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The seven-year Programme targets all stake holders who can help shape the development of appropriate and effective employment and social legislation and policies, across the EU-27, EFTA-EEA and EU candidate and pre-candidate countries.

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- providing analysis and policy advice on PROGRESS policy areas;
- monitoring and reporting on the implementation of EU legislation and policies in PROGRESS policy areas;
- promoting policy transfer, learning and support among Member States on EU objectives and priorities; and
- relaying the views of the stakeholders and society at large

For more information see:

http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/progress/index_en.html

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ILGA-EUROPE:

ILGA-Europe's campaign on new EU anti-discrimination directive

Sign the petition, save the directive!

by Evelyne Paradis, ILGA-Europe's Senior Policy Officer

The campaign to save a new anti-discrimination directive that would cover all the grounds (disability, age, religion/belief and sexual orientation) continues!

On 17 April, MEP Liz Lynne launched a petition to call on the Commission and Member States to bring forward a comprehensive, inclusive anti-discrimination directive.

Please sign this petition and circulate it widely!

We need everyone's support to make sure that this coming June, the Commission proposes an anti-discrimination legislation covering all the grounds, and not just on disability.

The petition can be found here: www.signtostopdiscrimination.org

It takes 2-3 minutes to do and will help us in our efforts!

Below you will find our media release on stepping up the directive campaign:

Many thanks in advance for your ongoing support!

European Parliament's message to the European Commission is clear: end hierarchy of rights and protection in the EU!

Source: ENAR, ILGA-Europe, and AIEU joint media release, 20 May 2008

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR), the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA-Europe) and the Amnesty International EU Office (AIEU) welcome the clear and strong message issued by the European Parliament today to put "an end to the hierarchy of protection against different grounds of discrimination."

ILGA-EUROPE:

In the resolution adopted today, the European Parliament calls on the Commission to adhere to its commitment to propose a "comprehensive directive" to combat all forms of discrimination outside employment.

Mohammed Aziz, President of ENAR, said:

"We are very happy that the European Parliament has shown once again that it is a consistent supporter of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. The Commission cannot ignore this strong call for legislation covering all discrimination grounds. There is clear evidence of the need to fight religious discrimination in Europe. It is only by fighting for comprehensive protection against all grounds of discrimination that we will achieve equal opportunities for all in jobs, accommodation, schools, etc."

Martin K.I. Christensen, Co-Chair of ILGA-Europe's Executive Board, said:

"This is very positive and encouraging news. We are thankful to the Parliament for standing up for non-negotiable equality and ending a current embarrassing hierarchy of rights and protections. The people of Europe spoke today through their representatives to say that Europe should no longer tolerate the situation where some groups are left unprotected and without redress from discrimination. Now it is all up to the Commission to deliver on its promise and propose one directive covering all grounds of discrimination in all areas of life."

Dr Nicolas Beger, Director of AIEU, said:

"Discrimination is still wide spread in Europe. The Commission must fight it with measures that leave no one behind."

Several MEPs took the floor during a debate in plenary to say that it would not "make sense to outlaw discrimination in one area whilst allowing it in another".

Sophia in't Veld, MEP, said today during the debates:

"In 2004, this European Commission got the green light of the European Parliament only upon the solemn promise to be the champion of fundamental rights. But paying lip service to equality is not good enough. EU citizens must get the legal instruments to defend their rights in court. Now, the European Commission is frantically looking for excuses to avoid a general ban on discrimination, such as that more study is needed – as if we cannot all see that there is discrimination all around – or that there is no consensus in the Council – well, that never stopped the European Commission from pushing its proposals in other areas such as energy policy. And let us not forget that discrimination is already forbidden on the basis of the Treaties, but if we do not legislate the courts will do it for us. So I expect the European Commission to take its own responsibility and stand for the rights of European citizens, because if the horizontal directive must fail, then let it fail in Council and not in the Commission."

ILGA-EUROPE:

This latest statement from the European Parliament in favour of a 'comprehensive directive echoes the calls for a directive covering all the grounds of age, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief made by numerous social and human rights NGOs, trade unions, equality bodies and businesses.

