: birthday cake in family

ILGA-Europe media release, 6 November 2006

On 26-29th October 2006 almost 200 delegates from all over Europe gathered for the 10th ILGA-Europe annual conference in Sofia.

The conference theme was “We are family: our families in Europe and the European family.” ILGA-Europe re-affirmed its determination to work towards full legal equality and social acceptance of all forms of families across Europe. During the conference a draft ILGA-Europe’s key demands on diversity of families was circulated and soon its final version will be available. One of the panel sessions and various workshops discussed and explored the diversity of families and the ways of ensuring their recognition and acceptance.

During more than 30 workshops and caucuses the delegates discussed a whole range of issues affecting LGBT people in Europe. This year’s conference was innovative in a way that during each conference day the delegates were offered in-depth capacity building workshops – on using video as a human rights advocacy tool, understanding and working with the media and making our organisations more diverse and inclusive.

This was also a celebratory conference as ILGA-Europe marked 10 years of existence and paid tribute to all ILGA-Europe’s mothers and fathers. The delegates reflected on and celebrated achievements of the last decade and sketched out priorities and challenges for the next decade.

The conference has also elected a new ILGA-Europe Board:

Ruth Baldacchino (Malta Gay Rights Movement, Malta)

Martin Christensen (LBL, Denmark)

Linda Freimane (Mozaika, Latvia)

Riccardo Gottardi (Arcigay, Italy)

Lisette Kampus (Diversity, Estonia & KPH, Poland)

Deborah Lambillotte (Holebifederatie, Belgium)

Christine Le Doaré (Centre LGBT de Paris, France)

Miha Lobnik (Legebitra, Slovenia)

Pierre Serne (Commission LGBT des Verts, France)

Tomasz Szypuła (KPH, Poland)

Reserve Board members elected are Jackie Lewis (UNISON, UK) and Vera Cîmpeanu (ACCEPT, Romania).

The conference also confirmed Ruth Baldacchino (Malta Gay Rights Movement, Malta) and Janfrans Van Der Eerden (COC Nederland, Netherlands) as representatives of ILGA-Europe on the Executive Board of ILGA.

Reserve representatives of ILGA-Europe on the Executive Board of ILGA are Jackie Lewis (UNISON, UK) and Søren Andersson (RFSL, Sweden).

Conference report and images from the conference will be available on our website very soon:

www.ilga-europe.org

ILGA-Europe's history is available online

by ILGA-Europe

During the 10th anniversary conference in Sofia, an exhibition about first decade of ILGA-Europe was prepared by Kurt Krickler, Vera Cîmpeanu and Gerhard Grün. The content of this exhibition highlighting chronicles and highlights is now available at our website:

www.ilga-europe.org/europe/about_us/our_history

OSCE Support for Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity is Growing

by Maxim Anmeghichean

The OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting (HDIM) of 2006, which took place in Warsaw between 2-13 October, had an unusual for this organisation religion-related LGBT touch. Reverend Chris Newlands of the Church of England, Bishop Diane Bishop of the Metropolitan Community Church (USA) and Chairman of the European Network Against Racism Bashy Quraishy took part in a side event organised by ILGA-Europe, entitled "The Role of Religion in Promoting the Human Rights of LGBT People in the OSCE Participating States". The event was well-attended by NGOs and representatives of country delegations. Presentations by the key-note speakers were followed by discussions on religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, with concrete recommendations voiced towards the OSCE. Apart from the side event, Diane Bishop and Chris Newlands made public interventions during the plenary sessions, addressing the subject of religion and sexual orientation / gender identity.

OSCE is the largest international organisation of which one of the most vocal opponents of the global LGBT movement – the Holy See – is a full participating state, and as the organisation works by consensus – has the right to veto. The Holy See has explicitly stated during the HDIM in 2005 that they are opposing the inclusion of sexual orientation in the definition of hate crimes by the OSCE, and have made other statements opposing ODIHR's (Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the OSCE) work on LGBT issues. The above were main reasons behind making religion and sexual orientation / gender identity the main topic of ILGA-Europe's presence at the HDIM 2006.

