

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.

Editor:

Juris Lavrikovs

Contact us:

euroletter@ilga-europe.org

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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 Ravdas and Danae Panagiotopoulou** – for the Greek translations.

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

**ILGA-Europe's team wishes all Euroletter readers
a very happy festive season and a successful 2008!**

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ILGA-EUROPE:

ILGA-Europe welcomes EU Fundamental Rights Charter – the first ever international treaty prohibiting sexual orientation discrimination

ILGA-Europe media release, 10 December 2007

On 13 December, leaders of the EU member states gathered in Lisbon to sign the Reformed Treaty which includes the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Charter is the first international treaty containing explicit prohibition of sexual orientation discrimination.

The Reform Treaty was agreed earlier this year in Lisbon by the EU member states' leaders and it replaces the proposal for an EU Constitution defeated by referenda in France and the Netherlands and eventually abandoned by the EU.

ILGA-Europe recognises the significant development that the signing of the Reform Treaty shall bring with it in EU law, and the implications that it may have for the advancement of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people within Europe. The Charter is the first EU document that brings together the whole range of civil, political, economic and social rights provided in a number of international conventions. Undoubtedly the Charter, which will come into force 2009 after all EU member states ratify it, will provide a new opportunity for LGBT people to address and challenge discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and we look forward to seeing how the European Court of Justice is going to interpret the Charter.

Patricia Prendiville, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe, said:

“While welcoming the first ever international treaty containing an explicit ban on sexual orientation discrimination, we are disappointed by the decision of the UK and Polish governments to opt out of their duty to provide their citizens with the same rights as the rest of EU citizens by not ratifying the Charter. While the reasons for not ratifying the Charter are different in both countries, we believe the lack of unanimity among the EU member states weakens the strength and authority of this significant document.”

ILGA-Europe and IGLYO respond to Commission's consultation on schools

by ILGA-Europe

ILGA-Europe and IGLYO submit written contribution in response to the European Commission's consultation "Schools for the 21st Century". This document highlights the issues of discrimination that LGBT pupils/students still experience in the Europe and identifies what schools could and should be doing to promote equality and respond to cultural diversity and reduce early school leaving, and to prepare young people to be responsible citizens, in line with fundamental values such as peace and tolerance of diversity.

Full text of this document is available on our website: www.ilga-europe.org

Lisette Kampus, member of the ILGA-Europe's Executive Board, greeted by the President of Estonia

by Juris Lavrikovs, ILGA-Europe's Communications Manager



Lisette Kampus, member of ILGA-Europe board, and Toomas Hendrik Ilves, President of the Republic of Estonia

On 9 December 2007, Lisette Kampus, member of ILGA-Europe's Executive Board from Estonia, was invited to take part in an event acknowledging and celebrating valuable contributions by volunteers towards the development of Estonian society. During this event the President of Estonia greeted the volunteers, including Lisette Kampus. Lisette is one of the leading LGBT activists in Estonia.

"The Estonian nation has examples to follow. And these examples are followed," said President Ilves. "Volunteer work continues to spread in Estonia. This is a prerequisite and sign of a healthy and strong society."

"I wish that we would be caring and attentive. This starts if only with an everyday friendly smile and a candid gaze directed at your compatriots," the President said in summary.

Our congratulations to Lisette!

EUROPE:

2007- The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All is coming to its end

by Juris Lavrikovs, ILGA-Europe's Communications Manager

The Year 2007 which was the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All is coming to its end. ILGA-Europe and its members across European Union took very active part in the Year's activities. While the Year highlighted and brought to the surface many examples of still existing prejudice and discrimination towards LGBT people in Europe, there was significant progress made towards recognition and increased awareness about discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity.

On 6 December 2007, the Council of the European Union adopted a resolution in which it acknowledges the existence of discrimination and the need for strengthening equality legislation and mainstreaming of equal opportunities. The Council firmly condemned all forms of homophobia and called for further monitoring and research on this issue in particular by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency.

This Resolution is available at: <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st15/st15383.en07.pdf>

We are currently collecting feedback from our members about their experiences from this Year and it will be published in 2008 on our website's section on the Year 2007: [www.ilga-](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns_projects/2007_european_year_of_equal_opportunities)

[europe.org/europe/campaigns_projects/2007_european_year_of_equal_opportunities](http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns_projects/2007_european_year_of_equal_opportunities)

Hungary approves partnership legislation

Source: Pink News, 18 December 2007, www.pinknews.co.uk/news/articles/2005-6361.html

Hungary's parliament has approved the Registered Partnership Act. From January 1st 2009 lesbian and gay couples will have almost identical rights as married heterosexual couples in common law.

Notable exceptions are the right to adopt, access to fertility treatment and the right to take their partner's surname.