ENAR, ILGA-Europe and AIEU urge the European Commission to respond to the calls and honor its commitments to bring equality for all in all areas of life.

Text of the Resolution adopted by the European Parliament on 20 May 2008 is available at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2008-0212+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&language=EN>

More information about the campaign for a new EU anti-discrimination legislation, including background documents, resources and information, advice and suggestion on what you can do to help this campaign, are available on our website: www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns_projects/campaign_for_a_new_european_anti_discrimination_legislation

Are you working on issues of concerns for older LGBT people? We'd like to hear about it...

by Evelyne Paradis, ILGA-Europe's Senior Policy Officer

IGLYO, in partnership with ILGA-Europe, is leading a one-year project on the intersectionality between age and sexual orientation as grounds of discrimination. The aim of the project is to reflect over intergenerational dialogue and age-related issues in the LGBT community. As part of the project, IGLYO is currently seeking information about projects (past or current) and research on older LGBT people. We want to build on existing experience and identify potential participants to roundtables to be organised in the coming months.

Thank you for sending your information to Sylvi Paulick, the project co-ordinator, at sylvi@iglyo.com

LGBT organisations develop strategic advocacy planning

by Aija Salo, ILGA-Europe Programmes and Policy Officer

ILGA-Europe supports its member and partner organisations in Eastern Europe and Central Asia by facilitating advocacy planning. An advocacy planning session was facilitated by ILGA-Europe in Kyrgyzstan in May with the Bishkek-based LGBT organisation Labrys. The three days in the mountains formed an encouraging experience of strategising around LGBT advocacy.

The training included presentation of central concepts of advocacy, discussion of main problems faced by the LGBT community in Kyrgyzstan, defining goals for Labrys' advocacy plan and choosing main strategies for the advocacy work. Forming new alliances and supporting the evolving LGBT community throughout the country were among topics intensely discussed during the programme. ILGA-Europe also visited Labrys' community center which was opened in Bishkek January 2008 as a venue for social services, events and gathering.

The advocacy planning session was a part of the PRECIS project (PREvention and Empowerment in the Commonwealth of Independent States) which is an LGBT empowerment and HIV/AIDS prevention project in Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova and Ukraine. The project is coordinated by COC Netherlands, whereas ILGA-Europe is responsible for the implementation of the project's advocacy component.

More information about PRECIS project on our website:

http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/campaigns_projects/project_precis_prevention_and_empowerment_in_the_cis

EUROPE:

Promoting equality for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in the European Union

Source: statement of the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency on the occasion of the International Day against Homophobia, 16 May 2008,

"The combat against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation is a priority issue to ensure equal rights to all people in the EU", said Constantinos Manolopoulos, FRA's Acting Director, ahead of International Day against Homophobia on 17 May 2008. "This day is an occasion to recall the discrimination and prejudices that many LGBT people still face in some EU Member States. We must address this social ill head on."

FRA joins in the efforts by developing a comprehensive study on homophobia and discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation across the European Union. This study has been requested by the European Parliament to examine the need for new European Community legislation to combat discrimination. Initial results of FRA's ongoing project highlight that key issues include the access to civil partnerships or marriage, the achievement of social acceptance and visibility in areas such as employment, sports and the media as well as the importance of fair and non-discriminatory pension and tenancy laws. Effective legislation is hereby seen as a key instrument in tackling and overcoming such challenges across the EU.

The European Union and the Council of Europe play a lead role in promoting human rights and equality for LGBT people in Europe. The European Community Treaty and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights list sexual orientation among the prohibited grounds for discrimination. The European Parliament has taken a strong position against homophobia in its Resolution of April 2007. It also gave its full support to the Yogyakarta Principles on the application of international human rights law in relation to sexual orientation and gender identity in the recently adopted "Annual Report on Human Rights in the World 2007 and the European Union's policy on the matter". There have been some recent landmark decisions of the European Court of Human Rights and the European Court of Justice. Finally, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, in his latest viewpoint, called on States to take concrete action to make "human rights principles apply also to sexual orientation and gender identity".