There is a growing support for sexual orientation and gender identity human rights issues in the OSCE context. For the first time in the OSCE history two participating states' delegations – Sweden and the Netherlands – have also organised side events on the topic, and have committed themselves to promote further developments. More and more participating states (including all relevant statements by the EU) mention sexual orientation in their public statements.

For more information on ILGA-Europe's advocacy work with the OSCE, please visit our web-site at: http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/advocacy_lobbying/human_rights_issues/homophobic_violence_and_hate_or_contact

Maxim Anmeghichean at maxim@ilga-europe.org

Multiple discrimination working group

by Christine Loudes

A multiple discrimination working group with representatives from networks working on anti-discrimination and equality (ENAR, Age, EDF, EWL, the Youth Forum, the Social Platform and ILGA-Europe) meets every three months to respond to the agenda of the Commission in this area of work and to support each other in integrating more and more multiple identities and multiple discrimination in our work.

The Working group is to nominate two organisations to seat on the steering committee of a research on multiple discrimination. This research is commissioned by the European Commission and will be conducted by the Danish Centre for Human Rights.

The group also plans to have a webpage which will provide information on multiple identities and multiple discrimination mentioning interesting projects and research in this area. If you are part of a project tackling multiple discrimination please let us know and we will mention it on this page. Please send info to christine@ilga-europe.org.

Additionally, the group plans to contribute to the organisation of a conference on multiple discrimination, as part of to the European Year of Equal Opportunity 2007. The Youth Forum will take the lead on this initiative and ILGA-Europe will contribute towards the costs of some members attending the conference. More information will be available closer to the date of the conference.

Auto-evaluation of the Commission on the Hague Programme

by Christine Loudes

On the 19 and 20th October, The Directorate Justice Freedom and Security organised a two days conference to evaluate its policies in relation to the implementation of the Hague Programme. This programme is relevant to LGBT people in particular in relation to the implementation of the freedom of movement directive and the directive on the definition of refugee. Both directives should be implemented in member states; however LGBT people encounter difficulties in accessing their rights. In particular, we are aware that the recognition of unions or marriages acquired in one member states of the EU remains problematic in other states. If you are aware of such situations in your state, please let us know about it and we will raise the issue with the Commission (which is the guardian of EC Law!!). Contact: christine@ilga-europe.org.

EU Consultation on health care services

by Evelyne Paradis

The European Commission has opened a consultation for a future EU legislation on health care services. The aim of the consultation is to ensure legal certainty and support for Member States in areas where EU action can bring added value. The Commission recognises that this should include the shared values and principles for health services throughout the EU and the link between health services and related services such as social services and long-term care.

In the context of this consultation, the Commission is interested in getting input on these questions, among others:

- What specific legal clarification and what practical information is required by whom (e.g.; authorities, purchasers, providers, patients) to enable safe, high-quality and efficient cross-border healthcare?
- Are there other issues where legal certainty should also be improved in the context of each specific health or social protection system? In particular, what improvements do stakeholders directly involved in receiving patients from other Member States - such as healthcare providers and social security institutions - suggest in order to facilitate cross-border healthcare?
- In what ways should European action help support the health systems of the Member States and the different actors within them? Are there areas not identified above?

ILGA-Europe plans to respond to this consultation and to highlight the following issues:

- Rights of users and clients (including rights to information, access to services, choice, safety, privacy and confidentiality, dignity and comfort, non-discrimination in access to services and treatment)
- Call for common standards in relation to accessibility, safety of patients, quality, and non-discrimination.
- Access to cross-border care and treatment for treatments that are not offered in a given Member States (e.g. fertility treatment)

We would greatly welcome information from members about the issues mentioned above, whether it is research, examples of good national legislation, projects, individual stories and cases of discrimination in cross-border health care. We would also like to hear about additional issues that we may be able to raise in the context of this consultation.