The Registered Partnership Act was passed with votes of the members of the Socialist-led social-liberal government.

Both gay and straight couples will be able to register their partnership, and will have protections regarding next of kin status, taxation, health care, inheritance, social security, pensions and shared possession of a home.

Government statistics show that there were an estimated 349,000 unmarried couples in Hungary in 2005, 12.2 per cent of all families, compared to 62,000 in 1970, 2.1 per cent of all families.

Hungary's opposition conservative parties refused to back the new law, which they regard as a "hidden attempt" to legalise gay marriage.

The Hungarian gay and lesbian associations have welcomed new law as a milestone while acknowledging it does not grant full equality.

HATE CRIME:

MEPs call for withdrawing public funds from extremist political groups

Source: Media release by the European Parliament, 13 December 2007

The European Parliament called today in Strasbourg for public funding to be withdrawn from political parties - or media businesses - that incite to hate of a group of people on the basis of their race, religion, handicap, sexual orientation or nationality. They also stressed that such speeches coming from public personalities should be considered an aggravating circumstance.

The European parliament adopted today a resolution to show its concern on the fact that several European countries have experienced recently hatred violent events and killings. The text, adopted by 527 votes in favour, 15 against and 39 abstentions, calls for public funding to be withdrawn from "political parties that do not condemn violence and terrorism and don't abide with human rights as set out in the Charter for Fundamental Rights" -formally signed yesterday in plenary by the three EU institutions-, and to the media who promote racist, xenophobic and homophobic ideas. The Chamber also said to be "seriously alarmed at the Islamic fundamentalist recruitment" in Europe.

Members stressed that public personalities should "refrain from statements that encourage or incite to hate or stigmatisation of groups of people on the basis of their race, ethnic origin, religion, handicap, sexual orientation or nationality" and believed that being a public personality should be considered as an aggravating circumstance when inciting to hatred. Furthermore, on an amendment adopted by 450 votes in favour, 93 against and 30 abstentions, MEPs warn, looking to the 2009 European elections, "of the possibility that extremist parties may secure representation in the European Parliament and calls on the political groups to take the appropriate measures in order to ensure that a democratic institution is not used as a platform for financing and echoing anti-democratic messages".

The resolution calls on the EU institutions to give a clear mandate to the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights to investigate on the structures of extremist groups, and for governments to give appropriate preventive responses," regarding young's people education and public information, teaching against totalitarianism" and keeping alive the memory of European history.

Members also expressed their concern on how to counteract the existence of public and easily accessible websites which incite to hatred without violating freedom of expression.

The resolution, which does not name concrete examples of extremist groups or associations in Europe, does include in such category neo-nazis, neo-fascists and all "movements, paramilitary groups and parties" which base their ideology on "racism, intolerance, incitement to religious hatred, exclusion, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, anti-Gypsism, homophobia, misogyny and ultra-nationalism". Among the most vulnerable groups mentioned are "migrants, Roma, homosexuals, antiracist activists and homeless".

Last 29 November Parliament also adopted a consultation report to harden a future EU law to combat certain forms of racism and xenophobia, including the establishment of criminal sanctions -from one to three years of prison- to any public incitement to violence or hatred, even by dissemination or distribution of tracts, pictures or other material. The legislative text -first European law of this kind, which still needs to be transposed by Member States-, also includes punishment for the denial or gross trivialisation of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes.

Full text of the resolution is available on our website: www.ilga-europe.org

OSCE: European Governments Must Do More to Tackle Hate Crimes

Source: Media release by Human Rights First, 17 December 2007

A majority of European governments get a poor grade in their efforts to tackle violent hate crimes, according to Human Rights First's 2007 **Hate Crime Report Card** released today at the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) meeting in Tel Aviv. This new study examines monitoring and reporting systems as well as the enforcement of hate crime laws in the 56 states that comprise the OSCE – from the Russian Federation and the Central Asian states across Western Europe and also including the United States and Canada.

The report is a follow-up to Human Rights First's 2007 Hate Crime Survey, which documented the disturbing rise in hate crimes across the OSCE region. The report released today examines government efforts to combat these violent hate crimes.

Full text of this media release and link to the report are available on our website:

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

NOTICE BOARD:

Job opportunity with Solidar – Communications Officer

Source: Solidar, 19 December 2007

Solidar is seeking to appoint an experienced individual who will produce and coordinate the communication work in Solidar. The successful candidate will have an extensive knowledge of international development and social justice issues in the context of the Solidar areas of work; strong communication skills, including the ability to deliver information in a form accessible to the press. Fluency in written and spoken English and French is essential. Other European languages would be an advantage.

Closing date for applications: **Friday 4 January 2008**. Interviews will be held during the week of **14 January 2008**.

Further details including applications form on their website:

http://www.solidar.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=13970&la=1&langue=EN