"The fight against homophobia must continue with all possible means. Our forthcoming study aims to make a strong contribution to this common effort and to help the EU institutions and Member States in making equality a reality for all people in the EU who face discrimination today", said Constantinos Manolopoulos.

Further information about the Agency: <http://fra.europa.eu>

EUROPE:

Council of Europe's Human Rights Commissioner: "Time to recognise that human rights principles apply also to sexual orientation and gender identity"

Source: Council of Europe

Prior to the International Day against Homophobia, Thomas Hammarberg who is the Human Rights Commissioner of the Council of Europe, published his view point on human rights for LGBT people.

"A number of people around the world – including in Europe – continue to be stigmatised because of their actual or perceived sexual orientation and gender identity. In some cases these individuals are still being denied their right to education, health care, housing and work. Some of them are harassed by the police, get no protection when attacked by extremists or are deported to countries where they risk torture or execution. Also, some of their organisations are denied registration or are refused a permit to organise peaceful meetings and demonstrations. Too few leading politicians stand up against these or even worse homophobic and transphobic expressions.

It is sometimes said that the protection of the human rights of lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people (LGBT) amounts to introducing new rights. That is a misunderstanding. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the agreed treaties establish that human rights apply to everyone and that no one should be excluded..."

You can read full text of the viewpoint at http://www.coe.int/t/commissioner/Viewpoints/default_en.asp

European Parliament adopts resolution calling on US to stop discriminating against HIV positive travellers from Europe

Source: European Parliament, 22 May 2008

MEPs call for Member States involved in bilateral talks with the US on visas to respect EU law and for the US to end discrimination among Member States in a resolution adopted today. They also recall that the EU could temporarily restore a visa requirement for US citizens if reciprocity is not reached. Members adopted a resolution by 511 votes in favour, 29 against and 7 abstentions.

MEPs take note of the bilateral talks going on between the US and several Member States (Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania) on participation in the American "Visa Waiver" programme, which could allow their citizens to travel to the US without a visa. They recall that the EU Council is responsible for establishing rules on this matter and that it has exempted US citizens from a visa requirement, while the US still maintains it for nationals of some member states. MEPs also adopted an amendment asking the Commission to ensure, in its negotiations with the US, that HIV positive travellers would also benefit from the Visa Waiver program, from which they are excluded:

"3a. Urges the Commission to include in the negotiations the exclusion of Europeans with HIV from the visa waiver programme, and ensure equal treatment of all EU citizens; agrees with the Commission that there are no objective reasons for a travel ban for HIV infected persons (as stated in its reply to parliamentary question E-6038/07 of 19 February 2008)"

MEPs therefore consider that any form of discrimination between European citizens should be forbidden, even outside the EU and call on the US authorities to observe the principle of reciprocity and to ensure the same rights for citizens of all Member States. Otherwise, MEPs warned, the Council would be allowed to restore temporarily a visa requirement for third country citizens.

‘For Diversity. Against Discrimination.’ campaign in 2008

by Elizabeth Tapper (Pleon) and Katrina Sichel (Mostra)

The “For Diversity. Against Discrimination.” information campaign continues in 2008 with a new consortium made up of Mostra and Pleon taking over the coordination of the campaign on behalf of the European Commission.

Begun in 2003, this EU-wide information campaign aims to raise awareness of discrimination and the legislation which exists to combat it, as well as to promote the benefits of diversity across the EU. In 2008, particular attention will be paid to reaching employers and employees as well as young people.

The ‘For Diversity. Against Discrimination.’ truck returns in 2008. Set to launch in June, the truck tour ‘road show’ will visit ten EU Member States: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Activities organised at each stop, including debates, quizzes, painting and music performances, will bring together business, NGOs, musicians, artists and the general public to explore discrimination and diversity issues.