Please send information and comments by January 8, 2007 at the latest to evelyne@ilga-europe.org! The deadline to respond to the consultation is 31 January 2007.

For more information about the consultation and background documents, please visit the Website of the European Public Health Alliance at www.eph.org/a/2392

Support ILGA-Europe and promote equality by wearing our new t-shirt!

by ILGA-Europe

Passionate about ILGA-Europe and its work? Now you can promote the organisation by wearing our new t-shirt: www.ilga-europe.org/europe/get_involved_support_us/buy_ilga_europe_t_shirt_and_promote_equality

EUROPE:

Europe reacts on new chairperson of Latvian parliamentary human rights committee

by ILGA-Europe

On 20 November 2006, the Latvian Parliamentary Human Rights and Public Affairs Committee confirmed Janis Smits as a chairperson of this committee. Janis Smits is one of the most vocal and active anti-gay campaigner and his nominations was strongly criticised by a number of Latvian and international NGOs.

Janis Smits' election caused outraged not only in Latvia but also across Europe. The Gay and Lesbian Rights Intergroup of the European Parliament deplored the confirmation as an insult to those who believe in a European Union founded upon the principles of human rights, diversity, and equality.

Terry Davis, Secretary General Council of Europe, issued a Statement by in reaction to the election of the new head of the Latvian parliamentary human rights committee:

"I am very concerned about reports that Latvian parliament has elected a leading anti-gay activist as the head of its Human Rights Committee. The parliamentarians who made this decision should realise that what is at stake is the international reputation of Latvia. The best way to clear the air would be for the Latvian parliament to ratify Protocol 12 to the European Convention on Human Rights, which guarantees that no-one shall be discriminated against on any ground by any public authority. This general prohibition of discrimination extends to gays and lesbians as much as religious, ethnic or any other minority groups".

Full statement by the Intergroup, protest letter initiated by Mozaika and quotes by Janis Smits:

www.ilga-europe.org/europe/guide/country_by_country/latvia/intergroup_deplores_latvian_parliament_s_choice_for_chairperson_of_the_parliamentary_human_rights_and_social_affairs_committee

www.ilga-europe.org/europe/guide/country_by_country/latvia/an_open_letter_to_the_chairmen_and_deputies_of_the_political_parties_in_the_latvian_parliament

2007 European Year logo launched as final implementing bodies are confirmed

Source: European Commission

The logo for the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All has been revealed. The design – three figures side-by-side with the EU flag – is available in two different, vivid colour combinations, as well as in black and white for print. The logo and the guidelines for its use will soon be available for download from the Year's website - http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equality2007/index_en.htm.

In total, 27 countries (the 25 EU Member States, Bulgaria and Romania) have confirmed their participation in the 2007 European Year. In 26 of the 27 countries, national implementing bodies have been appointed - http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/equality2007/nb_en.htm. These organisations, generally the ministry or government agency for equality issues in each country, are responsible for the Year at national, regional and local level. Contact your national implementing body to find out more about the Year in your country.

ILGA-Europe's webpage on the 2007 European Year of equal Opportunities for All:

www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns_projects/2007_european_year_of_equal_opportunities

Anti-discrimination training manual in 23 languages

Source: European Commission

Our last mailing announced that a training manual from the EU-funded project 'Capacity building of civil society dealing with anti-discrimination' was available in 14 languages. It is in fact now available in all official EU languages as well as Romanian, Bulgarian and Turkish. Copies are available online:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/public/pubst_en.htm#train or as hard copies in limited numbers. To request hard copies, send an e-mail to the European Commission: empl-antidiscrimination@ec.europa.eu.