The Journalist Award 2008 will also be launched during the summer. Now in its fifth year, the award honours journalists in the EU who, through their work, contribute to a better public understanding of the benefits of diversity and the fight against discrimination.

A new initiative for the campaign in 2008 is the production of audiovisual materials, including a Video News Release on Diversity issues and an updated information film on anti-discrimination legislation with examples shot in different Member States, for use by NGOs and other partners. A photo database of images is also planned.

Throughout the year, the campaign will also link to, and create, a number of events at national, local or regional level across all Member States to raise awareness about the Diversity and Equality issues.

The campaign team would appreciate any contributions or suggestions on:

- National or local events
- Speakers or artists in the ten Member States that the truck tour will visit
- Case studies, projects, or testimonies which could be filmed for audiovisual materials

EUROPE:

- Publications and innovative ideas for their distribution
- Creative uses for the winning articles of the Journalist Award 2008

Contacts: Katrina Sichel: ksi@mostra.com or Caroline Danloy: cda@mostra.com

To receive regular updates on the campaign activities, sign up for the monthly 'For Diversity. Against Discrimination' electronic newsletter:

<http://www.stop-discrimination.info/94.0.html>

IGLYO launches research on discrimination of LGBT young people in education

by IGLYO

On 7 May 2008, IGLYO launched at the European Parliament its latest research into the impact of discrimination in education on the lives of LGBT young people.

In 2007 IGLYO carried out comparative research in five EU member states, examining the experience of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people in schools. This included the collection of best practices which follow the rights-based approach. These emphasise that young LGBT people have the right to an education which is responsive their needs to develop a positive self-images, allowing them to participate fully in their communities (*UN convention of the Rights of the Child*).

The recent study, *Social exclusion of young LGBT people in Europe (ILGA-Europe, IGLYO, 2006)* demonstrated that 61% of young LGBT people in Europe have had a negative experience related to their sexual orientation and/or gender identity during their time in education. This indicated a clear need for further research and examination of the experiences of LGBT young people in European schools.

Anti-bullying programs and inclusive curricula have been proven to improve the experience of LGBT youth at schools. However, many schools and even policy makers in Europe still are strong advocates against LGBT issues being implemented in their school curricula. This existing gap needs to be filled; LGBT young people have the right to study and spend their school time in a safe environment, free from discrimination, intolerance and abuse.

The presentation of this research coincided with the preparation of a horizontal anti-discrimination directive by the European Commission, which will aim to protect citizens from discrimination in all fields outside employment. This is a positive development, which would help young LGBT people to fully benefit from their time spent in schools.

For further information visit IGLYO's website: www.iglyo.com

LGBT FAMILIES:

UK: fertility treatment for lesbians legalised

Source: media release by Stonewall, 21 May 2008, www.stonewall.org.uk

Stonewall is celebrating last night's historic vote by MPs to end discrimination against lesbian parents seeking access to fertility services. MPs voted by 292 to 217 and 290 to 222 to retain new measures in the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill which will mean that in future fertility clinics take account of the presence of 'supportive parenting' rather than the previous 'need for a father', a requirement which was frequently used to deny lesbian couples access to fertility services.

Ben Summerskill, Stonewall Chief Executive, said: 'We know that the families of lesbian and gay people are every bit as caring and loving and tender, and magical, as any other. What really matters now is that no lesbian parents will ever again be forced to use backstreet fertility services if their local clinic turns them away.'

'Stonewall has lobbied tirelessly for months on this part of the Bill and we did everything we could to persuade MPs to vote for equality. The new law does not send out a message that fathers are not needed; it simply recognises the diverse make-up of families in 21st century Britain. The clear message it does send out is that a loving, supportive family is paramount to the needs of a child.'

The new legislation is now almost certain to become law as passage through the House of Lords was secured earlier this year.

EMPLOYMENT:

1st Annual Congress of the International Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce (IGLCC)

by Silvan Agius, ILGA-Europe Policy & Programmes Officer

The IGLCC organised its' 1st Annual Congress during 24-26 April in Montreal. Under the banner of *A world of opportunities*, this congress addressed the need to push for further justice, equality and respect of diversity in the business world and provided various strategies for the attainment of this goal.

The Congress specifically looked at:

- the development of world benchmarks for companies to improve their performance for LGBT employees, entrepreneurs and consumers - *the Index highlighted below is one such example.*
- the strengthening and growth of LGBT business organisations worldwide
- the development of supplier diversity programmes - *these programmes ensure that a segment of corporate expenditure goes to purchase goods or services from LGBT certified businesses.*
- the inclusion of the LGBT community within mainstream marketing and the development of specific products/business initiatives catering specifically for the LGBT community.
- greater engagement and partnerships between businesses and the LGBT community.

International LGBT Business Equality Index

Following the end of the Congress, a meeting was held to finalise the questionnaire of the *International LGBT Business Equality Index*, which is being developed by the IGLCC with the support of ILGA-Europe and ILGA.

The finalised set of questions that form the basis for the review of business practices vis-à-vis their LGBT employees, customers and suppliers look at:

- diversity and inclusion programmes and resources;
- sexual orientation and gender identity policies and practices;
- supplier diversity; and
- marketing and LGBT community involvement of the participant companies.

This Index is expected to challenge international corporations and businesses to improve their performance concerning LGBT people. It is scheduled to be launched during the World Outgames 2009 in Copenhagen.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY:

Pride season 2008 in Europe starts with ban and violence in Moldova

by Juris Lavrikovs, ILGA-Europe's Communications manager

As during the last few years, this year's Pride season in Europe started with a ban of LGBT demonstration in the Moldovan capital of Chisinau. Not only the Mayor of Chisinau illegally banned the LGBT demonstration, but the Moldovan police did not react when a bus with LGBT activists was stopped by a homophobic mob, prevented from moving for nearly an hour and LGBT activists were intimidated. This is not the first time when the city of Chisinau disrespects not only the decision of the European Court of Human Rights, but ignores also a decision of the Supreme Court of Moldova which stated that banning LGBT demonstration was illegal. ILGA-Europe and IGLHRC sent a letter to various Moldovan authorities regarding these events. Also the European Parliamentarians expressed their concerns with the situation in Moldova. Further information on our website: www.ilga-europe.org/europe/guide/country_by_country/moldova/moldovan_lgbt_pride_2008

The 4th Pride March in Bucharest took place on 24 May under a heavy police protection. The media reported no incidents or attacks this year. Michael Cashman (MEP) attended the Bucharest Pride this year. More about the Bucharest Pride 2008 on our website: www.ilga-europe.org/europe/guide/country_by_country/romania/gay_activists_march_in_romania_despite_opposition

On 31 May, March for Equality is taking place in Riga. The March was authorised after the organisers, Mozaika - the alliance of LGBT people and their friends, successfully negotiated the date, time and route with the city council and the police. It remains to be seen whether this year it going to be a peaceful one as this year LGBT people and their supporters are no longer marching in an enclosed park. We will be reporting about Riga and other 'problematic' Pride events on our website and future editions of Euroletter.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION AND ASSEMBLY:

Ankara saw its first anti-homophobia march

by Aija Salo, ILGA-Europe Programmes and Policy officer

The first anti/homophobia march in Ankara, Turkey, on the International Day against Homophobia (May 17th) was a great success. 200 people marched peacefully with rainbow flags, sang, applauded and shouted.

The crowd marched first from the human rights monument almost to the parliament. Near the parliament buildings they were asked to put down the flags and walk silently in small groups to a side street next to the parliament house. At the parliament they could raise the flags again, a speech was delivered by the organizers and for a short time people were again singing and shouting. There was a lot of media interest. The presence of MEP Michael Cashman and other international human rights defenders was assumed by the organizers to be one reason to the police's and authorities' tolerance of the event.