SAME-SEX FAMILIES:

Finland: Parliament votes to allow fertility treatment for single women and lesbian couples

Source: *Helsingin Sanomat*, 15 November 2006,

www.hs.fi/english/article/BREAKING+NEWS+Parliament+votes+to+allow+fertility+treatment+for+single+women+and+lesbian+couples/1135222283607

Decision comes after years of delays

Parliament voted on Friday in favour of a government bill to allow single women and lesbian couples to continue to have fertility treatment. The vote in Parliament was 105 to 83 in favour of the proposal. The Legal Affairs Committee of Parliament had endorsed a more restrictive version, which would have restricted treatment to couples comprising a man and a woman.

Parliamentary debate on the issue brought demonstrators and police barricades to the front of the House of Parliament on Thursday. On one side, demonstrators representing conservative Christian groups held prayers and defended a child's "right to have a father". On the other, rainbow-coloured banners were carried by those supporting the right of lesbian couples to get fertility treatment.

The battle between the opposing demonstrators remained on the verbal level on Thursday, with one side proclaiming eternal damnation and the possibility of redemption, and the other emphasising human rights and the importance of loving a child.

Friday's vote came after years of delays. Inside the Parliament, debate on Thursday focused on who would be entitled to fertility treatment. In spite of the contentiousness of the issue, the tone of the debate in Parliament was quite calm, with only a few speeches reaching a fever pitch, as most MPS are known to have made up their minds already. The bill still requires the approval of the Parliament's Grand Committee, which is considered likely to come. The Grand Committee will vote on the measure on Wednesday next week.

FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY:

Belarus: police arrest gay activists

by ILGA-Europe

On 8 November 2006, the Belarus special police forces arrested various LGBT activists during the preparatory meeting of the international conference to be organised in Minsk. All activists were later released, the conference was postponed. Detailed account on our website:

www.ilga-europe.org/europe/guide/country_by_country/belarus/latest_from_belarus

ILGA-Europe calls on Amnesty to contribute to the monitoring of Pride marches

by Christine Loudes

On the 7th November, Lissy Gröner, Member of the European Parliament, Rafal Kownacki, member of the board of the Polish Section of Amnesty International and Christine Loudes Policy Officer at ILGA-Europe spoke at a conference organised by Amnesty Belgium on the topic: The fight against homophobia a European Value? The discussion very much focussed on the lack of response of most EU institutions to the raising homophobia witnessed in the last months. It was pointed out that outside of the two resolutions by the European Parliament very little had been done to address the issue. The situation in Poland was discussed at length in particular with the proximity of the March in Poznan planned for the 18th November. In relation to the exercise of the freedom of assembly, ILGA-Europe called on Amnesty International to contribute to the monitoring of Pride marches; to report any violation in their yearly country report and to mention the issue as part of their campaign on human rights defenders. We will continue our efforts to encourage mainstream human rights organisations to denunciate violation of the rights of LGBT people!

Amnesty International calls on EU to ensure rights of minorities are protected in Poland & Latvia

Source: statement by Amnesty International, 15 November 2006

If the EU wants 2007 to be "European year of Equal Opportunities", it needs to ensure as of now that lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people can freely express, assemble and associate in countries such as Poland and Latvia.

Amnesty International is concerned that despite public attention to a string of homophobic incidents - in

some cases actions and statements by the very authorities of these countries - little has been done to redress the situation and guarantee the basic rights of LGBT persons.

In a briefing paper Amnesty International recalls the most serious incidents that occurred in the past two years and highlights all that still needs to be done if Latvia and Poland are to live up to the EU's values and rules.

"After so much emphasis on entry-criteria, it is essential that the EU applies the same firmness, if not more, now that both countries are full EU Member States," said Dick Oosting, Director of Amnesty International's EU Office.

"When serious offenses such as these are not accounted for, it can create a climate of fear and intimidation," Oosting added.

In a letter, Amnesty International has asked the EU to:

- Support the right of freedom of assembly, including "Pride Marches" and similar events in all Member States;
- Take concrete steps to monitor the implementation of EU standards against discrimination in Member States;
- Ensure that police cooperation in Europe includes training of law enforcement officials on how to address homophobic violence.