TRANSGENDER:

The 2nd European TransGender Council aims to establish a strong transgender movement in Europe

by Silvan Agius, ILGA-Europe Policy & Programmes Officer

TransGender Europe (TGEU) organised its' 2nd European Transgender Council during 2-4 May in Berlin, under the banner *Make Human Rights Work*. This Council brought together circa 200 participants from across Europe and beyond.

The council launched the *Transgender Eurostudy: Legal Survey and Focus on the Transgender Experience of Health Care*, which is the first comprehensive study of the legal rights situation and experience of health care of transgender people in Europe.¹ The Study shows that transgender people continue to face severe violations of their human rights in most European states and in nutshell "that all trans people are getting a bad deal," as Stephen Whittle, the author of this study put it.

The activists present during the council shared their experiences on dealing with various transgender specific human rights concerns, including amongst others the recognition of changes to gender in formal documentation and the processes related to it, access to services (particularly healthcare), and social prejudice and negative stereotyping that lead to social exclusion and loneliness. The conference also addressed the lack of clear legal protection that currently exists at EU.

During this council a new Executive Board and a new Steering Committee were elected, with the new President of TGEU new being Prof Stephen Whittle.

More information about Transgender Europe is available on the organisation's website at <http://www.tgeu.org/>

¹Available at http://www.ilga-europe.org/europe/publications/non_periodical/transgender_eurostudy_legal_survey_and_focus_on_the_transgender_experience_of_health_case_april_2008
(hard copies of the document are also available upon request)

NOTICE BOARD:

Call for data on sexual exploitation of LGBT children

by Annica Ryng, RFSL

I recently became a member of a national reference group in Sweden working with the issues of sexual exploitation of children. The work is commissioned by the government and the reference group has Swedish representatives from NGOs working with children rights, governmental organisations and also researchers from the University.

RFSL's position is to raise the awareness of the specific vulnerability of children due to sexual orientation and gender identity. Addressing issues such as LGBT children being more vulnerable because of having less social network of family and friends, being isolated and not having anyone to talk to/seek help and so on.

As you all know, there is a lack of knowledge within the field. My question is - do you know if there's any research, data, articles, studies or other type of material that talks about sexual exploitation of children in relation to the aspect of LGBT?

Please send me your info by e-mails, links or reference to where I can get a hold if it. It can be studies made internationally but also national or local studies. Children is defined according to the convention, up to 18 yrs:
annica.ryng@rfsl.se

NOTICE BOARD:

European Training course for Teachers and Trainers in Berlin (19-24 October 2008) – LLP grant available!

by Stephanie Nordt and Thomas Kugler, KomBi – Communication and Education

KomBi offers a training course on Homophobia and Gender-based Discrimination addressed to persons working in the educational sector (teachers at school or trainers in adult education). Comenius or Grundtvig grants are available for applicants from EU member states (except Germany), Turkey, Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein.

Further information:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/llp/istcoursedatabase/index.cfm?fuseaction=DisplayCourse&cid=9616>

NOTICE BOARD:

Amnesty International looks to the future

by Kate Sheill, Amnesty International

During 2008, Amnesty International is looking to the future by undertaking a focused exercise to review and develop its human rights strategies and its activist tactics for the coming years.

We hope that human rights defenders, human rights activists and people concerned about human rights the world over will help us identify the most important human rights concerns and the most effective ways in which human rights can be defended.

Your input will be invaluable and taking part is simple: just fill out this short questionnaire.

The information you provide will be kept completely confidential and we will report the results of the survey in aggregated form only.

Thank you for being part of Amnesty International's strategic direction setting and for being active for human rights!

The questionnaire is accessible at:

Arabic https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=GPEzTjZMjR5ZJrLqLTs_2b5g_3d_3d

English https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=ndsqaPa3WTEZXisktTq8O1g_3d_3d

French https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=DQ1k2ZDobs99ahHf3GjXAQ_3d_3d

Spanish https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=zzl8rKuLUN3PP7TXOHZRGg_3d_3d

The information collected through this survey will be one of source used in the drafting of our new Integrated Strategic Plan, which will craft the movement's work from 2010 to 2016.