AI's letter and briefing are available at: www.amnesty-eu.org

NOTICE BOARD:

Faith and homophobia conference: securing legal protection and managing conflicts - 17 February 2007, London

by Richard Kirker

Are faith groups entitled to expect their views on sexuality to take precedence in society over those who hold no faith? Can you make sense of the competing claims made by faith groups?

This multi-faith conference is open to all who are interested in these questions, and many others that arise from the conflict that some believe is intrinsic between the unfettered, public expression of faith and the full, open expression of same-sex relationships. Are the two reconcilable?

Details at: www.lgcm.org.uk/fhconference

Polish TV programme is seeking same-sex couples

by Agnieszka Reczek

I am a television journalist from Cracow, Poland. I am working in a talk show famous for showing various aspects of life, fighting with intolerance and discrimination and giving everyone right to speak their voice. We are currently preparing a programme (talk-show) dedicated to the life of homosexual people. We would like to talk about bringing up children by them. We would like to invite a gay couple who are bringing up a biological child one of them or, who has adopted a child. The ideal situation would be that at least one person is a Pole. Obviously we cover the cost of journey and accommodation. The date of recording is not fixed yet, but the most probably it will take place in January. The recording will take place in Cracow.

Contacts: Agnieszka Reczek: anowir@poczta.onet.pl,
tel: 0048126528257, 0048122955257

A Call for Affinity Groups for the European Feminist Forum Deadline for Applications: 15 December 2006

by Gisela Dütting, Affinity Groups Coordinator, European Feminist Forum 2007

The European Feminist Forum (EFF) is a space for discussions on how to re-politicise the feminist movement in Europe and to explore feminist agendas needed in today's Europe. EFF aims to engage all interested in a

broad forum on key issues for feminists across Europe, however they wish to define Europe. EFF aims to build collectively a programme for a revitalised feminism in Europe through an on-going process leading to a European-wide face-to-face meeting in Central Europe that will launch renewed feminist political engagement in all of Europe. The main vehicle to launch this initiative is **affinity groups** as a non hierarchical, open and participatory and innovative process to explore topics EFF participants see as key to their political vision as feminists.

We are currently calling for topics and coordinators of up to 15 affinity groups. Affinity groups are invited to work in which ever medium they chose, in cyberspace, face-to-face meetings, across all European countries, within one country, in which ever language and media. The affinity groups findings set the agenda for EFF in the future. In the next months the outcomes of affinity group discussions and activities will shape the face-to-face meeting of the European Feminist Forum planned to take place in a Central European country September 2007.

Please contact us for any further information on affinity groups or any aspect of the EFF process.

EFF Organising Group

EFF@iav.nl

Stirred UP - a new European political and cultural magazine

by Nick Buteau, 14 November 2006

You might have heard from us through the grapevines, as our magazine has been making some noise around Europe, and the response we are receiving is tremendous.

We are a new London-based magazine dedicated to European politics, culture and pop culture. The first issue is now available, the December issue will follow soon, and we are on track to be in print in January 2007. Our overarching aim is to bring Europeans together, regardless of religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc: we are very interested in pushing gay issues to our pan-European readership.

Every month, Stirred Up will bring a broad coverage of European politics, culture, history, food, travel, fashion and pop culture. Our aim is to raise the bar of debates and to mirror the interests of educated, well-traveled Europeans. We are not always committed to further European integration, even though we are Europhiles. We are quite design and fashion focused, because we operate on the premise that a strong interest in politics does not preclude a sense for fashion and pop. We also understand Europe in the broadest sense. This sets us apart in the European press. Our website is interactive and we encourage readers to post their blogs, and to participate in our lively debates. The forum is also an ideal place to post classifieds, from job ads to personals.

www.stirredup.net

www.myspace.com/stirredupmag